

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

ASSEMBLY

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Monday, February 8, 2016, at 5:00 p.m., at the County Administration Building, 60 E Court Street, Marion, North Carolina.

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

OTHERS PRESENT

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

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman 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, second by Commissioner Brown, to approve the January 11, 2016 Regular Session minutes as presented. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Commissioner Hollifield ask to add purchase of a new building to the agenda.

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

LIVESTOCK JUDGING TEAM RECOGNITION

Greg Anderson, Ag & Natural Resources Extension Agent with NC State Cooperative Extension, introduced the 4-H Junior Livestock Judging Team. The team recently competed in the NC State 4-H Livestock Judging Contest and was crowned State Champions. Team member Hannah Ellis was the State Champion Individual, winning high point honors in the junior division. The team was first place in judging swine, meat goats, oral reasons, and first overall.

The Board expressed their appreciation to the students for their hard work and commitment in achieving the Championship.

FOREST SERVICE PLAN DISCUSSION

Mr. Wooten spoke on the National Forest Plan Revision process in regards to the wilderness designation. He explained the revision law requires road less areas to be evaluated for designation as wilderness. He stated there are four areas in our county to be considered, Mackey Mountain, Jarrett Creek, Dobson Knob, and Woods Mountain.

Nicholas Larson, with United States Forest Service advised the public could give their input on the wilderness area on their website. He also stated hunters and fishermen would still have access if designation was made. Mr. Larson stated the revision is required every 10-15 years, and does not mean an area will be recommended to Congress for the designation. Commissioners asked Mr. Larson questions in regards to the revision plan, and stated they would like to see the mountains more accessible for recreational access.

Commissioner Hollifield made a motion to adopt a resolution that we would disagree with the position of designated areas that have been indicated as wilderness area, second by Commissioner Brown. By unanimous vote, motion carried.

Chair Walker announced a brief recess at 5:42. Board went back in session at 5:48 pm.

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS AND BUDGET UPDATE

Budget Update

Mr. Wooten stated he had given a draft budget calendar to the Commissioners, if there were any concerns over the dates to let him know.

Budget Amendments

GF 24 – Allocates donated funds, 911 fund reimbursement and makes transfer between line items in Emergency Services.

GF 25 - Allocates asset forfeiture and unallocates inmate housing in the Sheriff's Office.

GF 26 — Transfer funds between line items in Tax Assessing.

GF 27 — Transfer funds to the Universal Enterprise Fund for electricity for American Plastics.

Vice Chair McPeters made a motion to approve GF 24-27, second by Commissioner Crawford. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.

Senior Center Fee Waiver

Mr. Wooten presented a request from the McDowell Senior Center for waiver of rental fee for Anwer Gillani. He stated Mr. Gillani would like to host a thank you dinner for McDowell law enforcement, emergency personnel and first responders that assisted with the Thanksgiving Day meals. Mr. Gillani will cover the costs for catering and cleaning up.

Commissioner Brown made a motion, second by Commissioner Hollifield, to grant the request from Mr. Gillani for Senior Center rental fee waiver. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.

AUDIT PRESENTATION

The county's independent auditor Kathy Atkinson from Johnson Price and Sprinkle, and April Westmoreland, chief auditor presented a detailed overview of the county's FY 2014-15 independent annual audit as required by the State of North Carolina.

Ms. Atkinson reviewed several specific items of interest related to the various funds. She stated that she felt it was a very good audit report. She added that the fund balance percentage was healthy and stable as well. She praised Ms. Alison Morgan and her staff, Mr. Wooten, and Mr. Abernathy for their cooperation in preparing the report.

Mr. Wooten spoke on the excellent job Ms. Morgan and her staff does each and every year. He also expressed his appreciation to JPS.

Vice-Chair McPeters made a motion, second by Commissioner Crawford to approve the audit as presented. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.

TAX COLLECTOR ITEMS

Ms. Onufrey presented the listing of taxpayers who are delinquent and requested authorization to place notice of Unpaid Real Property Tax Liens in the McDowell News. She stated the listing would publish Wednesday, April 6th. She advised she would send an advertising notice to the delinquents, and advised payment could be made up until day before publication. The quote for the advertisement was \$4,472.50

Commissioner Crawford made a motion, second by Vice Chair McPeters to set the close date of April 6th and authorize advertisement in the paper for quote presented. By unanimous vote, motion carried.

Commissioner Brown brought up discussion on tax foreclosure auctions. Ms. Onufrey stated bidding starts for the taxes owed and attorney fees, any revenue goes to the state if there are no verifiable claimants to the sale proceeds.

Commissioner Brown made a motion to seek a resolution from Sen. Hise and Rep. Dobson to look into this procedure for us, second by Vice-Chair McPeters. Commissioner Hollifield stated he was the Board representative for the NCACC, and he would bring this suggestion to NCACC for consideration. By unanimous vote, motion carried.

ELECTION UPDATE

Kim Welborn, Elections Director, gave an update on the upcoming March 15 primary election early voting locations, times, and voter ID requirement.

Commissioners expressed appreciation to Ms. Welborn for the update.

JAIL/COURTHOUSE PROJECT UPDATE

Mr. Wooten gave a report on construction at both facilities:

Jail:

- *Continuing with block work
- *Installation of duct work, conduit and sewer line
- *Brick and mason work will continue as weather permits

Courthouse:

- *Work is still ongoing with installation of elevator and most work is inside
- *Staff looked at six different sites to hold court during the renovation; settled on old House Theatre. Lease would be \$4,000 a month, including utilities and insurance for Monday-Friday, 8:00am-5:00pm. County would be responsible for setting up the equipment each week on Monday at 8:00am, and moving out on Friday at 5:00pm.

