

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF MCDOWELL COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR SESSION – OCTOBER 8, 2012**

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met in regular session at 4:00 p.m. on Monday, October 8, 2012, at Historic Carson House, 1805 US 70 West, Marion, NC. By tradition, the Board met at this location by invitation of the Carson House Board of Directors. The meeting was duly advertised.

MEMBERS PRESENT

David N. Walker, Chairman; Barry E. McPeters, Vice-Chairman; Andrew K. Webb; and Josh Dobson

THOSE ABSENT

Michael K. Lavender (sickness)

OTHERS PRESENT

Charles R. Abernathy, County Manager; Carrie Padgett, Clerk to the Board; Ashley Wooten, Assistant to the County Manager (Filming); Fred Coats, County Attorney; Members of the Historic Carson House Board of Directors; and Mike Conley, Reporter for THE McDOWELL NEWS

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman David Walker called the meeting to order and began with a brief summary of the formation of McDowell County. It was formed in 1842 from sections of Burke and Rutherford Counties. At that time, local Government was called the Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions. The Court Members were not elected but were appointed by House Members. Government has become more democratic over the years with elections. The first meeting in the Carson House was held March 13, 2843. John Carson donated the land for the County Seat...Marion. Local Government became governed by the Board of Commissioners in 1868. The *original Board of Commissioners* were *James Ledbetter as Chairman, James Ross, John Evans and James McCall*. They were elected.

Commissioner Dobson then gave the invocation, followed by the pledge of allegiance, led by Commissioner McPeters.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Minutes of the September 10, 2012 regular session were presented for approval. Upon motion by Commissioner Dobson and a second by Commissioner McPeters, the minutes were unanimously approved as recorded.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

With no additions or deletion to the agenda, Commissioner McPeters made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Dobson, to approve the agenda as prepared. The motion received unanimous approval.

At this time, Chairman Walker advised Commissioner Lavender was not feeling well and that he may or may not be present tonight. Also, that Commissioner Webb was on his way and should be arriving shortly.

BUDGET UPDATE AND FINANCE MATTERS

The County Manager presented as the first item the EMS non-collectible billing accounts. Staff was requesting the Board's approval for writing off the non-collectible accounts which totaled \$4,922.85. A brief discussion followed.

Commissioner Dobson made a motion, seconded by Commissioner McPeters, to approve the EMS accounts for write-offs as non-collectible as requested. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

The monthly budget update included a revenue/expenditure sheet (shown through August 31st), a property tax collection report (shown through September 30th which is more up-to-date), and the sales tax report. Mr. Abernathy pointed out the collection rate is slightly higher this year in comparison to last year (53.69% versus 53.32% for the same month last year). He noted the tax levy, shown after releases at \$17,610,347.40. The sales tax report included a full year of receipts and \$223,385.00 in the black.

MIDDLE SCHOOL PROJECT SCHEDULE AND FINANCING

The County Manager advised Dr. Martin may not be present due to having had knee surgery; therefore, he gave a general overview of the McDowell Middle School Project that would shift 9th graders to the High School. He reviewed revenue on hand as of July 31, 2012, including sales tax, ADM unallotted and Lottery unallotted, for a total of \$7,614,903. He said some very minor revisions to the schedule had been made to what had previously been presented to the Board, noting the revisions only reflect the changes that had been made to the project. Mr. Abernathy pointed out the schedule is showing a spring 2013 projected date for groundbreaking and a 12-14 month construction period. He pointed out the project will affect dropout rate, graduates, etc., and that Dr. Martin needs to give an explanation about this.

Mr. Abernathy pointed out a figure of \$8.5 as the amount to be financed, noting that an amortization schedule would be done for the Board soon.

A general discussion followed. Chairman Walker noted the cooperation of all boards, the conservative approach, etc. concerning this project. Commissioner Webb

made similar comments, also noting this is not a pay-as-you-go project but rather one that will basically be done with funds that are already there. He pointed out we have 27 years as a model for pay-as-you-go. Commissioner Dobson commented on the County's ability of still being able to add to the funds. The Finance Officer addressed her decision of going with sales tax instead of lottery funds, noting the ADM funds status at this time. She advised we have \$643,000 funds now but when they are gone, that will be it, noting that ADM funds were stopped about three years ago.

Commissioner McPeters offered comments on the staff's work in looking out for the Board in matters like this.

Mr. Abernathy advised more information from the Finance Officer would be provided when bids are opened, etc., and that they will keep the Board informed.

PRESENTATION OF SCHOOL RECYCLING CHECK

Chairman Walker noted the check in the amount of \$4,135.00 to be presented to the School System. The County shares the recycling revenue back to the schools for the amount they generate for the County by recycling. The intent is for these funds to be used in the classroom.

