

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
COUNTY OF MCDOWELL COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
REGULAR SESSION – JANUARY 12, 2015**

**ASSEMBLY**

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Monday, January 15, 2014, 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” Hollfield.

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

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Commissioner McPeters made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Crawford, to approve the December 1, 2014 Regular Session minutes as presented. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

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

**BUDGET UPDATE AND FINANCE MATTERS AND AMENDMENTS**

Mr. Abernathy presented an update on the county’s expenditures and revenues through this point in the fiscal year. He pointed out that the sales tax report and the property tax report were being displayed on the screen. He explained the type of sales tax revenues and some of the restrictions of that revenue. He went into a little more depth in regards to the property tax revenue as well. He provided an explanation of the real and personal property and motor vehicles. He stated that the anticipated collection for both was about \$135,440 more than what was budgeted. He said he would prefer that the number be higher in order to provide more of a cushion for budgeting for

next year's budget. He stated that he would provide an overview of the remaining revenues for the next few months.

Finance Officer Alison Morgan presented a list of non-collectible EMS accounts that she requested be written off by the Board.

Commissioner McPeters motioned, with a second by Commissioner Hollifield, to authorize the write-off of the non-collectible accounts. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

Mr. Abernathy presented a list of budget amendment that he requested be approved:

GF 10 - This amendment receives the loan proceeds that the Board has previously approved that allowed for the purchase of a Building Inspection vehicle.

GF 11 - This amendment adds \$514.00 to the Jury List line item in the Clerk of Courts budget. Programming changes were required and the funds are amended from Court Officer Fees.

GF 12 - These amendments pertain to Emergency Services. The donations are routine. The Equipment Purchase and Fund Balance Appropriation are also routine.

GF 13 - This amendment rolls forward restricted revenue for the Register of Deeds and went towards the purchase of equipment.

GF 14 - This amendment involves the Sheriffs Department. On the expense side he has various vehicles and physical fitness equipment. The Execution Amendment is an "in and an out." The \$40,000 is received as revenue and is expended as required by law.

GF 15 - This amendment involves waste collection. These funds are restricted and roll forward from the previous year. The funds were used to repair cardboard dumpsters.

GF 16 - This amendment involves DSS matching funds.

Amendment 911 – Transfer funds from the capital line item to other line items.

Commissioner McPeters motioned, with a second by Commissioner Crawford, to approve Budget Amendments GF 10-16 and 911. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

## **WATER SYSTEM UPDATE**

The County Manager presented a brief overview of the extension of the water line to the Exit 90 interchange area. A \$100,000 grant from the NC Department of Commerce has been awarded and the county is waiting on information from the federal Appalachian Regional Commission on the award status. He stated that there are funds in the current budget to pay for a portion of the project in this budget year.

He also discussed the water filtration plant project. He noted that the planning process is very involved and involves many different state and federal agencies. He stated that a big component of the process is the adoption of resolutions of support and approval for the reclassification of the lake as a drinking water source. He noted that the adoption of the WS-IV classification would involve some regulation of private property in Burke County, the City of Marion and unincorporated McDowell County. He stated that the preference of the county would be to transfer development rights from the national forest to the City of Marion properties.

Chairman Walker explained that the development of the water treatment plant is to provide for a long-term drinking water solution for the county. He noted that the development of the plant is not in reaction to any City action and is not to be viewed as a negative reaction to that organization.

Mr. Harmon provided more detailed information about the developmental rights transfer. Mr. Abernathy noted that the goal of the county is to limit any impacts by transferring the rights to the national forest.

### **PRESENTATION BY MCDOWELL HOSPITAL**

The Chairman recognized interim McDowell Hospital CEO Bob Bednarek who provided an overview of the proposed developments at their property.

Mr. Bednarek introduced Bobbie Young, chairman of the Board of Trustees for the McDowell Hospital. She recognized the board members and the members of the hospital foundation board.

Past Board president Harold Walker provided an overview of the project via PowerPoint presentation. He noted that the facility has many functional deficiencies that need to be addressed. He also noted that the type of care has changed at the facility with the vast majority of the patients being of the ambulatory nature.

He noted that there had been an evaluation of renovating in place, relocating to a new location, or building a new facility on the current property. Renovating the current facility would cost approximately \$32 million, while constructing a new facility would be approximately \$35 million. After evaluating all the options, he noted that the best option seemed to be building a new facility onsite.

