

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
COUNTY OF MCDOWELL COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
REGULAR SESSION – OCTOBER 13, 2014**

**ASSEMBLY**

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Monday, October 13, 2014, at 4:00 p.m., at the Historic Carson House, Marion, North Carolina.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

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

**OTHERS PRESENT**

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

**CALL TO ORDER**

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

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Commissioner Kaylor made a motion, seconded by Commissioner McPeters, to approve the September 8, 2014 Regular Session as presented. By unanimous vote, the motion carried.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

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

**BUDGET UPDATE AND FINANCE MATTERS**

The County Manager presented an update on the county's expenditures and revenues through this point in the fiscal year, and the close out of the prior fiscal year. He advised that the most recent sales tax figures are looking positive for the closeout of the previous year. He stated that other revenues look good at this point as well.

The County Manager also presented the following Budget Amendments.

GF 1 - This amendment carries forward restricted funds from the Library for the previous fiscal year.

GF 2 - This amendment appropriates funds for the review of the personnel handbook and the Marriage lawsuit in the amount of \$6,000.

GF 3 - Transfers the person that maintains the county road signs from public works to the addressing/91 1 function. There are no new dollars involved. Donations are carried forward.

GF 4 - This amendment carries forward Register of Deeds funds from the previous fiscal year.

GF 5 - This amendment appropriates funds out of the inmate revenue line item that the sheriff uses for the purchase of a vehicle.

GF 6 - This amendment carries forward revenue from the previous fiscal year in DSS and additional revenue.

GF 7 - This amendment is what is called an “in and an out.” This is the sales tax revenue that we pay on purchases and then receive the same amount back from the state since it is local sales tax. This is budget neutral.

GF 8 - This is the transfer to the Universal Project that I updated you on last month. The transfer is the general fund obligation.

GF 9 - This amendment rolls forward funds for the senior center and also recognizes donations.

UENT 1 - This transfers funds from Universal Fund revenue to the building fund consistent with our discussion.

Mr. Abernathy also presented an amended Project Ordinance for the Universal Building Project.

Commissioner Walker motioned, with a second by Commissioner Kaylor, to approve budget amendments GF 1-9, UENT 1, and the revised Project Ordinance.

Mr. Abernathy also noted that the Sheriff had requested to donate a 2004 Crown Victoria to the Hankins-North Fork Fire Department.

Commissioner Walker motioned, with a second by Commissioner Lavender, to approve the ***RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING DONATION OF PERSONAL PROPERTY TO NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION***. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

### **REQUEST FROM TRAILS ASSOCIATION**

Frank Dean of the McDowell Trails Association presented a request from his organization concerning property that the county owns along State Street in Marion. He stated that the county owns excess land adjacent to the Probation and Parole building. The Association’s desire is to combine the county property with property that the Association owns. The concept they are proposing is for the land to be sold to a private apartment

developer. If and when the property is sold, the Association would propose to place its sale proceeds in an account to benefit trail construction.

The County Manager presented a brief legal overview of the options available to the County in regards to what is allowable under state law. A general discussion of the proper way to proceed followed.

Mr. Dean suggested that any sale monies be set aside for the Catawba River Phase III local match.

Commissioner Lavender stated the numerous benefits to the county and the community.

Commissioner Lavender motioned, with a second by Commissioner Walker, to authorize the transfer of approximately 2.28 acres located off of State Street to the McDowell Trails Association for a no less than \$80,000 for the total acreage with the sale proceeds to be used for the local match of trail projects. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

### **REQUEST FROM FOOTHILLS PILOT PLANT**

The County Manager presented a brief overview of the history of the Foothills Pilot Plant project. He advised that the McDowell Economic Development Association might be interested in transferring the operation of the facility to another non-profit.

Mr. Smithson Mills provided additional details on the operations on the plant. He stated that the facility is breaking even as designed and 180 farmers have used the plant in 2014. He stated that there are three full time employees and several part time employees.

Mr. Mills mentioned that the desire is to transfer the building and its contents to the Independent Small Animal Meat Producers Association (ISAMPA). Mr. Mills introduced the manager, Amanda Carter.

The Chairman asked Mr. Mills where he saw the facility in five years. Mr. Mills said he felt that the facility would be at full capacity at that time and would be interested in expanding to a larger facility.

