

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
COUNTY OF MCDOWELL COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
RECESSED SESSION – APRIL 27, 2020**

**Assembly**

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met in Recessed Session on Monday, April 27, 2020, at 11:30a.m., at the Universal Conference Room.

**Members Present**

David N. Walker, Chair; Tony Brown, Vice-Chair; Barry McPeters; Lynn Greene; Brenda Vaughn

**Members Absent**

None

**Others Present**

Ashley Wooten, County Manager; Cheryl Mitchell, Clerk to the Board; William Kehler, Director ES; Maria Preswood, HR Director; Virginia Rhodes, EOC Public Information Officer

**Call to Order**

Chairman Walker called the meeting to order. Mr. Wooten explained Ms. Karen Powell, Health Director, was unable to attend due to a board meeting in Rutherford County.

**COVID-19 Update**

Mr. Kehler gave an update from Emergency Services:

- The EOC remains activated at Level 2 on this the 43<sup>rd</sup> day of activation
- 368 have been tested; 24 positive; 327 negative; 17 pending; and 1 death of an 83 year old male
- congregate living facilities is still a top priority, and as of this date there are no positives; taking mitigation action to make sure the virus does not enter the congregate living facilities
- Dogwood Trust has reached out to the EOC with help financially to set up a strike team in case of any positives in long term facilities. The team would help with staffing and equipment; and assistance for sheltering in place unless they have priority issues
- PPE supply is stabilized, shortage of isolation gowns
- FEMA is shipping PPE directly to both nursing facilities in the county
- testing supplies received have not been enough for mass testing; only getting 20-25 test kits per shipment; hospital issue in testing has been resolved;
- Atrium Health has drive through testing, both the nasal swabs and rapid blood test
- feeding operations are still operating well

- call center has fielded over 1100 calls; due to a decrease in calls the medical calls will be moving back to the EOC staff
- PIO continues to push out valid information
- \$197,500 current county cost, with most of that amount coming from the cost of PPE
- CDC has updated guidance with additional signs/symptoms of COVID-loss of taste/smell; chills; repeated shaking with chills; muscle pain; headache; sore throat;
- there have been several of the positives that have appeared asymptomatic, which is consistent across the nation

Chairman Walker asked if hazard duty pay for emergency personnel was covered under FEMA. Mr. Kehler noted he would find out and report back to the board.

Mr. Kehler also noted the department was seeing it hard for individuals who had tested positive to integrate back into the community after they had come out of quarantine, due to the stigma.

Vice Chairman Brown added the Board had to have the health and safety of the citizens first and foremost, and continue to follow the recommendations from the Health Department and Emergency Services.

Mr. Wooten reported he had received several calls related to the hospitality industry on opening up campgrounds and lodging. The Board reviewed the local State of Emergency Amendment 1 regarding short term rentals of lodging facilities and campgrounds; and the self-quarantine 14 days when entering from out of state declaration. US Forest Service has noted there has been increased traffic to the forestlands from out of state and other counties. The increased traffic puts a burden on their department due to being short staffed.

Mr. Wooten added he had spoken with Ms. Karen Powell, Health Director, regarding her opinion on the short term lodging, and the 14 day quarantine. She thought it would be acceptable to rescind the order, as long as there was emphasis on social distancing and maintaining the 10 people or fewer gatherings.

Commissioner Greene made a motion to rescind Amendment No. 1, second by Commissioner McPeters. Discussion followed on the current State's Executive Order extending the stay at home order and orders limiting mass gatherings of ten or more, requiring social distancing, and restricting visitation at long term care facilities. A copy of the draft Amendment No. 2 would be sent to each Board member for approval. By a vote of 5-0 the motion passed.

### **Operations Update**

Mr. Wooten reported employees that had been sent home due to county facilities closing are still receiving pay at 100%. He explained the COVID federal mandate directed the employee to be paid at 2/3 pay after two weeks, and the county had the option of paying the 1/3 pay.

Ms. Maria Preswood, HR Director, gave an update on the number of employees that were teleworking, or were unable to work due to childcare, caring for high risk family member, or the employee's own high-risk.

Discussion was held regarding the employee salaries are already budgeted, and the county is making re-opening plans for the near future. Item should be revisited in thirty (30) days.

Vice Chairman Brown made a motion to continue with 100% pay for all employees and revisit this item in thirty (30) days, second by Commissioner McPeters. By a vote of 5-0 the motion passed.

Mr. Wooten reported the county safety committee had met via ZOOM and discussed using the State of NC's template for phasing in services. The committee addressed implementing social distancing; installation of Plexiglas where needed, and sanitation requirements where needed. The Senior Center would be the last facility to re-open.

### **Adjournment**

Vice Chairman Brown made a motion to recess at 12:31pm to Monday, May 4<sup>th</sup>, at 11:30am at the Universal Conference Room, second by Commissioner Greene. By a vote of 5-0 the motion passed.

Attest:

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Cheryl L. Mitchell  
Clerk to the Board

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David Walker  
Chairman