

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF MCDOWELL COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
RECESSED SESSION – AUGUST 27, 2020**

Assembly

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met in Recessed Session on Thursday, August 27, 2020, at 2:30 p.m., at the Universal Conference Room, 634 College Drive, 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

Call to Order

Chairman Walker called the meeting to order.

DSS Return to Work

Mr. Wooten noted there were some extenuating circumstances for county employees due to the school schedule and teleworking issues. Chairman Walker noted he had been contacted by an employee that had childcare but no internet availability. One child went to school bi-weekly, and one went to school weekly. Commissioner Greene reported that case has been solved; the school system is allowing both children to go weekly.

After discussion, each Commissioner agreed the County Manager and Human Resources Director should look at each extenuating circumstance individually if it is COVID related. They will review options with the employee on an individual basis.

Face Covering Mandate

Mr. Wooten noted the county Face Covering Mandate does not address content on the mask, but rather the requirements and exceptions for wearing a mask on county property. Mr. Wooten said he had been made aware of a county employee stating he had been told he could not wear a mask that had a flag and a thin blue line in support of law enforcement. Mr. Wooten advised the county has a mask reimbursement where the employee can receive up to \$25 for masks or mask making materials. There was nothing on the mask reimbursement form about content on the mask. He noted a request had been received from the employee for a Trump 2020 mask for reimbursement. He added Section 5 of the Conditions of Employment in the Personnel Policy addresses the political activity restriction that prohibits employees from wearing political type clothing. Chairman Walker requested the restrictions be sent to the Board in the event the Commissioners were asked about the county political activity policy.

Vice Chairman Brown noted law enforcement was a vital part of county government and a mask in support of law enforcement is not political. Each Commissioner was in agreement and agreed the employee should be allowed to wear the thin blue line mask.

Discussion was held on a prior department head having a verbal informal agreement with allowing a personal TV at the convenience sites.

The Board requested a written county policy regarding TVs at the convenience sites, and allows the TVs to remain until a policy is submitted to the Board for consideration.

Economic Development Update

Mr. Abernathy noted there had been a change in the amount of funds requested previously with the Project TAD, ONE NC Grant. The change from the State was from \$140,000 to \$210,000, and Building Reuse from \$220,000 to \$140,000. The one-third match required from the county would increase from the original request of \$70,000 to \$105,000 for the 70 jobs.

Consensus of the Board was to move forward with the One NC Grant and hold a public hearing on September 21, 2020.

Shooting Range Update

Mr. Wooten advised he had received a letter from Neil Brackett, Chairman of the McDowell County Soil and Water Conservation District and Robert Yutzy, Chairman, Muddy Creek Watershed Board expressing their concern with the NC Wildlife Resources Commission placing 3,360 c. yds. of fill material in the flood pool area of the Ashworth Dam, in order to construct a permanent access road to the proposed shooting range.

Mr. Wooten submitted a copy of the reply letter he sent to Mr. Brackett and Mr. Yutzy explaining he had shared the requirement with the project engineers and consultants for NCWRC. An area has been identified on county property where the equivalent amount of material could be removed in order to allow the flood pool storage area to maintain its existing storage capacity.

A copy of the letter and map are with the agenda materials.

Wellness Initiative

Mr. Wooten noted the county had a wellness incentive program dating at least as far back as 2008. That incentive was for employees who participated in a goal setting program and wellness activities would receive a \$55 reimbursement every quarter if a voucher was submitted, and the employee attended the annual county Health Fair.

He noted in 2017 in order to be compliant with ADA guidelines the initiative had to be broadened. The insurance brokers presented a list of wellness resources that ensured equal opportunity to everyone. The county would reimburse the employee up to \$200.00 per fiscal year for any of the resources.

Mr. Wooten will research if there was a benefit to the county to keep the wellness initiative in place and bring back more information to the Board.

Adjournment

There being no further business to transact at this time, upon motion by Commissioner Greene and a second by Commissioner Vaughn, the meeting was adjourned at 3:23p.m., and went to the Ground Breaking Ceremony at Station 4 and the Headquarters.

Cheryl L. Mitchell
Clerk to the Board

David N. Walker
Chairman