Mr. Walker noted that the focus of the new facility would be for less impatient rooms, which would reflect the actual usage.

Mr. Walker noted in response to Chairman Walker's question that the new facility would be open while the new facility is constructed. Commissioner Crawford stated that he felt that the construction of the facility so close to the current facility would certainly be felt by the staff and patients. Mission staff noted that the current entrance would be moved to the rear of the building during construction.

The proposed footprint of the property is approximately 25,000 for the hospital facility and 14,000 for the medical offices, according to Mr. Walker.

Commissioner McPeters noted that he did not see any discussion of the behavioral health treatment in the proposed facility. Mission staff noted that there have been quite a bit of discussions at various levels in their organization on how to address the problem.

Commissioner Hollifield asked if the current facility could be retained and still build a new facility on the same property. Mission staff noted that the topography of the site and several other considerations made it difficult to site a building on other portions of the property.

Mr. Abernathy noted that there had been discussions and evaluation of using county property for a new facility, but the options do not seem to be there.

The Chairman stated that the Board was behind the McDowell Hospital and their plans. Mission staff noted that the employment numbers would probably stay similar to the current numbers, but may increase with the increase of the ambulatory procedures.

Mission staff noted that they are currently seeking additional physicians to serve the county.

### **EMERGENCY SERVICES MATTERS**

Emergency Services Director William Kehler presented various emergency service updates. He noted that it had been a longstanding practice to purchase a new ambulance each year. He requested that the Board authorize the bidding for a new ambulance that would be received in the next fiscal year.

Commissioner Crawford motioned, with a second by Commissioner Hollifield to authorize the bidding of a new ambulance.

Mr. Kehler noted that the county had previously participated in the development of a communications tower on Dobson's Knob with the purpose of establishing emergency radio transmission through that tower. If a repeater were to be installed on the tower, it would allow for increased radio transmission capability throughout the northern and southeastern portion of the counties.

Mr. Kehler displayed several maps showing the improved coverage that would result from the tower.

The County Manager requested that the Board authorize staff to bid the necessary equipment for the tower. Staff would bring the bids back to the Board.

Commissioner Crawford motioned, with a second by Commissioner Brown, to authorize the bidding of the tower equipment. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

Mr. Kehler also presented a request to study the idea of a false alarm ordinance request. He noted fire departments are required to respond to fire alarms and can only make a determination if it is a false alarm from on site. He noted the Fire Commission is behind the ordinance.

Commissioner Crawford motioned, with a second by Commissioner McPeters to forward the ordinance request to the Planning Board. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

### **DISCUSSION OF STREAM STABILIZATION/WATERSHED DAM LEGISLATION**

Soil and Water Conservation Board Chair Terry English who provided an overview of the erosion problem that exists at the Old Fort ballfields.

Mr. English introduced Jessica Hocz with the Mountain Valleys RC&D who has developed grant proposals to do work at the affected site. The proposal would involve eliminating the problem and would also have an enhancement with the possibility of a walking trail and fishing access.

Commissioner Crawford motioned, with a second by Commissioner Brown, to authorize the submission of the grant and to let the RC&D administer the grant if awarded. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

Mr. English came back to the Board and introduced Tyler Ross to explain the impact of dam safety impact legislation that arose due to the coal ash controversy. He noted that dam owners have until March 1, 2015 to provide the dam safety plans. Staff had developed a letter to send to Representative Dobson to request that the deadline be extended.

Chairman Walker commended Mr. Ross for his work in looking for an affordable solution to the problem.

Commissioner McPeters motioned, with a second by Commissioner Crawford, to submit a letter requesting a deadline extension. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

### **JAIL/COURTHOUSE BIDDING UPDATE**

Mr. Abernathy presented an updated jail and courthouse bidding schedule to the Board. He said he was aiming for a mid January advertisement, with an opening in late February. He added that he hoped to have bids approved at the March meeting with construction beginning in mid April.

### **CROOKED CREEK CONVENIENCE CENTER UPDATE**

The County Manager distributed a survey of the property that the County will purchase for the convenience center site. Mr. Abernathy noted that there had been many positive comments about the site development.

### **GREENWAY MASTER PLAN UPDATE**

Mr. Wooten noted that the County had previously adopted a countywide greenway master plan. He noted that it had not been updated in several years to reflect the development of greenways throughout the county. He noted that he had worked to update the document to keep it relevant for future planning.