Ms. Carter explained to Commissioner Walker's question that a very small number of the users of the facility are from McDowell County. She stated that there have been outreach efforts to increase the awareness and utilization. She said there are several economic reasons for why there haven't been more users.

Commissioner Walker asked about the use of the facility regarding pork. Mr. Mills stated that processing pork would help with cash flow during the slow months.

Commissioner Lavender and Kaylor both asked concerning the benefits of transferring the ownership of the building itself to ISAMPA. Mr. Mills explained that removing the ownership would eliminate a liability for the county.

Commissioner Lavender expressed reservations concerning transferring the property, as well as the cost of the processing. Mr. Mills stated that the desire is to keep processing as low as possible.

The County Manager stated that the operation is running well, but is difficult to operate for county staff.

Ms. Carter addressed several of Mr. Lavender's concerns regarding local control, pricing, etc. Mr. Mills also advised that there is an advisory committee made up of local appointees that could continue to exist to address some of those concerns.

Commissioner Lavender asked several follow-up questions regarding his concerns.

Commissioner Lavender made a motion, with a second by Commissioner Walker, to consider the issues raised during the discussion (i.e. building transfer, board composition, and other items that need to be reviewed by the County Attorney). By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PUBLIC HEARING**

The Chairman declared the meeting in public hearing session in order to receive comments regarding a proposed economic development incentive.

The County Manager provided an overview of the proposed incentive, which would involve the transfer of property in the industrial park to a company that has proposed to create nine jobs initially with a building of approximately 10,000 square feet. Additional considerations would be the extension of utilities to the site and to name the adjacent unnamed road Innovation Drive.

The County Manager introduced Greg Norell, the owner of the company that would locate in the park. His business produces high precision glassware for the medical and scientific fields. He stated that they currently partner with Foothills Industries and would continue to do so in the future. He also praised the county for its vision in the development in the Universal Center, and what it would mean for industries like his.

The County Manager stated that the location of this company would be a great opportunity for the county and the workforce of the county.

Commissioner Lavender asked several questions regarding the size of the tract to be transferred, the road/parking, and surveying costs.

Mr. Abernathy stated that the remaining acreage could be utilized for a small building.

No one from the public requested to speak on the economic incentives.

Mr. Norrell expressed a great appreciation for the employees and management of Foothills Industries for their desire to work with his company. He also praised the community and its desire to see positive developments in the future.

Commissioner Lavender motioned with a second by Commissioner Walker, to go out of public hearing. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

Commissioner Walker motioned, with a second by Commissioner McPeters, to approve the incentive package as presented, which includes a building site in the industrial park, the extension of utilities, and naming the road Innovation Drive.

### **PUBLIC HEARING TRANSPORTATION FUNDING**

The Chairman declared the meeting into public hearing to receive comments on the ROAP transportation funding. Weyland Prebor of the Transportation Planning Board presented an overview of the purpose of the hearing and the grant funds that the Board is seeking. The funds would be used by various agencies to provide necessary transportation. DSS and the Senior Center would be the

No one from the public requested to speak.

Commissioner McPeters motioned to go out of public hearing with a second by Commissioner Walker. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

Commissioner Walker motioned, with a second by Commissioner McPeters, to approve submission of the grant. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

### **BOARD APPOINTMENTS**

Mr. Wooten provided an overview of the two board appointment items. He advised that Gwen McNeely should have been appointed to the Adult Care Home Community Advisory Committee at the last meeting. He also noted the first reading for the Planning Board Alternate vacancies.

Commissioner Lavender motioned, with a second by Commissioner Walker, to appoint Ms. McNeely to the Adult Care Home Community Advisory Committee. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

### **GOLDEN LEAF GRANT**

The County Manager stated that the Golden Leaf Foundation is accepting grant applications for a new initiative called the Community Based Grantsmaking Initiative. This grant funding is similar to the Community Assistance Initiative that funded the Universal Center. He stated that there are several components to the project.

The first part of the project would be to prepare sites adjacent to the Universal building for additional industrial or commercial sites, with the largest being for an approximate 100,000 square foot building. He added that the community college would be able to use land in this area as well. The second part would involve the development of a four-year engineering program to be located at the Universal Center.

Commissioner Walker echoed Mr. Norrell's comments from earlier that McDowell County is being aggressive in the job development sector in order to be competitive in the region and state.

Commissioner Lavender asked several questions regarding the proposal. He expressed a concern about giving up space to another entity that might limit the expansion opportunities for the community college. Mr. Abernathy stated that the current concept is for Western Carolina to use the existing space.

