

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF MCDOWELL COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR SESSION – MARCH 9, 2015**

ASSEMBLY

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Monday, March 9, 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; and Matthew Crawford; and Van “Randy” Hollifield.

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 Crawford, followed by the pledge of allegiance, led by Commissioner Brown.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Commissioner Hollifield made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Brown, to approve the agenda as presented. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.

BUDGET UPDATE AND FINANCE MATTERS AND AMENDMENTS

The County Manager presented a resolution to donate several items from the County to McDowell Tech entitled ***RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING DONATION OF PERSONAL PROPERTY TO NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION***. The equipment was formerly located at the Sheriff’s Office.

Commissioner Crawford motioned, seconded by Commissioner McPeters, to approve the transfer via the resolution. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

Mr. Abernathy also presented a water bill adjustment from Jordan Baker for \$76.74.

Commissioner McPeters motioned, with a second by Commissioner Brown, to approve the bill adjustment. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

The County Manager and Finance Officer also presented a list of budget amendment that he requested be approved:

GF 22 - This amendment transfers the excess benefits line-items to the self insurance fund plus funding from the ED Reserve fund. You will see additional amendments on this account.

GF 23 - This amendment receives donations for 4-H.

GF 24 - This amendment transfers funds for training within the department for the Elections Department.

GF 25 - This amendment allocates donated funds.

GF 26 - This amendment transfers \$700.00 in public works between line-items.

GF 27 - This amendment carries forward funds reserved last fiscal year in the Register of Deeds. The funds make repairs to books.

GF 28 - This amendment allocates grant proceeds primarily in the Library but also a small amount in Soil Conservation.

GF 29 - This amendment reduces several expense line-items in DMV so that we could call in help from another location due to the short-staffed situation.

GF 30 - This amendment allocates additional transportation grant funding.

GF 31 - This amendment receives additional DSS revenue and allocates the revenue.

GF 32 - This amendment receives additional Senior Center revenues.

GF 33 - This is the “flip-side” of the previous Public Works amendment.

Commissioner McPeters motioned, with a second by Commissioner Crawford, to approve Budget Amendments GF 22-33. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

Mr. Abernathy also presented a brief overview of the property tax collections and sales tax collections through the end of February 2015. He noted that revenues were currently in the black, but the sales tax amount received so far are fairly tight.

EMERGENCY SERVICES UPDATES

Emergency Services William Kehler addressed the Board concerning several items, including approving purchase of an ambulance. Mr. Kehler presented the following bids for an ambulance:

Select Custom Apparatus of Falkland, NC -	\$162,009
Northwestern Emergency Vehicles of Jefferson, NC -	\$169,593.43
Precision Rescue Vehicles of Arden, NC -	\$172,704

Commissioner Crawford motioned, with a second by Commissioner Brown, to accept the bids as presented and to award the low bid to Select Custom Apparatus for their bid of \$162,009. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

Mr. Kehler also presented bids for the tower repeater. He recommended that the Board approve the proposal submitted by High Country Communications for their equipment package in the amount of \$40,869.23.

Commissioner Crawford motioned, with a second by Commissioner Hollifield, to authorize the procurement of the equipment for the repeater tower provided by High Country Communications for the bid amount of \$40,869.23. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

The Finance Officer presented financing bids for the purchase of four sheriff vehicles, the ambulance, and the repeater equipment. The low bid was BB&T at a rate of 1.67% for a period of four years. The sheriff vehicles are to be purchased off of state contract. Other financing bids were:

Asheville Savings Bank -	3.50%
Bank of America -	Responded with not at this time
PNC -	No response
Fifth Third -	No response
Wells Fargo -	No Response
Suntrust Bank -	2.16%
First Citizens Bank -	Responded with not at this time
Capital Bank -	No response
Carolina Alliance -	1.70%

Commissioner Hollifield motioned, with a second by Commissioner McPeters, to approve the *Resolution Approving Financing Terms* for the financing of the four sheriff vehicles, the ambulance, and the repeater. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

Mr. Kehler also presented a request to contract with the Black Mountain Fire Department to cover the High Rock Acres development in southwestern McDowell County. Currently the development is covered by the Crooked Creek Fire Department, which is quite a bit distant from the their location. Black Mountain Fire Department is willing to contract to provide the service.

Commissioner McPeters motioned, with a second by Commissioner Brown, to approve the contract with Black Mountain Fire Department to provide fire protection service to the High Rock Acres development. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Wooten provided an overview of the board appointments for the month. He noted that there were three applicants for the McDowell County Board of Trustees. The applicants were James Gorst, James Washburn, and William Bach. After reviewing the ballots as marked by the commissioners, Mr. Wooten noted that Mr. James Washburn had been appointed to the Board of Trustees.

