

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF MCDOWELL COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR SESSION – AUGUST 14, 2017**

Assembly

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Monday, August 14, 2017, at 5:00 p.m., in the Commissioner's 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; and Matthew Crawford.

Members Absent

Lynn Greene

Others Present

Ashley Wooten, County Manager; Cheryl Mitchell, Clerk to the Board

Call to Order

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

Approval of Minutes

Vice Chair McPeters made a motion to approve the July 10, 2017 Regular Session minutes as presented, second by Commissioner Brown. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.

Approval of Agenda

Chair Walker called for any additions or deletions to the agenda. He then requested adding as item G. Health Department as a standalone operation.

Commissioner Crawford made a motion to approve the agenda with additional item, second by Vice Chair McPeters. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.

Tax Collection Settlement and Order of Collection

Ms. Linda Onufrey, Tax Collector, presented the 2016-2017 fiscal year tax settlement for 2016 McDowell County property taxes and district taxes as required by Statute 105-373. Ms. Onufrey reported the collection rate for property taxes (combined) was 99.22%, a .10% increase over last fiscal year. Vehicle tax was 100% collection rate.

Mr. Wooten added the percentage spoke well to the staff and the professionalism of the department.

Ms. Onufrey presented an Order of Collection for authorization. The order authorizes the department to collect all taxes for 2017-2018 using the legal means available to the department.

Vice Chair McPeters made a motion to approve the tax collection settlement and Order of Collection, second by Commissioner Crawford. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.

NCDOT Transportation Update

Mr. Wooten noted the Board had discussed regional and stand alone transportation models in previous meetings. He added it was very difficult to capture the county cost of transportation due to different departments charging various rates. He asked NCDOT for their cost analysis, and they advised they were unable to attend this month, but could come to next month's meeting.

Chair asked if it would be beneficial to move forward with stand alone model, pending funding from the state. Mr. Wooten advised another month would give staff time to develop policy and procedures. It would also allow the NCDOT time to present how they can assist the county in reaching stand alone status. The regional department wants what is best for the county, and is willing to work with the county at a later time if needed.

Commissioner Crawford made a motion to proceed with stand alone transportation system pending funding from the state for 2018, second by Commissioner Brown. Discussion followed. It was noted the Transportation Board is very supportive of a standalone operation. By unanimous vote, the motion passed.

Overview of Morris Broadband Services

Mr. Wooten introduced Anthony Carter, from Morris Broadband, to give a presentation on their services. In 2009 Morris Broadband began services in Nebo. They are in the process of updating their services to go all digital coverage. Their focus is on getting better service to existing customers before expanding the coverage area. Discussion followed on coverage area and areas with no coverage. The Board desires countywide coverage to allow students internet coverage in their homes in order to operate their chrome books.

Universal Property Planning

Mr. Wooten gave the background of the Universal property purchase, and then recognized Chuck Abernathy, MEDA Director; and Mike Lovoy, with A.C.E. Engineering to discuss potential uses and layouts of the property. They proposed to construct two access roads to three planned industrial sites on the Universal Property. They would apply for an Appalachian Regional Commission grant for \$1.5 million to cover the cost of the roads. Other potential uses of the property involved adding intermediate trails with recreational sites with educational value, since 70% of the property is undevelopable. Currently there are 3.2 miles of beginner trails. The road construction is projected to be completed by fall of 2018.

Discussion followed in regards to potential uses of the property.

Chair Walker thanked Mr. Abernathy and Mr. Lovoy for the presentation.

Workforce Pipeline Update

Chair Walker recognized Mr. Jerry Broome, Director of NC Works, to provide an update of the Workforce Pipeline Committee. He noted the committee is comprised of representatives of the school system, community college, community leaders, and employers. He added the goal was to develop and implement strategies for improving the labor pool for local employers.

McDowell County is 3rd in the state of percentage of its workers in manufacturing, which is 39%. Currently the county unemployment rate is 3.8%. The committee is working on a strategic employment plan.

