

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF MCDOWELL COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING – JUNE 18, 2018**

ASSEMBLY

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met in Public Hearing on Monday, June 18, 2018, at 5:00 p.m., at the County Administration Building, 60 East Court Street, Marion, North Carolina.

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

OTHERS PRESENT

Ashley Wooten, County Manager, Cheryl Mitchell, Clerk to the Board; Alison Bell, Finance Officer

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Walker declared the Board in Public Hearing pursuant to NCGS 159-12.

Mr. Bill Bach asked the following questions:

- Why was there a reduction of \$273,000 in the County Administration?
The Planning Dept and HR department were removed and are now stand alone departments
- TDA—
County collects occupancy tax and pays TDA 97%, keeps 3% for bookkeeping
- Human Services- any places could look at cutting he thinks the Board should cut
- Event Center how much toward the center--
\$20,000 line item under Economic Development
- Believes a tax increase is needed

Mr. Paul Bartlett asked:

- Why a property tax increase was needed, due to a lot of businesses and new restaurants opening.

Commissioner Brown agreed while the county is experiencing growth, the county is also facing new expenses such as a new school in Old Fort, a third courtroom in the Courthouse Renovation Project, and constructing a new EMS building.

- Why is the Board helping private industry such as the Event Center? The new hospital will generate tax income why a tax increase.

The new hospital should generate \$200,000 two years from now; a tax increase is needed now.

Chairman Walker noted he was committed to no new taxes and was very hesitant, but stressed there was no other way, and understands Mr. Bartlett's concern.

Commissioner Greene asked what was needed to balance the budget from fund balance, and was told approximately \$500,000. He noted the Board could not continue to spend funds out of fund balance in order to balance the budget. He added to be competitive in the workforce salaries also needed to increase.

- Is it a good time to buy another building??

Yes, the Register of Deeds needs a building, and the District Attorney needs the Register of Deeds building. The estimated costs to move the Register of Deeds was more than the cost of the building.

- The county is overrun with trails-- there is plenty to do for the youth.

- A former renter moved to Universal and was given 2 months free rent- hurt his income.

Commissioner Brown noted the renter asked MEDA for space at the Universal building because he needed more room. Universal income is \$100,000 over expenses.

- Surprised no one is present to speak out against the tax increase. He is 70 years old and still working and pays \$14,000 in City and County taxes. He hasn't increased rent at some locations in 20 years.

Vice Chairman McPeters noted the tax rate was lowered several years ago and it shouldn't have been. Commissioner Brown agreed the tax increase was necessary. Chairman Walker added 1 ½ cent of the increase is for the courthouse renovation, and the county was losing money on the landfill.

- Mr. Bach asked could there be a sales tax increase put on the ballot in November?

Chairman Walker advised a decision by the Board would have to be made soon in order to get the item on the November election ballot. He added the sales tax could go toward the Old Fort Elementary construction, and the new EMS building. A ¼ cent sales tax increase would be approximately \$850,000.

There were no other comments.

Commissioner Brown made a motion to go out of Public Hearing, second by Commissioner Greene. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.

Mr. Wooten advised the Board would meet with the Fire Commission, Thursday, June 28th at 6:00pm. They would also meet on Friday, June 29th at 11:30am for budget amendments and other matters.

Commissioner Greene made a motion to adjourn to June 28th, second by Commissioner Brown. By unanimous vote, the motion was adjourned.

DAVID N. WALKER
CHAIRMAN

CHERYL L. MITCHELL
CLERK TO THE BOARD