

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF MCDOWELL COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR SESSION – AUGUST 8, 2016**

Assembly

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Monday, August 8, 2016, 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; Van "Randy" Hollifield; and Matthew Crawford.

Others Present

Ashley Wooten, County Manager; Cheryl Mitchell, Clerk to the Board; and, Theresa Strickland, Public Information Technician (Filming).

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

Commissioner Hollifield made a motion to approve the June 30, 2016 Called Session, the July 11, 2016 Regular Session, and the July 18, 2016 Adjourned Session minutes and, approve and seal June 30, 2016 Closed 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. There were none.

Vice Chair McPeters made a motion to approve agenda as prepared by staff, second by Commissioner Crawford. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.

Recognition of Teacher and Principal of the Year

Chair Walker expressed his appreciation to the teachers of the county school system. He added the Board of Commissioners had budgeted over the next four years to increase the teacher supplements for certified staff. The increase would make salaries greater than the surrounding counties, with exception of Buncombe. Chair Walker then recognized Supt. Mark Garrett for presentations.

McDowell County School Supt. Mark Garrett recognized Ms. Carrie Franklin as Teacher of the Year, and Ms. Lisa Robinson as the Principal of the Year. Ms. Franklin teaches K-1-2 at Glenwood Elementary. Ms. Robinson is the principal at McDowell Early College.

Chair Walker presented certificates to Ms. Franklin and Ms. Robinson on behalf of the Board of Commissioners. Ms. Robinson and Ms. Franklin expressed their appreciation to the Board for the recognition.

Chair Walker declared a brief recess for pictures.

NCACC Youth Summit Attendee

Mr. Chad Ray, 4-H Youth Development Extension Agent, introduced Maranda Schill, a local 4-H'er who will be attending the NCACC Youth Summit as a representative of McDowell County.

Ms. Schill spoke about her 4-H experiences, and stated she is a member of the 4-H Ride It Club.

Chair Walker expressed his appreciation for the 4-H youth program, and congratulated Ms. Schill on her successes and willingness to attend the summit. Chair Walker then called for a brief recess for pictures.

Tax Collection Settlement, Order of Collection and Reappointment

Ms. Linda Onufrey, Tax Collector, presented the 2015-2016 fiscal year tax settlement for 2015 McDowell County property taxes and district taxes as required by Statute 105-373. Ms. Onufrey reported the collection rate for property taxes (combined) was 99.12%, a .5% increase over last fiscal year. Vehicle tax was 100%. Chair Walker praised the Tax Department on their work; noting this was the highest that had ever been achieved in the county. 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 2016-2017 using the legal means available to the department.

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

Mr. Wooten stated Ms. Onufrey's position as Tax Collector was up for reappointment. Staff recommended her reappointment for a four-year term.

Commissioner Hollifield made a motion to reappoint Linda Onufrey four more years as McDowell County Tax Collector, second by Commissioner Brown. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.

The Board expressed their appreciation to Ms. Onufrey and her staff for the outstanding job her department does each day.

Annual Job Fair and Workforce Pipeline Update

Chair Walker recognized Mr. Jerry Broome, Director of NC Works, to provide an update on the Annual Veterans and Community Job Fair to be held Thursday, August 11, at Universal Advanced Manufacturing Center.

Mr. Broome stated of the 42 employers who will be represented at the fair, 40 were looking for employees. He encouraged the public who were looking for a job, to come to the job fair.

Mr. Broome also provided an update on 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. He stated a couple of employment issues our county faces are 1) lack of skills for entry level, and 2) lack of skills for technical jobs. Manufacturing certification classes started in 2014, addresses those issues. The class is graded on attendance, punctuality, and willingness to work. Long term goal of the committee is working with middle school students, and encouraging them to be productive in the county.

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

Zoning Ordinance Amendment Public Hearing

The Chairman declared the meeting in public hearing session in order to receive comments regarding a zoning ordinance amendment.

Mr. Wooten noted the Planning Board had voted unanimously to recommend that solar farms be added to the use by right section of the General Business District. Solar farms by nature fit into the described uses in this district, which is in the PG area.

Discussion was held by the Commissioners. There were no comments from the public.

Vice Chair McPeters made a motion to go out of public hearing, second by Commissioner Crawford. By unanimous vote the motion carried.

Commissioner Crawford made a motion to approve the text amendment allowing solar farms be put in General Business District in Pleasant Gardens community, second by Vice Chair McPeters. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.

Water Bid Approvals

Mr. Wooten noted at the July meeting the Board approved an increase in the local funding to \$300,000 for the Harmony Grove Road Water Project. The US Forest Service agreed to pay \$60,000 to serve their facility on Lawing Drive. The Appalachian Regional Commission had indicated they would award the remaining \$232,703 to fund the project. Mr. Wooten recommended awarding the project to Cooper Construction with their bid of \$862,703.

The other bids were: Stillwell Enterprises - \$897,844.00;
Davis Grading, Inc - \$973,682.00;
Buckeye Bridge, LLC - \$985,220.50;
Iron Mountain Construction Company, Inc.- \$1,398,300.00.

