

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF MCDOWELL COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR SESSION – MARCH 10, 2014**

ASSEMBLY

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Monday, March 10, 2014, at 5:00 p.m., Commission Board Room of the County Administration Building, 60 East Court Street, Marion, North Carolina.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Van Randy Hollifield; Joseph R. Kaylor; David N. Walker; Barry E. McPeters; and Michael K. Lavender.

OTHERS PRESENT

Charles R. Abernathy, County Manager; Ashley Wooten, Deputy Clerk to the Board; and Theresa Strickland, Public Information Technician (Filming).

CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Hollifield called the meeting to order. The invocation was given by Commissioner Walker, followed by the pledge of allegiance, led by Commissioner Lavender.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Walker made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Kaylor, to approve the February 10, 2014 Regular Session Minutes as amended by changing the mental health item. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.

BUDGET AMENDMENTS, RESOLUTIONS AND WRITE-OFFS

The County Manager presented an update on the county's expenditures and revenues through this point in the fiscal year.

The County Manager and Finance Officer presented the following budget amendments for the Board's approval:

GF 35 - This amendment transfers \$2,000 in the Elections Department budget to cover additional training for new members.

GF 36 - This amendment allocates \$83,000 additional federal dollars by DSS for energy allocation and day care.

GF 37 - This amendment allocates the funds approved at the February meeting for the foyer in the recreation department.

GF 38 - This amendment moves funds reported in the general fund balance for 911 to the 911 fund balance for the purpose of covering the 911 phone lines.

GF 39 - This amendment transfers funds from the Inmate Housing Reserve fund to cover the cost of transferring female inmates.

Amendment 911 F1 - This amendment would allocate funds out of the 911 Reserve for the software program and equipment.

The Finance Officer also presented a resolution entitled ***CLOSEOUT OF PROJECT FUND*** for the purpose of closing out project fund 46, which covered three school roofing projects.

Commissioner Walker made a motion, seconded by Commissioner McPeters, to approve budget amendments GF 35-39 and the closeout resolution. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

The Finance Officer also presented leak waiver requests for McDowell DSS, Spencer, and Rutherford, and a bill error write-off for Moore. Commissioner Lavender made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Walker, waivers and write-offs as presented. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

LEASE UPDATE AND RENEWALS

The County Manager informed the Board that there two leases that are up for renewal. He also presented a list of lease agreements where the county is leasing out county buildings or space to other entities. He presented the example of the rental space at the Senior Center in Marion as an instance where outside funds are assisting with debt payments.

The County Manager presented the lease agreement for the Probation and Parole Office on State Street. He stated the county is required to provide space for the offices at no cost.

Commissioner Lavender motioned to approve the lease renewal with NC Department of Public Safety as presented, with a second by Commissioner McPeters. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

The County Manager also presented a lease agreement with the dialysis provider in the Senior Center building. He informed the board that the initial rate was a discount lease in order to entice the provider to the county. The lease renewal would be at a 50% increase over

the current rate, or approximately \$15,000 more a year. He said the company had preferred a longer-term lease, but he is recommending a five-year term with a five year optional renewal. Commissioner Walker asked for clarification on the term. A general discussion of the benefits of the dialysis clinic for the county followed.

Commissioner Walker motioned to approve the lease renewal as presented, with a second by Commissioner Kaylor. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

SHERIFF VEHICLE FINANCING

The County Manager stated that each year the county budgets for four sheriff vehicles each year. The sheriff would like to purchase four Ford Interceptor vehicles on the state contract.

The Finance Officer presented the response to financing proposals in regards to the financing of four (4) 2014 Ford Interceptor Sedans. BB&T responded with a rate of 1.62% and for a period of four years (8) semiannual payments in arrears beginning September 2014. Wells Fargo and PNC also responded with unfavorable repayment terms. Bank of America, Fifth Third, SunTrust, First Citizens, and Capital Bank did not respond to the RFP.

Commissioner Walker motioned to approve the financing resolution and the low bid as presented with a second by Commissioner Lavender. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

SOFTWARE FOR 911 COMMUNICATIONS AND UPDATE ON COMMUNITY CARE PARAMEDIC

The County Manager presented a brief overview of the 911 Fund to the Board and explained that the funds are limited in use. Approximately \$250,000 is deposited in the fund each year to be used for approved expenses.

Emergency Services Director William Kehler requested from the board that they approve the purchase of software that would be installed on the 911 Center dispatch units. The software provides instructions for the telecommunicators on how to respond to specific emergencies. Most surrounding counties use the software. He also stated that the 911 Board in Raleigh has approved the software for purchase by 911 funds. The local 911 Advisory Committee is also supportive of the purchase.