Mr. Broome announced the McDowell County Workforce Pipeline Committee will be receiving the 2017 Governor's NC Works Awards of Distinction as an "Outstanding Innovative Partnership" at an awards ceremony later this year.

Chair Walker expressed the Board's support for the committee, and their appreciation to Mr. Broome for the update.

Health Department Update

Karen Powell, RPM District Health Director, gave an update on the Environmental Health section, specifically well and septic permits. She noted there were approximately 73 waiting applications due to being short staffed in the county. Due to the retirement of an employee, and another one leaving the agency, the department has gotten behind on the permits. Certification takes one year for an employee to be able to permit by themselves. Ms. Powell has brought in three people on the weekend that can usually do 7-10 permits per weekend. There are also two retired employees that are helping to catch up. Ms. Powell has requested assistance from Rep. Josh Dobson to get permission for a 30 year inspector who recently retired, to come back and be able to make inspections on his own, without shadowing for one year. Discussion followed on salaries for inspector positions, and contractors having to go inside the health department on Fridays. Ms. Powell will look into moving staff around to cover the area on Friday, to eliminate having the contractors go to the health department main lobby.

Vice Chair McPeters made a motion to draft a resolution to house and senate legislation, and Governor Cooper, to revisit the process to re-qualify retired personnel, second by Commissioner Brown. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.

Shooting Range Update

Mr. Wooten advised the Board that staff had met with NC Wildlife, and the adjacent property owner to discuss the shooting range proposal for the Ashworth Road property. NC Wildlife will be conducting additional sound tests. He noted there would be a public meeting hosted by the NC Wildlife in the next few months to receive public comments about the proposal. The date will be advertised when it is made available.

Commissioner Brown requested staff to keep contacting NC Wildlife until a date has been set.

Greenway Update/Contract

Mr. Wooten presented the proposal for services from McGill Associates for Phase 3 of the Catawba River Greenway. The proposal included design of the park, floodplain modeling

and associated work that would be necessary. The total for the park site for design, permitting, and construction administration is \$52,220. The additional work that would be needed for further extensions is \$36, 210, for a total of \$88,430.

Commissioner Crawford made a motion to approve contract for proposed \$88,430 to McGill Associates, second by Vice Chair McPeters. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.

Fire Protection Ordinance

Mr. Wooten reminded the Board at last month's meeting they had reviewed the proposed Fire Protection Ordinance, and had asked the Planning Board to review the ordinance. The Planning Board unanimously recommended it's approval, the county attorney recommended adding to the violation a reminder that violations of county ordinances are Class 3 Misdemeanors.

Commissioner Crawford made a motion to approve the Fire Protection Ordinance including the language of Class 3 Misdemeanor, effective immediately, second by Vice Chair McPeters. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.

Watershed Reclassification Update

Since the Environmental Management Commission approved the reclassification of Lake James effective on July 1, 2017, the Watershed Ordinance now needs to be updated. McDowell County, Burke County, and the City of Marion have until March 2018 to make the changes.

Mr. Ronald Harmon, Planning Director, asked the Board to issue a charge to the Planning Board to propose amendments to the Watershed Ordinance and map in order to comply with the reclassified area.

Commissioner Crawford made a motion to have the Planning Board propose amendments to Watershed Ordinance to comply with the reclassification area, second by Commissioner Brown. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.

NC226 South Sewer Interlocal Agreement

The Board previously agreed to support the sewer extension along NC 226 South from the City's sewer plant to the site of the proposed hotel at the interstate intersection. Mr. Wooten presented the interlocal agreement. The city will bid the work, and will invoice the county this fiscal year and next for the local match. The extension will allow county buildings to connect to the city sewer system.

Commissioner Brown made a motion, second by Vice Chair McPeters, to approve \$114,150 over two year period for expansion. By unanimous approval, the motion passed.