DSS STATEWIDE COMPUTER SYSTEM

DSS Director Phillip Hardin came before the Board to address two items. First was the NC Fast Program update on a statewide integrated computer system that is being implemented for human services. The new system will give staff the capability to view clients over many programs throughout the area and while it will slow the process, they will be able to check across county lines. Also, once the clients are in the system, staff will no longer have to ask the 31 questions each time, and they will be able to add other programs as they go along.

Mr. Hardin pointed out there are some glitches with this program but they are prepared for this with a food pantry on site. Also, he said there will be some extended hours for staff, etc., but the extra time would be handled within the department, and addressed other pros and cons about the program. In conclusion, he advised the program is an advantage for them in that they have access to other programs to check data.

Mr. Hardin mentioned a call he had received on best practices, noting they had received two awards

KATE B. REYNOLDS GRANT

Mr. Hardin said the grant is actually from the Duke Endowment Fund and the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust. He said it would be used to assist with a juvenile court counselor (for Substance Abuse), and will enable them to hire another person. They anticipate hiring a Licensed Clinical Social Worker or a Qualified Professional to

fill this position. Smokey Mountain Center has agreed to fund \$10,000 per year for two years. Mr. Hardin said he had considered contracting this position out but for now feels this is best for DSS. He recommended receipt of the grant and asked for approval to create this position in order to get the funds.

A brief discussion followed, during which a question was asked regarding future plans for the position once the two-year period is over. Mr. Hardin advised he would have no problem having a review of this position after two years, noting in fact he would expect that to happen.

A motion was made by Commissioner Webb and seconded by Commissioner McPeters to approve the grant from the Duke Endowment and Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust based on staff recommendation. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

McDOWELL COUNTY DOT PLANNING DOCUMENT

Josh King, Regional Planner with Isothermal Planning and Development Commission, came before the Board concerning the Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) for McDowell County and the Town of Old Fort. Also present was Linh Nguyen, PE with the NC Department of Transportation Planning Board.

Mr. King advised the recommendations for CTP were in the agenda and they had one recommendation on Bat Cave Road to make it a three-lane road by 2042. He asked Mr. Nguyen to address this recommendation.

Mr. Nguyen advised they had been working on the Comprehensive Transportation Plan for two years, noting this is a long-range, multi-modal transportation plan for a 25-30 year planning period, and it is a non-comprehensive vision plan. The Plan was developed cooperatively among local stakeholders (County, City, local businesses, residents, etc.), Rural Planning Organization (RPO), and NCDOT.

In addition to recommendations regarding public transportation/rail, bicycle, and pedestrian, the Plan addresses highway recommendations. The two major ones are to widen to 3 lanes Bat Cave Road and to widen to 5 lanes Sugar Hill Road.

Commissioner Webb asked about any studies done about Highway 70 West from Marion to Old Fort. Mr. King briefly addressed this and agreed to provide information later in the fiscal year.

Mr. Nguyen continued with transportation needs for those without a car, with disabilities, etc., noting the transportation study will start in 2024. They will incorporate the bicycle plan into this Plan, recommending that a bicycle lane be incorporated into the Plan on US 70. He addressed the pedestrian plan also.

Mr. Abernathy recommended adopting the CTP at the November meeting. The Board agreed to accept his recommendation since the Board had not had time to review the Plan properly.

In other transportation matters, the Board agreed to look into a replacement for former Commissioner Dean Buff who had served on the McDowell County Transportation Planning Board.

UPDATE TRAIL SYSTEM

Ronald Harmon, McDowell County Planner, provided an update on status of Phase 2 of the Trail construction underway near the McDowell Hospital. He advised the project should be completed by Christmas.

Trails Association members Bill Hendley and Frank Dean were also present.

The County Manager pointed out the first loop of the Trail out by the Hospital was dedicated to Ray Buchanan (actually to Rev. George Hutchins). Chairman Walker recommended naming Phase 2 for Bill Hendley. At this time, he called Mr. Hendley forward and presented a framed rendering of the sign to him.

Mr. Hendley stated he would accept the award on behalf of the 21 members on the Trails Association Board.

Frank Dean advised Phase 2 is fully funded and they are looking to be on the greenway by June 1, 2013 (8/10 of a mile). He said Phase 3 has one gap and that he had spoken with Tony Boyd about going across his property.

Bill Hendley addressed Round Hill and provided photographs of it. He also addressed Lookout Trail, noting the amount of rain which has occurred, etc., and made a recommendation on doing the mowing and other maintenance. He mentioned plans for other projects on which they are working.

WATER PROJECTS UPDATE

In a brief update, Mr. Abernathy advised the major update involves the Water Filtration Plant study that is underway and that he would be meeting with the Catawba River Management Committee the following Tuesday. He said he would have a good 30 minute presentation on the next agenda.

UNIVERSAL COMMITTEE UPDATE

The County Manager advised the Universal Committee had met twice and, as part of the agenda, Mr. Abernathy provided the power point presentations used in both meetings. The first one was put together by Mr. Abernathy and Dr. Wilson; the second one was done by the architect and included early design drawings.

