

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF MCDOWELL COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
DSS REGULAR SESSION – NOVEMBER 18, 2019**

Assembly

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met in Regular Session with the DSS on Monday, November 18, 2019, at 11:30a.m., at the Department of Social Services (DSS), 145 E Court Street, Marion, North Carolina.

Members Present

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

Members Absent

Barry McPeters

Others Present

Ashley Wooten, County Manager; Cheryl Mitchell, Clerk to the Board; Lisa Sprouse, Director of Social Services; Jay Suttles, Building Inspector; Sheriff Ricky Buchanan; County Attorney Fred Coats

Commissioner Greene made a motion to add Johnny Banks MHP to the agenda, second by Vice Chair Brown. By a vote of 4-0 the item was added.

Agency Update

Ms. Sprouse gave the following update on her department:

- fully staffed
- 111 kids in foster care, half of that figure is in relative custody
- the agency will make sure every child in foster care has presents for Christmas
- Chapel Hill Church will provide 40 Thanksgiving meals in a box to DSS for distribution for those in need

Building Update

Mr. Wooten noted steel doors have been ordered for the exterior entry, estimated cost of tile in public areas of hallways, conference room, and lobby was \$15,000.

Ms. Sprouse had met with company representatives and toured the facility on replacing locks with key fobs for entrance to the building. Also, Adult DSS building has requested for the reflective film to be placed on their windows also due to clients walking around the building and looking in on personnel. Most windows in the building are waist high.

The need for more parking lot lighting was also discussed. Also the blinds in the conference room had been removed due to being unable to be repaired. Suggestion was made to purchase new blinds.

Chair Walker reiterated the safety of the employees was very important to the Board.

Pre-Placement Policy

Ms. Sprouse presented a pre-placement assessment policy for approval that was rewritten to meet federal regulations.

McDowell County Pre-Placement Assessment Policy

This policy is on requested adoptions for pre-placement assessments (PPA), step-parent adoption services, or other related adoption placement services. Please note this is for adoption requests for children that are not in McDowell DSS custody and families not currently licensed NC foster families. There is no charge for these services for children adopted through McDowell County DSS foster care or McDowell DSS licensed NC foster families.

McDowell County Department of Social Services non-discriminatory fee structure for requested adoptions for pre-placement assessments (PPA), step-parent adoption services, or other related adoption placement services costs are as follow: \$500 for a PPA, \$800 for a PPA and required court documents, \$250 to update a PPA or court documents or PPA for families DSS previously involved with. If a family received Medicaid or Food and Nutrition and are unable to pay the fee it may be waived.

Adopted:

David Walker, Chairman

Cheryl L. Mitchell, Clerk to the Board

Commissioner Greene made a motion to adopt the McDowell County Pre-Placement Assessment Policy, second by Vice Chair Brown. By a vote of 4-0 the motion passed.

Questions, Answers, and Suggestions

Ms. Sprouse distributed the data tracker for the agency. Vice Chairman Brown asked why the number was higher in CPS assessments. Ms. Sprouse noted there was no definite reason for the increase.

Johnny Banks MHP

Mr. Wooten noted there are two properties, one in Johnny Banks, Sr. name and one in Johnny Banks, Jr. name. One owner was deceased and the other owner was in and out of jail. The concerns pertaining to the properties are trying to get the property cleaned up and the squatters removed. County Foreclosure Attorney, Jennifer O. Jackson strongly advised to not foreclose, and look for other avenues. A letter describing some of the challenges from Attorney Jackson is with the agenda materials.

Mr. Wooten has met with Sheriff Buchanan, Jay Suttles, and Attorney Fred Coats in regards to dealing with the issues for squatters and drug activity, and stealing power in the park.

Vice Chairman Brown asked if it was possible to foreclose and then do a quick sale with stipulation to clean up the property. Attorney Coats advised that Duke Power has charged three individuals with stealing power and has cut the power off. He added the personal property owners are not the renters.

Sheriff Buchanan gave the following information: noted on its best day the estate value would be \$40,000; the properties have \$90,000 in liens; estate owns other properties; order of abatement—NCGS to proceed on ordinance violation –spend to clean up property and then place lien on property; probation officer attacked last week; drone video footage of the filth and destruction on the property; enforce trespassing; clean up the property; county can pursue injunction and abatement; 50 trash citations since June; summons have been placed on Banks, Jr. and he has not appeared in court.

Attorney Coats noted a tax foreclosure goes in front of liens and a bid on cleaning up the solid waste on both properties cost could be applied back to a lien on the property.

Mr. Suttles noted that three trailers on the property have legal power from Duke Power; the rest of the 12 had power turned off. Because the squatters were living without power, he had posted Unsafe Notices at the mobile homes. Also posted 12 of the 15 mobile homes are condemned; set for 30 days, go to court, serve by deputy the owner of the trailer; post a notice in the paper.

Attorney Coats advised he would review the estate file and determine ownership of who owns the mobile homes; determine next step as far as abatement of nuisance; and then determine action needed rather to board up the mobile homes or move them out. He added he could have information for the Board within 30 days.

Vice Chairman Brown made a motion for the County Attorney to proceed with review and action plan, second by Commissioner Vaughn. By a vote of 4-0 the motion passed.

Commissioner Greene made a motion to get three estimates on cleaning up the property, second by Commissioner Vaughn. By a vote of 4-0 the motion passed,

Adjourn

Commissioner Brown made a motion to adjourn at 12:48pm, second by Commissioner Greene. By a vote of 4-0 the motion passed.

Attest:

David Walker
Chairman

Cheryl L. Mitchell
Clerk to the Board