

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF MCDOWELL COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
BUDGET WORKSHOP – MAY 23, 2016**

ASSEMBLY

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met for a budget workshop on Monday, May 23, 2016, at 11:30am, in the Commissioners Board Room, Marion, North Carolina.

MEMBERS PRESENT

David N. Walker, Chair; Barry McPeters, Vice-Chair; Van "Randy" Hollifield; Matthew Crawford; and Tony Brown

OTHERS PRESENT

Ashley Wooten, County Manager; Cheryl Mitchell, Clerk to the Board

Called to Order

Chair Walker called the meeting to order, and asked Sheriff Greene to present his request.

Sheriff's Department

Sheriff Greene stated his need for an increase in salaries to be more competitive with surrounding counties for deputies, investigators, and jailers. He stated only four counties of the 79 counties who responded to a state survey have starting pay lower than McDowell. He added the City of Marion had increased their starting pay for their officers at \$1700 higher than the county deputy starting pay. He asked for a two step grade pay increase for deputies. The increase would be less than the state average, but would be more competitive with the area.

Sheriff Greene also stated there had been no pay increase since 1999. He stated he had gone through the department budget and cut approximately \$50,000 to help meet the request in salaries.

Request was made for one step grade pay increase for Jailer trainee and current employees moved up on the pay grade. This would prevent new hires from making more money than the current employees. This request would impact 18 employees for approx \$51,000.

Mr. Wooten stated the DSS, and EMS departments were moved pay grades according to certification. He suggested a pay study might be an option the board would want to consider.

Chair Walker stated the Sheriff's Dept had committed to \$175,000 per year toward the jail and courthouse construction. He also noted the department had showed a need, and had presented pertinent information. Commissioners agreed the positions should receive fair and competitive compensation.

Sheriff Greene stated it typically takes 5 to 7 years to go from Deputy 1 to Deputy 2. He also stated an Animal Control Officer dedicated to animal complaints is addressed in his budget request.

Commissioners thanked Sheriff Greene for his presentation, and all the work the department does for the county.

Rescue Squad

Mr. Ray Hollifield stated he had requested a tax increase from .099% to 1.5% for services on rescue and transport, for a projected increase of approximately \$167,000 per year. The budget proposal he had previously submitted asked for increase so they could go to paramedic level, he stated that after discussion with Mr. William Kehler, his department was not going for the certification at this time. Mr. Hollifield stated he was still requesting the tax increase to add three staff members to rescue side for helping out EMS when their call volume gets high, and to keep someone at the station. Also, the department wants to update equipment, replace smaller rescue truck and ambulance. In addition, building needs to be replaced in order to house service vehicles, and add a training room.

Discussion was held on actual operating cost of the Rescue Squad and their current manpower. Mr. Hollifield stated the Squad currently has seven full time rescue and transport employees and 33 volunteers on the roster. He added he never knew how many volunteers would show up for a call.

Mr. Ricky Wright stated 4 to 5 times a week Mission cancelled the transport call once their truck was at the hospital. Mr. Wright would then call the hospital to see if they had another patient to transport so it would not be a wasted trip. Some of these trips he stated were to other counties. Mr. Hollifield stated they never drove to Mission for the purpose of transporting to another county, all trips to Mission were based on receiving a call to transport McDowell County patient to rest home/nursing facility. Mr. Hollifield stated their transport service is self sustaining.

Mr. Kehler stated there was no need for Rescue Squad to add paramedic services at this time based upon data for the county. He added he had spoken with Mission Hospital and they are working on reducing the number of transfers. He stated EMS has seen reduction in volume of transports going from McDowell to Mission in the last 45 to 60 days.

Chair Walker thanked Mr. Hollifield for the presentation and the work the Rescue Squad does, and the cooperation they have with the county staff.

The Board held discussion on funds appropriated toward Rescue Squad. Consensus was to not approve the increase.

Mr. Hollifield came back into the board room and asked to address the Board. Mr. Hollifield stated he and Mr. Bruce Messing had met after leaving the meeting and decided to come back and asked for a partial increase instead of their initial request. Mr. Hollifield stated any assistance would be greatly appreciated, he suggested an increase of 1.2 or 1.3. Chair Walker ask for one thing above all the department had requested was the most needed, Mr. Hollifield stated funds were needed the most the for improvement of equipment in order to meet the needs of the county. Chair Walker thanked Mr. Hollifield for coming back with his request.

Commissioner's Input

Discussion on Sheriff Department request, consensus was to address animal control issues and agreed to department request.

Discussion was held on needs presented by the Rescue Squad. Consensus of the Board was to direct staff to run figures for 1.0 to 1.3 in increments, and bring back to the next meeting.

Discussion was held concerning budget meetings with other county departments, consensus was they would not meet with any other departments. Mr. Wooten confirmed the Board did not want to meet with the Health Department. He also stated the Health Department asked to increase fees so the fees would be the same across the other counties they serve, consensus was to maintain the current amount and do not increase fees.

Mr. Wooten stated staff would like to increase fee for commercial construction disposal on solid waste to be the same as for household waste disposal. The increase would be \$4 a ton to equalize the fee. Consensus was to allow the increase.

Discussion was held on Mike Gladden's position; plans are to offer the position to an equipment operator currently working at the landfill who has managerial experience.

Discussion was held on positions where the employee has attained additional certifications, should they receive more pay. Mr. Wooten stated the staff will look at this issue.

Discussion held on increasing Rescue Squad tax to \$40,000.

Mr. Wooten stated since no other departments had requested to meet, he suggested to meet again on Wednesday, June 8, at 11:30am.

Commissioner Hollifield made a motion to adjourn, second by Vice Chair McPeters. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.

DAVID N. WALKER
CHAIRMAN

CHERYL L. MITCHELL
CLERK TO THE BOARD