Mr. Abernathy advised the Committee is “off and running” and is on schedule. The Committee wants to form two sub-committees.

RURAL CENTER GRANT

The County Manager briefly updated the Board on a grant application which had been submitted to the Rural Center under the category known as “economic stimulus”. The grant would be used for various items at the Universal Building. Mr. Abernathy said he had spoken with the Rural Center about the grant, and with Representative Gillespie who was involved in the creation of this particular program. Both conversations were positive.

ASSIGNING LEASE AT SENIOR CENTER

The County Manager advised that McDowell Hospital is purchasing the Doctor’s Office (McDowell Internal Medicine), located in the lower level of McDowell Senior Center. McDowell Internal Medicine will move into an office on Sugar Hill Road and the Hospital wishes to continue the lease. The Dialysis Center and Mission Hospital will be the new entity on the lease, which extends through October 2014. Mr. Abernathy advised he did not renegotiate the lease and would recommend that the County partner with the Hospital on assuming the lease with the same conditions. They will be on the agenda in November.

Commissioner Dobson made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Webb, to assign the lease as presented by staff. By unanimous approval, the motion carried.

TAX MATTERS

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

Releases Over \$100.00	Released amount of \$7,037.31
Releases Under \$100.00	Released amount of \$867.20
Motor Vehicle Releases Under \$100.00	Released amount of \$888.10
Motor Vehicle Releases Over \$100.00	Released amount of \$390.13
Release Refunds	Refunded amount of \$915.63

A motion was made by Commissioner McPeters to approve the tax releases and refunds as presented. Commissioner Webb seconded the motion and by unanimous approval, the motion carried.

BOARD APPOINTMENTS

With Bob Brendle's term on the McDowell County Planning Board expiring this month, the Board considered this vacancy on second reading. The applicants were Bob Brendle (for reappointment), and new applicants Thomas Fleming, Brenda M. Vaughn, and Alex R. Portelli.

The Board voted by written ballot with the resulting vote being:

Two votes for Brenda M. Vaughn (Commissioners Dobson and Walker)

Two votes for Robert E. (Bob) Brendle (Commissioners Webb and McPeters)

With a tie vote, the Board agreed by consensus to postpone filling the Planning Board vacancy until the November meeting when Commissioner Lavender could be present.

Concerning the replacement for Commissioner Webb on the NCACC Board of Directors, the County Manager explained that Rutherford County was recommending that Rutherford County Chairman Julius Owens be appointed to serve the remaining 6 months of Commissioner Webb's term and then serve the full two-year term since it will be Rutherford County's turn to appoint a director in 2013. Chairman Walker asked Commissioner Webb what his thoughts were concerning Rutherford County's recommendation. Commenting briefly, Commissioner Webb said the County Manager's explanation was his understanding of the matter as well.

In discussion, Chairman Walker stated he would support one of McDowell's members. Commissioner Webb advised he feels comfortable with the replacement.

Commissioner Webb then made a motion to allow Chairman Julius Owens of Rutherford County to finish out his term on the NCACC Board of Directors. Commissioner McPeters seconded the motion and by unanimous approval, the motion carried.

CITIZEN COMMENT

No comments from citizens were heard.

REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

There were no reports to be given.

CARSON HOUSE UPDATE

Dr. Haney gave a warm welcome to the Board of Commissioners and staff for their presence at Historic Carson House.

Dr. Haney then provided a general summary of their activities over the past year, which had included hundreds of visitors. They had accepted the resignation of both Mr. Bill Greenlee and Mrs. Bradsher, as well as a letter from Sarah Bryant on her resignation as host after three years. They have two new board members and a new host, Linda Cloherty. Dr. Haney advised they are delighted to have her and she is a great asset to the staff. Also, since June they were able to have a student assistant (Carley Kaufman) who will be with them through the fall season. She has contributed 3,000 hours there. Other activities included tree planting, painting inside, restoration to the dining room, and new draperies. They had added a number of artifacts, a plantation desk which was a designated gift, a new brochure and a card rack.

Dr. Haney advised they continue having tours with the School System, and emphasized the help of Mrs. Ann McNutt and Mrs. Sandy Rabb for their work in funding efforts.

Their long-range plans include construction of a center in the back and next year they plan to construct a structure similar to an arbor for meetings, and other events, for which they will conduct a fund drive.

This being his last meeting with the Board at Historic Carson House, Commissioner Webb expressed his pleasure on being here through the years as a County Commissioner.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to transact at this time, Commissioner McPeters made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Webb seconded the motion and by unanimous approval, the motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Again, on behalf of the Board, Chairman Walker thanked Dr. Haney for the opportunity to meet at Historic Carson House this here and asked Dr. Haney to give thanks for the food they were about to receive.

DAVID N. WALKER, CHAIRMAN

CARRIE PADGETT
CLERK TO THE BOARD