After a general discussion of the positive progress of trail development, Commissioner McPeters motioned, with a second by Commissioner Crawford, to approve the updated trail masterplan. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

### **GREENWAY PHASE III UPDATE**

Mr. Wooten presented an overview of the proposed Catawba River Greenway Phase III project. He noted that he had been working with the contracted grant writer to develop a revised grant application that would assist in the construction of a greenway trail on the Catawba River Park on Old Greenlee Road. He also added that there were several amenities that were planned including picnic tables, horseshoe pits, a fishing pier, and a dog park.

After reviewing the project budget, Commissioner McPeters motioned, with a second by Commissioner Crawford, to approve the project as presented and to authorize the submission of the PARTF grant. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

### **MTCC LEASE FOR UNIVERSAL BUILDING**

The County Manager presented a simple lease agreement between the County and the College for the Universal Advanced Manufacturing Center.

Commissioner McPeters motioned, with a second by Commissioner Crawford, to approve the lease as presented. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

### **REVISIONS TO PERSONNEL HANDBOOK**

The County Manager presented a draft of the Personnel Handbook that had been developed by county staff and legal advisors. He noted that one of the main motivations in updating the plan was the incorporation of the Department of Social Services into the county organization. One major change that is proposed is a 24-month probationary period as opposed to 12-month probation for new employees.

Mr. Abernathy noted that the document had been extensively reviewed by county staff and a personnel law attorney.

Commissioner McPeters motioned, with a second by Commissioner Crawford, to approve the personnel handbook as presented. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

### **BOARD APPOINTMENTS**

Mr. Walker provided an overview of the board appointments for the month. He noted that there are three applicants for two planning board alternate positions.

Commissioner Crawford motioned, with a second by Commissioner Brown, to set a deadline of the Wednesday before the Commissioners meeting for committee applications. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

Commissioner Brown motioned, with a second by Commissioner McPeters, to table the Planning Board Alternate vacancies appointment. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

### **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 \$133.49
Releases Over \$100.00	Released amount of \$27,498.65

The NCVTS Pending Refund report showed a refund total of \$788.92.

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

### **ACCOMPLISHMENTS/ANNUAL REPORT**

The County Manager presented a draft annual report that will be posted on the county website. It highlights several of the major accomplishments of the organization over the past year including the Universal project, the middle school transition, and others.

The Board all voiced approval and support of the document and thanked staff for the effort.

### **CITIZEN COMMENT**

Bill Carroll from the Little Switzerland community spoke about his concerns regarding the road safety issues along NC 226A. Commissioner Hollifield asked Mr. Carroll to explain the issue, which he did. Commissioner Brown asked Mr. Carroll why he felt the county could do anything with a state road. The Chairman acknowledged that Mr. Carroll had a valid concern, but expressed his feeling that there is not much the county could do.

Mr. Abernathy relayed several of the conversations he has had with NC Highway Patrol and NCDOT.

The Chairman encouraged Mr. Carroll to contact elected officials in Raleigh.

### **REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS**

The County Manager presented a brief list of upcoming meetings. He mentioned that he would like to have a workshop for health insurance in the near future.

Mr. Abernathy also announced that he would plan to retire before the end of the summer. The Chairman noted no board member wants to see Mr. Abernathy leave the position, but they understand his desire to retire and to focus full time on the economic development department.

Each board member commented on Mr. Abernathy's service. The chairman noted that Mr. Abernathy had helped him grow as a commissioner over his years of service.

Commissioner McPeters expressed his appreciation for Mr. Abernathy as a boss when he worked at EMS and was supportive when he decided to run for county commissioner. He praised Mr. Abernathy for his conservative budgeting, his managerial approach, and his support of the employees. He added that he felt that the move to a full-time economic developer job would be extremely beneficial to the county.

Commissioner Hollifield said he would appreciate for Mr. Abernathy's hard work and his assistance in helping him in get his footing as a commissioner.

Commissioner Brown stated that he had a new appreciation for the role of the county manager and the hard work that Mr. Abernathy does each day.

Commissioner Crawford stated he was surprised by the news but he understood that Mr. Abernathy would be helping with the transition and would do well at the economic development office.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

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

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DAVID N. WALKER  
CHAIRMAN

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ASHLEY R. WOOTEN  
DEPUTY CLERK TO THE BOARD