The County Manager presented the following proposed committee list for the Transportation Planning Committee:

Ronald Harmon - McDowell County
 Steve Bush - McDowell Chamber
 Jim Hamilton/Krista Engle - RHA
 Will Thomas - McDowell County Schools
 Heather Cotton - City of Marion
 Beverly Watts - McDowell Tech
 David Walker - Chair County Commissioners
 Jerry Broom - Job Link
 Danny Hampton – Freedom Life Ministries
 Bill Warren - Retired McDowell Missions
 Joy Shuford - Retired Foothills Industries
 Terry Evans - McDowell DSS Transportation Supervisor
 Lisa Sprouse - Director McDowell DSS
 Tim Blenco - YMCA
 Weyland Prebor - McDowell Senior Center
 Brian Oliver - McDowell County Schools
 Ashley Wooten - Assistant County Manager

Commissioner Hollifield motioned, with a second by Commissioner McPeters, to approve the Transportation Planning Committee membership as presented. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

GOLDEN LEAF UPDATE

The County Manager presented an update on the Community Based Grantsmaking Imitative grant. The concept had been to submit a grant for establishing an engineering program at the Universal Advanced Manufacturing Center and to provide some money to grade a building site at the Universal property.

Mr. Abernathy noted that representatives from Western Carolina University's engineering program had recently been present to hear a presentation from local officials. The reception from WCU staff had been positive, according to the County Manager. He stated that the design of the program might be more of a "2 + 2" program where students do some work at McDowell Tech first and then transfer to WCU's campus.

Commissioner Crawford stated that he thought such a setup would be positive for the community college. Commissioner Brown echoed Mr. Crawford's statement that he thought it would be a good thing for the community.

WATER SYSTEM UPDATES

The County Manager updated the Board on the status of the Lake James reclassification process. He noted that the city had approved the 10/70 resolution earlier in the month. He stated that now the state would take the lead on the process.

Chairman Walker noted that once the reclassification process takes place, the lake would be a protected resource for years to come. He urged his fellow board members to share their appreciation with the city council for their support.

Mr. Abernathy also noted that the county has planned to extend a water line to the Exit 90 interchange. He noted that there was a \$100,000 grant in hand, with another \$300,000 grant likely to be awarded in May. He also noted that the \$60,000 to be received from Crescent Resources for the easement on the former Hendrix farm would be applied toward the construction cost.

The County Manager also provided a brief update on the Universal Water Line project. He noted there is a \$130,000 grant in hand that can be applied to a business expanding in the building.

PLANNING BOARD ITEMS

The County Manager presented a draft false fire alarm ordinance for review. He asked the Board to bring back comments and to consider approving it at the April meeting.

The second item concerned the regulation of unsafe, dilapidated structures (including burned structures). He noted that there is a cumbersome statute process that can be utilized, but he recommended that the Planning Board examine the issue and bring a recommendation back the Board of Commissioners.

Commissioner McPeters noted that he had seen several examples that could be dealt with such an ordinance.

Commissioner Crawford motioned, with a second by Commissioner Hollifield, for the Planning Board to examine the issue of abandoned, dilapidated, etc. structures. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

JAIL – COURTHOUSE MATTER

The Chairman declared the meeting into public hearing for the purpose of receiving comments on the proposed financing of improvements to the jail and the courthouse.

The County Manager provided an overview of the jail and courthouse renovation projects.

Mr. Abernathy noted that the construction bids were as follows for the Courthouse:

GEM Constructors	\$947,373
HM Kern	\$951,800
Blue Ridge Enterprises	\$968,000

He noted that GEM was the low bidder. An additional \$25,000 for asbestos removal and \$11,000 for floor removal would be added to the project as well as a 10% contingency.

The County Manager then reviewed the jail bids:

GEM Constructors	\$1,545,021 + Alternate 1 \$267,108
Blue Ridge Enterprises	\$1,554,000 + Alternate 1 \$272,000
WC Construction	\$1,778,582 + Alternate 1 196,600
Hickory Construction	\$1,733,000 + Alternate 1 \$297,000

He stated that the courthouse project bid was \$2,944,802, including a 10% contingency. He noted that total jail project bid was \$1,866,729 including a 3% contingency. Architect fees are \$250,000 and legal is \$10,000. The total project cost is \$3,204,802.

County staff is proposing to use \$250,000 of county general fund balance, \$250,000 of jail revenue fund balance and to finance the balance of \$2,704,802.