Commissioner Crawford made a motion to enter bids into minutes and award bid to Cooper Construction in the amount of \$862,703, second by Vice Chair McPeters. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.

Courthouse Project Update

Mr. Wooten reported the holding cells and elevator work were complete, and the lower courtroom renovation would be completed in September. Staff is working with the Clerk of Court addressing juror chairs, and refinishing the current bench seats that will be used in the lower level courtroom.

Mr. Wooten noted the architect, Holland-Hamrick and Associates, had met with staff several times on the office design for the buildings next to the Administration Building. The current plan is to move the Register of Deeds operations to that renovated space, which would free up their current office for the District Attorney.

A surveyor will begin to map the administration building and property to lay the groundwork for the architectural drawings.

Board Appointments

Chair Walker presented the second reading for a vacancy on the Adult Care/Nursing Home Advisory Board. Leah Robertson applied as a reappointment. The vacancy was advertised in the newspaper, and there were no additional applications.

Vice Chair McPeters made a motion to approve the reappointment of Leah Robertson to the Adult Care/Nursing Home Advisory Board, second by Commissioner Brown. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.

The Focal Point Advisory Committee was presented as a first reading by Chair Walker. One application had been received from David Setzer. Vice Chair McPeters asked for the Adult Care/Nursing Home Advisory Committee to be advertised again, due to the death of a committee member.

Chair Walker called for a brief recess to set up video for the next presentation.

McDowell Tourism Authority Update

Chair Walker recognized Ms. Carol Price, Director of the Tourism Development Authority for an update on the agency. Ms. Price noted the occupancy tax for 2015 was \$385,000. She noted the office had relocated on Catawba Ave, beside the Mountain Gateway Museum which had increased foot traffic for the office. She gave highlights of the advertising and website upgrade. Chair Walker noted Lake James is now ranked #10 as one of the best lakes in the nation. Ms. Price added there were 400 tourism jobs in McDowell County.

National Park Service 100th Anniversary/Blue Ridge Parkway Update

Chair Walker welcomed Ms. Leesa Brandon, Public Information Officer with the Blue Ridge Parkway. She gave an overview of the Parkway's history, economic impact, and future. Supt. Mark Woods also spoke on the tourism of the Blue Ridge Parkway, and noted it was the most visited park in the nation. He added that August marks the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service.

Chair Walker asked the Board to consider a resolution in recognition of the National Park Service Centennial anniversary, and have the recognition in the media for their August 25th anniversary date.

Commissioner Brown made a motion to adopt a resolution, second by Commissioner Hollifield. By unanimous vote the motion carried.

Chair Walker called for a brief recess for photos.

Transportation System Discussion

Mr. Wooten gave an update on the transportation study and distributed a transportation cost breakdown provided by the consulting firm. The estimated breakdown showed: 1) stay as-is, with transportation being done with DSS staff would be an annual total of \$375,000; 2) establish a new transportation department, \$70,000-\$275,000 annual total; or 3) contract with established transportation system, Western Piedmont, \$48,000-\$65,000 annual total. Discussion was held on cost of assessable vans currently in use by the DSS, increasing trips for residents, and improvement of transportation services.

Commissioner Brown made a motion to go ahead and make partnership with Western Piedmont, second by Commissioner Crawford. Chair Walker noted the Commissioners would review the contract with specifics and if needed would make any changes. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.

Tax Matters/Refund Request

Mr. Wooten presented a request for a property tax refund due to a clerical error of incorrect total house square footage listed. Overpayment for the last 20 years was requested.

Commissioner Brown asked for copy of records, if available to see where the error had occurred. Mr. Wooten noted the permit records were so old they were no longer available.

Commissioner Crawford made a motion to go back five years for a total of \$1800, second by Commissioner Brown. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.

Releases, Refunds, & Write-offs	
MV tax refunds	\$ 1,081.86
Releases under \$100	\$ 516.31
Releases over \$100	\$ 7,141.64
Discoveries	\$ 1,865.36

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

Planning Board Ordinance Revision

Mr. Wooten advised there was an inadvertent sentence that was added in the Planning Board Establishment Ordinance that was revised a couple of months ago. The previous practice had been to seat alternates if a full member was absent. The new revision only allows them to be seated to make a quorum, which was not the intention.

The Planning Board requested the text be corrected so that alternates would continue to serve in a full member's absence.

Vice Chair McPeters made a motion to approve request, second by Commissioner Crawford. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.

Citizen Comment

No one in attendance wished to speak.

Reports and Communications

Commissioner Brown requested a formal letter be sent to state Legislature, and the Wildlife Commission in support of a shooting range.

Mr. Wooten noted the NCACC Conference would be held August 11-14 in Winston Salem. Commissioners Hollifield and Crawford, Mr. Wooten, and Ms. Mitchell are scheduled to attend.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to transact at this time, upon motion by Commissioner Brown, second by Vice Chair McPeters, the meeting was adjourned.

CHERYL L. MITCHELL
CLERK TO THE BOARD

DAVID N. WALKER
CHAIRMAN