Commissioner Lavender motioned, with a second by Commissioner Kaylor, to authorize the purchase of the software for the 911 Center, and to amend the budget with budget amendment 911 F1. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

Mr. Kehler also presented an update on the community care paramedic program that was funded by the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust. He stated that the program has been very successful in helping reduce costs to patients and health care providers.

There were several comments from Board and the County Manager stating support for the program and its benefits. Mr. Kehler said that the goal of the program is to make sure each patient is provided the adequate care he or she needs.

RECREATION UPDATE

Recreation Director Susan Huskins presented a proposal to stage an afterschool program at the Recreation Center for youths primarily in sixth, seventh, and eighth grade. The program would run from the afterschool period to 6 or 6:30 pm. There would be structured homework help, recreation time, and community assistance programs. The program could be extended into the summer as well. An approximate enrollment would be 40 students.

The County Manager indicated that there has been some preliminary interest from parents in the age groups. He said that Kate B. Reynolds staff has heard about the proposal. He said there would be an expectation from the parents and youth that they would participate and contribute to the program.

Commissioner Lavender asked several questions concerning transportation and anticipated participation rates, and whether there might be a conflict with an existing program at the YMCA. He voiced general concerns about attracting students into the programs.

A general discussion of the benefits of the program followed, as well as a discussion of the cost of the program. The County Manager stated that the idea of packaging the physical improvements to the facility with the afterschool program would be the goal in applying for a Kate B. Reynolds grant.

Commissioner Lavender reiterated that he felt the program should be innovative in order to be supported by the Kate B. Reynolds organization as well as drawing interest from parents.

The County Manager stated the program is in its initial design and comments from the Board are appreciated. The Chairman said he felt that there was enough consensus from the board to move forward with planning of the program.

Ms. Huskins provided a brief update on the physical improvements that have taken place throughout the county in the past year due to the Kate B. Reynolds funding. The Chairman told Ms. Huskins he was impressed with the changes that have been made to the department's facilities.

The County Manager briefly discussed the proposal for the development of a softball McDowell Business League similar to the industrial league in years past.

By consensus the planning for the afterschool program will commence.

JAIL RENOVATION UPDATE

Sheriff Dudley Greene provided an update to the Board on progress that has been made regarding the jail expansion and courthouse renovations. He indicated that there has been a review of preliminary plans. He also indicated that there have been some federal law changes that apply to juvenile offenders. He said they must be housed in an area segregated from the adult population. In order to comply with the law, the jail plans must be altered. There were also some alterations that would need to be made in the courthouse renovations to improve prisoner flow. These alterations would cost approximately \$119,500 more than what had previously been discussed.

In response to Commissioner Lavender's question regarding which gender would be using the space, the sheriff indicated that the primarily be used for male juveniles. It could be used for females if there were no males in the space. If the space were not available for females, arrangements would be made in order to comply with the law.

There was a general discussion of the timing of the work and how long the project would be delayed.

Commissioner Kaylor made a motion, with a second by Commissioner McPeters, to revise the jail and courthouse design and to move forward. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

FACILITY BASED CRISIS CENTER

Genny Pugh of the Smoky Mountain Center was present to discuss a proposal to establish a Facility Based Crisis Center to serve Alexander, Caldwell, and McDowell counties to update the Board on the progress on the project since the February meeting. She felt that the Center might not be able to make the funding application deadline of March 14 due to number of decisions that needed to be made by the three counties.

Ms. Pugh provided an update on the discussions she has had with the three counties about capital contributions, operating expenditures, and other pertinent information. She stated that there is strong community support from the McDowell Hospital and local law enforcement.

She also stated that the funding picture has improved since the last presentation. The funding from NC Housing Finance could be up to \$750,000 and the building estimates have decreased as well. The projection would be for McDowell and Alexander to provide \$50,000 each with \$200,000 from Caldwell. The funder will not allow an application without funding commitments from the local partners.

She stated that sixty percent of the patients that are utilizing the emergency department at the McDowell Hospital have no means of payment, which she said shifts those costs to other consumers. Ms. Pugh stated that her agency is trying many different means to divert patients from the hospital if they could be treated at another facility in the community.

Commissioner Walker asked about the property that was being sold that formerly belonged to Foothills Area Mental Health. The County Manager had spoken with the county

manager of Alexander County who told him there might be funds available from the sale of property that could be used for the project. Commissioner Lavender explained why there was property to be sold. Commissioner Walker suggested that the funding from those sales be accessed as soon as possible for the crisis center. The County Manager felt that the funds would arrive in the current fiscal year.

The County Manager stated that there were quite a few problems facing the county, the hospital, and law enforcement regarding this area. He said there were various options for reducing costs, especially the center proposed for Caldwell County.