Commissioner Walker motioned, with a second by Commissioner Lavender, to approve submission of the Golden Leaf Grant as presented. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

### **MCDOWELL HOUSE PROJECT UPDATE**

Mr. Wooten presented an update on the McDowell House project. He advised that there had been limited interest in the work from local contractors, and therefore he was asking if the county could proceed with the work by acting as its own general contractor.

Commissioner Walker motioned, with a second by Commissioner Kaylor, to authorize the county as acting as the general contractor for the removal of the wings at the McDowell House. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

### **WATER PROJECT UPDATE**

The County Manager provided a brief update concerning the Interstate Interchange Project. He advised that he and Mr. Wooten had met with Pat Mitchell of the NC Department of Commerce to discuss the grants. He reported that the visit was favorable and that a decision on both grants would be made later in the year.

Mr. Abernathy also stated that he, Mr. Harmon, and Ms. Buathier were coordinating a public hearing concerning the reclassification process. He will continue to work with the staff in Raleigh to schedule a hearing in November.

### **UNIVERSAL UPDATE/OPEN HOUSE**

The County Manager discussed the upcoming governor's visit on October 23 at the Universal Center. He stated that there would be an industry appreciation event inside the facility at the beginning of the event and then a public ribbon cutting to follow.

Mr. Abernathy stated that planning the event had been quite an undertaking and he hoped that there would be a good turnout from local industry as well as the public.

### **TAX MATTERS**

The County Manager presented the monthly tax releases, rebills, and refunds.

A summary of the tax matters:

Releases Under \$100.00	Released amount of \$971.62
Releases Over \$100.00	Released amount of \$6,969.11
Release Refunds	Refunded amount of \$2,388.66

The NCVTS Pending Refund report showed a refund total of \$2,288.51.

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

### **CITIZEN COMMENT**

Bill Carroll from the Little Switzerland community brought his concerns regarding the traffic and noise on NC 226A as a result of the branding effort underway to call the road the Diamondback. He felt that the branding had brought unintended consequences. He felt that the increased traffic had increased the danger for the residents along the road. He requested that the Board examine the issue.

The County Manager reported that he had spoken with the NC Highway Patrol and NCDOT about possible solutions to the issues that Mr. Carroll had raised.

### **CARSON HOUSE OVERVIEW AND UPDATE**

Dr. James Haney of the Carson House Board of Directors presented an update on the activities of the Carson House. He stated that it had been 171 years since the first meeting of the county organization at the House.

Dr. Haney spoke about the history of the home and how it came to be. He discussed the importance of the gold mining industry to the history of the county and the Carson family. He stated that the Carson House had developed a historical display on the gold history that is now on display on the third floor.

He provided an update on the arbor project. He stated that due to several delays the project has not yet begun. The cost of the project is higher than originally anticipated, with the projected cost to be in the vicinity of \$228,000. The project should be completed in approximately four months. He requested that the County continue to provide additional funding for the project over the next two fiscal years.

Commissioner Walker thanked Dr. Haney for educating the board and the public on the history of the house and the family.

The County Manager suggested that the county consider keeping the current level of funding for the Carson House arbor project.

Commissioner Walker motioned, with a second by Commissioner McPeters, to authorize budgeting \$10,000 for the next two years. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

## **REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS**

The County Manager presented several calendar items. In addition, he recognized Clerk to the Board Carrie Padgett who had been absent from work for several months due to health reasons.

The Chairman suggested moving the county commissioner meeting for November to the new Universal building.

Commissioner Walker motioned, with a second by Commissioner McPeters, to move the November meeting to the Universal building. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

The Chairman also mentioned that he had been considered for several NCACC steering committees. Before accepting, he asked that the Board approve his appointment.

Commissioner Kaylor motioned, with a second by Commissioner Lavender, to approve the appointment of the Chairman to the committees.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Before adjournment, Dr. Haney recognized the Carson House board members.

There being no further business to transact at this time, upon motion by Commissioner Kaylor and a second by Commissioner Lavender, the meeting was adjourned to Monday, November 10, 2014 at 5 pm at the Universal Advanced Manufacturing Center.

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VAN RANDY HOLLIFIELD  
CHAIRMAN

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ASHLEY R. WOOTEN  
DEPUTY CLERK TO THE BOARD