

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
COUNTY OF MCDOWELL COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
BUDGET REQUEST AND PRESENTATION – MAY 30, 2019**

**ASSEMBLY**

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met in Special Session on Thursday, May 30, 2019, at 8:30 a.m., at the County Administration Building, 60 E Court Street, Marion, North Carolina.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

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

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Barry McPeters

**OTHERS PRESENT**

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

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Walker called the meeting to order at 8:30am.

**FIRE DEPARTMENT REQUEST**

**Marion**

Mr. Bob Boyette, City Manager, presented a request for a 0.02 cent increase for the Marion Fire Department. The additional increase will go toward additional fire personnel. The current Marion Area tax is 0.06 and the request would put the fire tax at 0.08 cents. The Marion Fire Department serves the City of Marion as well as a service district that encircles the City called the Marion Area, which is covered by the service district tax.

**Old Fort**

Chief Ron Richardson, Old Fort Fire Dept. (OFFD) presented a request for a fire tax increase. The OFFD also serves the Town of Old Fort and a service district around the Town call Old Fort County. The Town of Old Fort does not provide funding to OFFD. Town residents pay 0.04 cents and out of Town/County residents pay 0.06 cents. The request was to increase to 0.06 cents inside Town and 0.09 outside the Town.

Consensus of the Board was to hold a budget workshop to review both requests.

Chair Walker called for a brief recess at 8:55am. The Board was declared back in session at 9:00am.

**BUDGET PRESENTATION**

The County Manager presented an overview of the budget process. He noted he and Ms. Bell

had met with the department heads and several external agencies over the last few months to develop the proposed 2019-2020 budget.

Mr. Wooten presented an overview of the accomplishments for fiscal year 2019. Some of those were:

- A new Transit Department began operating July 1<sup>st</sup>. Staff and the Transportation Advisory Board are working to enhance the operation with new vehicles and routes.
- Construction on Phase III of the Catawba River Greenway was started in the spring. A new Trails Committee from the County, City and McDowell Trails Association meet monthly to discuss ongoing and future trail projects.
- The Board started holding a regular meeting each month with the DSS Director. Also, the County Manager and DSS Director meet bi-monthly with the supervisors.
- The Courthouse Renovation project continued through the year. The renovation should be complete in the next fiscal year.
- The Board authorized an expenditure of funds in order to expedite the construction of access roads on the Universal property.
- The Register of Deeds office was relocated to a building on Fort Street. The relocation provided space in the courthouse for the District Attorney's office.
- Human Resources, Finance, and Administration moved to the Administration Annex in the Senior Center building. The vacated space in the Admin Building was used by Tax Assessing, Tax Collection, IT, and Planning Departments.
- The Board leased the former Planet Fitness building for the Board of Elections.
- The Charters of Freedom documents were placed on the Courthouse lawn, as well as the relocation of the flagpole and the war memorial. Entrance to the lawn was also made handicap accessible.
- The Facility Maintenance and Public Works departments were combined under the umbrella of Public Services. The move will improve collaboration between the departments.

Mr. Wooten presented a county comparison chart noting the following:

- McDowell County employs 32 fewer employees than the average
- McDowell County budgets \$10,510,564 fewer dollars than the average.
- McDowell County tax rate is 12.42 cents below the average.
- Property tax revenues are \$7,083,605 below the average.
- Average General Expenditure per Capita is \$210.25 below the average.

The fiscal year 2020 budget priorities were:

- Increase public education funding
- Improve public safety through investments in Emergency Services and Sheriff's Office
- Recruit and retain skilled county staff
- Improve county facilities
- Invest in community and economic development

The new expenditure impacts:

Public Education	\$330,701	
Public Safety	\$303,300	
County Facilities and Equipment	\$663,316	
County Organization Improvements	\$607,195	(includes a 3.75% COLA)
Community and Economic Development	\$465,723	

Mr. Wooten noted the local education funding continues to increase. The proposed budget would increase \$2,807,098 or 6.58%. The proposed General Fund property tax rate would stay the same at 0.5875 cents per \$100.

The neutral property tax rate was 2.31%. There was no proposed fund balance appropriated for 2019-20. The debt service percentage was .56%.

Vice Chair Brown would like to see the Board address the increased needs in Human Services and Public Safety since they are both so closely related. Expenditures in Public Safety are 24%, and Human Services is 26% equaling half of the \$45,442,843 budget.

Mr. Wooten noted there would be a Budget Public Hearing at the next Regular Session meeting on Monday, June 10<sup>th</sup> at 5:30pm.

Chair Walker noted the Board would review the budget recommendation. A line item budget request would be sent to the Board electronically.

After discussion the Board decided to meet for a budget workshop on June 6th at 8:30am.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to transact at this time, upon motion by Vice Chair Brown and a second by Commissioner Greene, the meeting was recessed at 9:58am to June 6<sup>th</sup>, at 8:30am.

Attest:

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DAVID N. WALKER  
CHAIRMAN

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CHERYL L. MITCHELL  
CLERK TO THE BOARD