

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF MCDOWELL COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR SESSION – APRIL 13, 2015**

ASSEMBLY

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Monday, April 13, 2015, at 5:00 p.m., Commission Board Room of the County Administration Building, 60 East Court Street, Marion, North Carolina.

MEMBERS PRESENT

David N. Walker, Chairman; Barry McPeters, Vice-Chairman; Tony Brown; Matthew Crawford; and Van “Randy” Hollfield.

OTHERS PRESENT

Charles R. Abernathy, County Manager; Ashley Wooten, Deputy Clerk to the Board; and Theresa Strickland, Public Information Technician (Filming).

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Walker called the meeting to order. The invocation was given by Commissioner Brown, followed by the pledge of allegiance, led by Commissioner McPeters.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner McPeters made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Hollifield, to approve the March 9, 2015 Regular Session minutes as presented. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Commissioner McPeters made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Hollifield, to approve the agenda as amended to include a proclamation for child abuse month and to add an item regarding veterans transportation. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.

BUDGET UPDATE AND FINANCE MATTERS AND AMENDMENTS

The County Manager presented several finance related items for the Board to consider.

Mr. Abernathy reviewed a building inspection fee that is being requested to be waived since it is a county building, non-collectible EMS bills, an occupancy tax fee waiver, budget amendments, the amendment of the Universal project budget, and the close out of several school funds, the establishment of a project budget for the jail/courthouse project, to establish a policy regarding segregation of duties, and the addition of a fee for newly purchased equipment in the soil and water department.

Commissioner McPeters stated that he liked the option of doing a consent agenda type format in order to handle routine items such as those presented by the County Manager. Mr. Abernathy did present the budget amendments for review:

GF 35 - This amendment recognizes additional state funding for a tire clean-up. We are transferring to the Enterprise Fund to handle the expenses.

GF 36 - This amendment transfers funds within the Public Works Department. The amount is small but we are required to have your approval on any amendment involving travel.

GF 37 - This amendment allocates additional Sheriff's Department Jail revenue and primarily involves computer and camera connections to State functions.

GF 38 - This amendment transfers funds within DSS. The primary issue involves shifting funds from the attorney's salary (there is a vacancy) to attorney contract labor.

GF 39 - This amendment allocates the loan proceeds from capital purchases previously approved.

GF 40 - This is the amendment addressing self-insurance. The amendment transfers salary and benefit dollars and puts the fund in alignment.

CP 41 - This amendment recognizes a slight overage in expenditures. The county pays Champion rent for the towers that are rented.

UENT2 - This amendment addresses the Universal Enterprise Fund and the expenses incurred and re-categorized to pay for the MTCC operations.

ENT 2 - This amendment recognizes additional revenue in the solid waste enterprise fund.

911 F2 - This amendment allocates funds from the 911 Fund to cover certain expenses.

Commissioner McPeters motioned, seconded by Commissioner Hollifield, to approve the finance-related items including the budget amendments. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

SALE OF PROPERTY

The County Manager presented a resolution that would agree to sell two parcel of property on Forest Lake Heights that was previously discussed. Mr. Steven Gentry had submitted a bid for \$197,430 for the parcels with no upset bids.

Mr. Abernathy also mentioned that the county had previously received a parcel located in The Arbor subdivision for the purpose of locating a water intake. Once it was determined that site would not be suitable for an intake, it was determined that the lot should be return due to the reversion clause in the deed.

Commissioner Hollifield motioned, with a second by Commissioner Brown, to authorize the sale of the property on Forest Lake Drive for \$197,430 and to return the property in The Arbor to Mr. Oscar Vasquez. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

LIBRARY PRESENTATION

Library Director Elizabeth House presented several updates to the Board regarding the operations of the McDowell County Public Library. She noted that the library had upgraded its offerings in the last several years by joining several consortiums that provide more materials for the library's users.

She pointed out to the Board that many of the duties of the library staff involve more than just checking out books. Many of the duties involve assisting patrons with job searches and research. Ms. House noted that almost all of her statistics have increased quite a bit over the past year.

Ms. House also noted that a generous anonymous donor had provided funds to help with the carpet replacement in the Old Fort branch. She also noted that one project that she would like to explore would be an outreach program that provide materials to home-bound patrons.

A general discussion of the importance of the library to the community followed. Ms. House also expounded on the concept of the home service.

Mr. Abernathy noted that the carpet cost would be approximately \$12,000-15,000 total. The County Manager noted that he would contact the donor to let him know that the county would proceed with the replacement in July, which would allow time to schedule the equipment to move the book stacks.

911 CENTER UPGRADE

Emergency Services William Kehler presented a request to the Board to implement a fifth emergency dispatching station in the 911 Center. He noted that the facility currently is maxed out at times when there is a significant emergency event. He added that at one time there were seven answering stations in three different facilities and now there are four answering stations. He stated that the fifth station would help to meet some of the peak demand needs that exist during certain situations. All of the funds to do the upgrade would be covered by the 911 Fund except for the installation of power for the station. The approximate cost would approximately \$72,000.

Mr. Kehler also noted that the county had applied for grant funds to purchase radio consoles for a total of five stations. He stated that the radio consoles were purchased used from Transylvania County in 2010.

Commissioner McPeters suggested that perhaps the old consoles could be used at the high school emergency service program.

Commissioner Crawford motioned, with a second by Commissioner Brown, to authorize the purchase of the fifth dispatching console. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

TEXTING AND DRIVING RESOLUTION

Sgt. Kevin Owens presented on the problem of distracted drivers. He noted that texting is a large percentage of the problem, but there are other problems such as talking on the phone, eating, and other problems that take the focus off of the road. Sgt. Owens showed the Board a phone that was owned by a teenager that was killed in McDowell County several years in an accident caused by texting.