The Finance Officer presented the financing bids. The lowest bid was BB&T at 2.62% over 15 years with 30 semi-annual payments. The other bids were:

Asheville Savings Bank -	Term issue
Bank of America -	No response
PNC -	Responded with not at this time
Fifth Third -	No response
Wells Fargo -	No Response
SunTrust Bank -	2.96%
First Citizens Bank -	Responded with not at this time
Capital Bank -	Term issue
Carolina Alliance -	No response

Sheriff Greene reminded the Board why the project was initiated, primarily being the overcrowding in the female area. He also added that there had been security and access needs at the courthouse.

Chairman Walker asked if anyone in the public wished to speak. No one else present requested to address the Board on the financing proposal.

Commissioner McPeters motioned, with a second by Commissioner Crawford, to close the public hearing. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

Mr. Abernathy also provided an estimate he had obtained for constructing of a new courthouse to replace the existing structure. The cost for a 45,000 square foot building would be at least \$11 million. Several commissioners noted that they had heard higher costs to do a replacement structure.

Mr. Abernathy noted several items that will be examined or addressed in the next few months including sealing the parking deck, evaluating a third courtroom, remodeling of the basement court room, and an evaluation of the heating and cooling system.

Commissioner Crawford motioned, with a second by Commissioner Hollifield, to enter the bids into the minutes, to award the low bid for both projects to GEM Construction, to approve the *Resolution Approving Financing Terms*, and to approve the resolution for the Local Government Commission. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

The Chairman thanked the sheriff for his work on the project and patience.

The County Manager also presented a proposal to do a feasibility study on the third courtroom by Holland & Hamrick Architects.

Commissioner McPeters motioned, with a second by Commissioner Hollifield, to approve the proposal by Holland & Hamrick. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

KEEP McDOWELL BEAUTIFUL & VOLUNTEER CENTER UPDATE

Director Gloria Burrow presented an update of her offices activities. She thanked the sheriff for filling the environmental enforcement officer with Ronnie Harvey. She noted that the Lake James Cleanup is scheduled for March 14. The event will be held in conjunction with agencies in Burke County. She also added that April 18 would be the annual Earth Day Celebration, with the location to be determined.

Regarding the Volunteer Center, she noted that April is National Volunteer Month. There will be a countywide volunteer fair on Thursday, April 9 from 4 – 7 pm at the McDowell High School Auditorium. She also invited the Board to the Volunteer Awards Ceremony on April 23 at 6pm. She said that there were six Governor’s Awards Winners and one Governor Medallion Winner.

She presented a proclamation to the Board for their approval. Chairman Walker read the proclamation aloud.

AGING IN PLACE PRESENTATION

Senior Center Weyland Prebor presented an overview of a recent study on the aging population of McDowell County. He noted that currently approximately 25% of the population was over the age of 60. He added that by 2023, the percentage would be closer to 30%.

The survey noted that there are several needs identified by seniors including affordable housing, transportation, adult day care, assisted living centers, and medical needs.

Several of the assets that were noted were quality of life, quality of health care, and emergency services among others.

Mr. Prebor noted that his agency and others are working to address several of the needs identified in the report.

Commissioner Hollifield asked Mr. Prebor to define exactly what was meant by affordable housing. Mr. Prebor noted that there were several types of housing that could be utilized to meet the need, including apartment communities.

The County Manager communicated several items that were of interest to him including senior housing, the respite care item, and the transportation. Mr. Prebor noted that he would work to find a consultant for the senior housing need.

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 \$44.12
MV Releases Over \$100.00	Released amount of \$319.36
Releases Under \$100.00	Released amount of \$185.59
Releases Over \$100.00	Released amount of \$791.99

The NCVTS Pending Refund report showed a refund total of \$1,013.63

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

FOREST SERVICE UPDATE

County Ranger Scott Ellis introduced his program to the Board and noted that his staff have a wide variety of forest-related activities, including fire suppression, and forestry planning. Mr. Ellis introduced Greg Smith, the district ranger over eight counties.

Mr. Smith mentioned a few items of interest to the Board. He suggested that the county ranger truck would need to be replaced very soon. Accordingly, he said he was going to ask for more local funds to help with that purchase. Mr. Smith also overviewed the numerous assets based at the McDowell office.

A general discussion of the surplus vehicle followed with Mr. Smith noting that he could not direct the vehicle to a county since it is state surplus property.

CITIZEN COMMENT

No one requested to speak.

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 Crawford, the meeting was adjourned.

DAVID N. WALKER
CHAIRMAN

ASHLEY R. WOOTEN
DEPUTY CLERK TO THE BOARD