Stand- Alone Health Department

Chair Walker asked staff to look into the feasibility of a stand-alone health department. The Board had received several requests from the public to look into the possibility of the county having their own health department.

Commissioner Brown made a motion to have a study done on seeing if feasible to have a stand-alone health department, second by Vice Chair McPeters. By unanimous vote, the motion passed.

Mission Health/Blue Cross Update

Since McDowell County employees are covered under Blue Cross, and several county residents have Blue Cross, there has been a lot of interest in the contract dispute between Mission Health and Blue Cross Blue Shield of NC. Staff is looking internally to identify ways to reduce impact to employees, if the dispute is not resolved by October 5th. Blue Cross is still in effect until October 5th. Mr. Wooten recommended a letter from the Board to both organizations urging an amicable resolution to the contract negotiations.

Commissioner Brown made a motion to allow staff to draft a letter and send to both parties, second by Vice Chair McPeters. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.

Administrative Items

Mr. Wooten presented a list of EMS write offs due to clients being deceased and no estate for collection. The total non-collectible charges was \$7,309.85

Commissioner Crawford made a motion to write off accounts, second by Commissioner Brown. By unanimous vote the motion carried.

Next, Mr. Wooten presented bid approvals for vehicles to be purchased off of state contract for one Ford Transit Van for NC State Extension; one Ford Escape for Building Inspections; and one Ford Explorer for Administration. Included in the financing package is also a request from EMS to purchase six Revel Ventilators. The total amount to be financed is \$171,021.55, for four years at 2.2% interest through BB&T.

Commissioner Crawford made a motion to approve financing bid and Resolution Approving Financing Terms, second by Commissioner Brown. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.

Tax Matters

Mr. Wooten presented the elderly exemptions request. The following filed late due to the fact they were unaware of the June 1st deadline.

Violoa S Briggs	Terry McGinnis	Teddie Lail
Elizabeth Creson	JB Suttles	Troy Elliott
Rosa Williams	Grady Elliott	David McPeak

He also presented a request for late listing fee waiver for a business listing, and an exemption for New Prospect Church Cemetery; Arbor Property Owners Assoc.; and Waterglyn Property Owners Assoc.

Releases, Refunds, & Write-offs	
MV tax refunds	\$ 1,155.32
Releases under \$100	\$ 497.58
Releases over \$100	\$ 49,790.22

Discoveries	\$ 14,199.44
Refunds	\$ 154.92

Commissioner Crawford made a motion to approve all tax matters, second by Commissioner Brown. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.

Board Appointments

Chair Walker presented the vacancy on the Adult Care/Nursing Home Advisory Board. Don Ramsey applied as a reappointment.

The Industrial Facilities and Pollution Control Financing Authority Board had five asked for reappointment of the five members and the clerk to advertise for the two vacancies.

By written ballot the Board voted unanimously for Don Ramsey to the Adult Care/Nursing Home Advisory Board; and Robert Boggs, James Condrey, Butch Justice, Kathy Rabb, and David Wooten, to the Industrial Facilities and Pollution Control Financing Authority Board.

Citizen Comment

Dawna Ledbetter of West Marion Community Forum—spoke on the need for public transportation

George Johnson—reclassification of water discussion

Susanne Johnson—spoke on cost of insurance for shooting range; one million gallons of water in reclassification seems like a lot during a drought; septic tanks being properly inspected

Trevor Bingham—broadband discussion

Bob Barnes—need water in Nebo, odor from the septic plant, and build water treatment facilities

Reports and Communications

Mr. Wooten announced a Closed Session meeting on Monday, August 21st at 5pm for the purpose of interviewing a candidate for the Tax Assessor position.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to transact at this time, upon motion by Commissioner Brown, second by Commissioner Crawford, the meeting was adjourned to August 21, 2017 at 5:00pm in the Commissioner's Board Room.

DAVID N. WALKER
CHAIRMAN

CHERYL L. MITCHELL
CLERK TO THE BOARD