The Chairman recognized Dottie Cooper from McDowell Hospital who explained the large amount of cost in time and money to the hospital related to patients in the behavioral health category. Ms. Cooper stated that her hospital would benefit greatly if some of these patients were diverted to more appropriate facilities.

Commissioner Walker asked the sheriff if he had any ideas for ways to keep the money from the sale proceeds in McDowell County instead of sending it to Caldwell. The sheriff said there might be some options to explore. He praised the hospital for the improvements they have made in the last few years to assist law enforcement. He said he felt the crisis facility would help his agency.

Kate Callahan of Smoky Mountain thanked the board for considering the request.

Commissioner Kaylor asked if the 12-bed facility was large enough for three counties. Ms. Pugh felt that the design would be sufficient for the needs that exist at this time. The County Manager asked if the facility could be in two different locations. Ms. Pugh stated that there would likely not be enough operational funds from Smoky Mountain Center to cover two locations.

Ms. Pugh stated in response to Commissioner Walker's question that there would not be ongoing expense from the county except for transportation costs by law enforcement agencies.

Commissioner Walker made a motion, with a second by Commissioner McPeters, to move forward with the crisis facility concept, pending the release of funds from the sale proceeds, and a memorandum of agreement between the three counties and Smoky Mountain Center. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

TRAIL DISCUSSION ON UNIVERSAL PROPERTY

Dr. John Gossett from McDowell Tech discussed using the former rail spur on county property for exercise for students and for access between the campus and the Universal Center.

Commissioner Walker made a motion, with a second by Commissioner Kaylor, to authorize the use of the property for a trail and to support grant applications. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

SIGN DISCUSSION ON UNIVERSAL PROPERTY

The County Manager informed the Board that there has been discussion of placing a sign in front of the Universal center that would advertise the facility and its programs. Dr. Bryan Wilson has proposed the name Universal Advanced Manufacturing Center for the facility, which be placed on the sign.

Commissioner Lavender informed the County Manager and Board that there is a draft design of the sign.

Commissioner Walker motioned, with a second by Commissioner Kaylor, to authorize staff to obtain bids on an electronic sign to bring back before the board. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

Commissioner Walker motioned, with a second by Commissioner Kaylor, to inform the trustees of the college that they may select a name for the center as well as a design for the sign. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

McDOWELL HOUSE UPDATE

The County Manager mentioned that the Board had previously committed to a \$5,000 contribution to match National Park Service funds. He presented a letter from the lienholder BB&T that authorized the county to remove the non-historical additions to the house.

The County Manager also informed the board that county staff has been actively seeking space for the McDowell Quilt Trail that have been using the space for the last several years.

Mr. Wooten informed the board that it might be summer before the work can begin on the house.

NEBO WATER LINE UPDATE

The County Manager updated the Board on the progress on grant discussions concerning serving the Nebo interchange area. He explained that there have been some difficulties in nailing down hiring commitments from the businesses in the area.

Mr. Wooten provided an overview of grant activity, specifically discussing an Appalachian Regional Commission grant in the amount of \$300,000 to serve the area.

The County Manager stated that there was still a negotiation ongoing concerning the reclassification of Lake James. He stated the reclassification process is extremely complex and will take time to work through all the required steps.

The County Manager also stated that staff is working with an engineer to come up with estimates to build water lines in unserved areas.

CITIZEN COMMENT

Chairman Hollifield asked if any one present would like to speak at this time. No one responded.

TAX MATTERS

The monthly listing of tax releases and refunds were presented for the Board's approval. In summary they were:

Releases Under \$100.00	Released amount of \$292.24
Releases Over \$100.00	Released amount of \$2,264.63
Motor Vehicle Releases Under \$100.00	Released amount of \$457.72
Motor Vehicle Releases Over \$100.00	Released amount of \$364.64
Release Refunds	Refunded amount of \$839.46

The NCVTS Pending Refund report showed a refund total of \$2,723.80.

Commissioner Lavender made a motion, seconded by Commissioner McPeters, to approve the tax releases and refunds as presented. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

HOUSING GRANT AWARD

The County Manager presented information regarding a NC Housing Financing Agency Single Family Rehabilitation Grant. The grant would pay for the rehabilitation of three homes located in McDowell County. Mr. Wooten provided an overview of the grant and the proposed activity. The County Manager asked that the Board approve the grant agreement and authorize staff to proceed with the project.

Commissioner Lavender made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Walker, to approve the grant agreement as presented. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS

The County Manager informed the Board that Isothermal Planning and Development Commission had sent a letter stating that Commissioner Walker's term on their board ends in April.

Commissioner McPeters made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Kaylor, to reappoint Commissioner Walker to the Board. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT

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

VAN RANDY HOLLIFIELD
CHAIRMAN

ASHLEY R. WOOTEN
DEPUTY CLERK TO THE BOARD