Chair Walker ask for the project architect to be at the next BOC meeting with suggestion of possible sites for court during renovation. Mr. Wooten stated he has a meeting with the architect in a week, and he would also have him attend next month's meeting. After discussion, Chair Walker stated the Board was in consensus for Mr. Wooten to continue on with logistics of leasing the theatre, and after meeting with the architect, a decision will be made.

SHOOTING RANGE UPDATE

Mr. Wooten stated he had spoken with Mr. Hamlett with NC Wildlife, who stated he and Mr. Ron Harmon, and several others had visited a potential site for the shooting range. Mr. Wooten stated he has also received letters of support for the shooting range from several agencies.

Commissioner Brown stated potential sites are not near residential areas.

DREXEL SITE UPDATE/INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT

Mr. Wooten stated the City has received the \$500,000 grant for clean up and remediation of the Drexel Furniture property. City and county will share the benefits, costs, and risks of the project 50/50. Mr. Wooten stated if the costs and or risks outweigh any potential gain, the city and county can back out of the project. If the CDBG funds are expended, funds would have to be repaid if the project is not carried out to completion.

Vice-Chair McPeters made a motion to approve interlocal agreement between the county and the City of Marion concerning the Drexel Heritage property, second by Commissioner Brown. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.

PARTF UPDATE

Mr. Wooten presented an update on the greenway. He stated staff had met with Kate B. Reynolds Trust and the City of Marion to discuss financial participation to offset the required \$293,000 match. Mr. Wooten stated the city has indicated they would be favorable to contributing toward the greenway. He also stated the design and construction would not begin until funding was in place.

Commissioner Brown made a motion, second by Vice Chair McPeters to send formal letter to City asking \$45,000 toward Phase 3 of the greenway. Discussion was held. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS

Chair Walker presented as a second reading the reappointment of Mr. Dean Buff to the Isothermal Planning and Development Commission.

Commissioner Hollifield made a motion to reappoint Mr. Buff to the Isothermal Planning and Development Commission, second by Vice-Chair McPeters. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.

Chair Walker stated there was a planning board vacancy due to the death of a member; this being the first reading no action will be taken.

Mr. Wooten presented a vacancy on the Region C Workforce Development board. This being the first reading, no action was taken.

TRANSPORTATION STUDY CONTRACT

Mr. Wooten presented an agreement between NCDOT, the county, and an outside consultant, for a transportation study. He added there would be a small county match of \$7,000 that would be met with DSS funds. The estimated project cost is \$72,688. Mr. Wooten will request the consultant attend a future Board meeting to give details of how the study will be conducted.

Commissioner Crawford made a motion to approve transportation study contract, second by Commissioner Hollifield. By unanimous vote, the motion carried

MCDOWELL TECH EXEMPTION

Mr. Wooten stated the City of Marion had transferred property to McDowell Technical Community College. The college did not file their application for exemption timely and ask that it be considered for 2015.

Commissioner Hollifield made a motion to approve exemption, second by Commissioner Brown. By unanimous vote, motion carried.

DUKE ENERGY EASEMENT – UNIVERSAL PROPERTY

Mr. Wooten stated he had a request from Duke Energy to allow the installation of a power transformer for the American Plastics operation in the Universal building.

Commissioner Brown made a motion to let Duke Energy have permission for easement for power transformer for American Plastic operation, second by Commissioner Crawford. By unanimous vote, motion carried.

OFFICE SPACE RENTAL FOR FOOTHILLS WEATHER NETWORK

Mr. Wooten stated he had a request from a small weather forecasting company, Foothills Weather Network, to relocate in McDowell. Mr. Wooten proposed to lease space in the Admin Annex (approximately 300 square feet) for \$300 a month.

Vice-Chair McPeters made a motion to approve the lease agreement, second by Commissioner Hollifield. By unanimous vote, motion carried.

SHERIFF'S OFFICE RECORD RETENTION SCHEDULE

Mr. Wooten stated the State Archives had sent the Sheriff's Office Schedule for board approval and review. He stated Sheriff Greene had reviewed and approved the document.

Commissioner Hollifield made a motion to approve, Vice-Chair McPeters second. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.

TAX MATTERS

Releases, Refunds, & Write-offs

Write-offs/Deceased	\$ 2997.14
Refunds	\$ 1254.15
MV tax refunds	\$ 1048.16
Releases under \$100	\$ 185.72
Releases over \$100	\$ 2115.66

Vice-Chair McPeters made a motion to approve all releases and refunds, second by Commissioner Hollifield. By unanimous vote, motion carried.

BUILDING PURCHASE

Mr. Wooten stated he had identified needs for additional space, since the Admin Building is at capacity. He stated he would like to look at options for more space and bring back recommendations to the Board.

Commissioner's consensus was to look into purchase of building for more space and report back at next month's meeting.

REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Wooten stated numerous staff had worked extra hours during Winter Storm Jonas and he expressed his appreciation to them.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ramona Bryson spoke in opposition to the memorandum of understanding in regards to the development of a National Recreation Area.

Susan Johnson spoke on concerns of the proposed shooting range.

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.

DAVID N. WALKER
CHAIRMAN

CHERYL L. MITCHELL
CLERK TO THE BOARD