The Chairman thanked Sgt. Owens for the eye-opening statistics. The County Manager stated that the county channel could show the slide show and any public service announcements that may help to address the important issue.

JAIL AND COURTHOUSE UPDATE

The County Manager informed the Board that the jail and courthouse project is still proceeding. He noted that the Local Government Commission had not yet approved the financing, but should in May. Mr. Abernathy also noted that the county's chief building inspector had reviewed items in the courthouse that had been highlighted by the grand jury report. He noted that the report was very honest and the maintenance department had already addressed several of the items.

Commissioner Crawford motioned, with a second by Commissioner Brown, to approve the resolution and the interlocal agreement. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

FALSE ALARM ORDINANCE

The County Manager presented the False Alarm Ordinance for consideration by the Board. The ordinance had been recommended for approval by the Planning Board.

Commissioner Crawford motioned, with a second by Commissioner Hollifield to approve the False Alarm Ordinance. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

PUBLIC HEARING FOR CDBG CLOSEOUT

Paula Kempton from Isothermal Planning and Development Commission presented the information regarding the Scattered Site Housing Project. She noted that five houses were rehabilitated and eight homes received urgent repairs.

The Chairman declared a public hearing in order to hear comments about the grant. There were no comments from the public or by board members.

Commissioner McPeters motioned, with a second by Commissioner Hollifield to go out of public hearing. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

The County Manager informed the Board that Ms. Kempton was moving to another organization. He thanked her for her service to the people of McDowell County over the years.

Commissioner Hollifield motioned, with a second by Commissioner Brown, to close out the Scattered Site Housing CDBG project. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

TAX MATTERS

The County Manager presented the monthly tax releases, rebills, and refunds.

A summary of the tax matters:

MV Releases Under \$100.00	Released amount of \$309.79
Releases Over \$100.00	Released amount of \$1,142.19
Releases Under \$100.00	Released amount of \$201.64
Refunds	Refund amount of \$2,120.54
The NCVTS Pending Refund report showed a refund total of \$1,504.54	
Tax Write-offs	Write-offs total of \$5,954.98

Commissioner McPeters motioned, with a second by Commissioner Hollifield, to approve the releases, rebills, and refunds. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

ROAD ABANDONMENT

The County Manager presented a request from NCDOT to abandon a portion of Valley Street in Marion in order for the City of Marion to assume maintenance of the road.

Commissioner McPeters motioned, with a second by Commissioner Crawford, to approve the resolution abandoning Valley Street as described. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

WI-FI AGREEMENT

The City asked that the County pull a proposed interlocal agreement for WI-FI service.

PROCLAMATION FOR CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

The Department of Social Services had requested that the Board adopt a proclamation that states that April is Child Abuse and Neglect Awareness Month.

Commissioner McPeters read the proclamation aloud for those present.

Commissioner McPeters motioned, with a second by Commissioner Brown, to approve the proclamation as presented. By unanimous approval the motioned carried.

NATIONAL MOTTO COMMITTEE

Dr. Ron Baity from the US National Motto Committee presented a request from his committee that the Board consider placing the national motto 'In God We Trust' on the County Administration Building.

Dr. Baity noted that his committee had worked with counties for approximately 15 years to have the motto placed on the administration building.

Commissioner Hollifield stated that he was behind the signage on the administration building and possibly the courthouse. Commissioner Brown shared his agreement and suggested he would be OK with it being placed in the Commissioners Board Room. Commissioner McPeters stated that he was 100% behind the proposal. Commissioner Crawford stated he was definitely behind the proposal and thought it was important to maintain God's place in the community.

Commissioner Hollifield motioned, with a second by Commissioner Brown, to place the motto on the administration building, in the commissioners board room, and the examine the possibility of having it engraved on the face of the courthouse. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

Dr. Baity thanked the Board for their action and stated that he looked forward to working with McDowell County.

CITIZEN COMMENT

There was no one who wished to speak.

SENIOR HOUSING PRESENTATION

James Jones from Alliance Engineering presented information regarding the possibility of developing senior housing in the county.

Mr. Jones stated that his firm could be involved in evaluating sites for senior housing in the county. His team would analyze the economics of whether a project would work in McDowell County, where a site should be located, and the level of care. Mr. Jones reviewed several of the projects he and his firm have worked on in the past.

The County Manager noted that there had been prior outreach efforts to secure additional senior housing options with little success. He added that he was working with several different possible funding partners to provide funding to offset the cost of funding the assessment.

The Chairman asked county staff to bring more information back to the Board for consideration in the future.

SENIOR TRANSPORTATION UPDATE

Alan Mainer addressed the Board to update them on a recent initiative to improve transportation for veterans. He updated the Board on the recent \$20,000 grant that was awarded to purchase transport for veteran to the VA hospital. His organization has been able to make several vehicle upgrades due to the receipt of the grant. Mr. Mainer provided a telephone number for veterans that they can call to schedule rides. The number will be advertised on the government channel.

Commissioner McPeters expressed his appreciation for the program and for the veterans that it serves. Chairman Walker praised Mr. Mainer for the record-keeping that his organization does and its transparency.

REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

There were none to report.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to transact at this time, upon motion by Commissioner McPeters and a second by Commissioner Hollifield, the meeting was adjourned to April 20, 2015 at 11:30.

DAVID N. WALKER
CHAIRMAN

ASHLEY R. WOOTEN
DEPUTY CLERK TO THE BOARD