

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
COUNTY OF MCDOWELL COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
REGULAR SESSION –AUGUST 16, 2021**

**Assembly**

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met in Regular Session on Monday, August 16, 2021, at 11:30 a.m., at the DSS Conference Room.

**Members Present**

Tony Brown, Chair; David N. Walker, Vice-Chair; Brenda Vaughn; Chris Allison; Patrick Ellis

**Members Absent**

None

**Others Present**

Ashley Wooten, County Manager; Cheryl Mitchell, Clerk to the Board; Lisa Sprouse, DSS Director; William Kehler, ES Director; Lake Silver, Project Administration Assistant

**Call to Order**

Chairman Brown called the meeting to order at 11:30a.m.

**DSS Update**

Ms. Sprouse gave an update and distributed the agency reports. A copy is with the agenda materials.

Ms. Sprouse noted the Foster Care program had 103 children, and the cost for July was \$90,893. The cause of the over budget was due to the number of children in foster care and also out-of-county placement. The cost for placement in a group home is also more expensive.

Chairman Brown noted Judge Davis had called him in reference to the letter that was sent to him, District Attorney Bell, and Judge Martelle. Consensus was to wait 90 days before taking further action.

**Emergency Services Update**

Mr. Kehler advised Tropical Storm Fred was expected to come ashore this evening, with the threat of a substantial amount of rain for the mountains and foothills. Flash flooding had occurred this weekend in various sections of the county. He added staff would be manning the EOC tomorrow.

**COVID-19 Update**

Mr. Kehler noted the rapid rate of transmission is alarming with this variant, over 100 positives reported today. There are outbreaks in a couple of long-term care facilities, industries, and a county department. The southeastern part of the state is currently out of hospital beds. The booster shot

should be available very soon, and ES is preparing to have plans in place to roll out the booster shot as quickly as possible.

Mr. Kehler recommended a State of Emergency to be declared to operate under the Emergency Operation Plan. This would allow the department to be able to request mutual aid in the event of staffing issues, to help operate the mass vaccination clinics, and also to help in the department if needed.

Vice Chairman Walker made a motion for Chairman Brown to sign a State of Emergency Declaration as requested effective today, second by Commissioner Allison. Commissioner Ellis asked if the Declaration would require masks. Mr. Kehler recommended no prohibition and no restrictions be included in the Declaration. He added he did see the benefit of wearing mask in congregate settings in county buildings. By a vote of 5-0 the motion passed.

Commissioner Ellis made a motion for county employees to wear a mask in congregate settings and revisit the mandate in two weeks. Visitors entering the building will not be required to wear a mask, but are encouraged to do so, second by Vice Chairman Walker. Mr. Kehler noted several industries were requiring masks. Mr. Kehler noted the hospital is out of rooms due to the viral spread of this variant, and the county is experiencing the second highest surge since December, 2020. Also, wearing a mask could help prevent staffing crisis in the departments. By a vote of 5-0 the motion passed.

Mr. Wooten introduced Lake Silver, a Western Carolina University graduate working on his Masters in Public Administration. He will be working as an Intern in the County Manager's office.

Vice Chairman Walker made a motion to adjourn at 12:34pm, second by Commissioner Ellis. By a vote of 5-0 the motion passed.

Attest:

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Cheryl L. Mitchell  
Clerk to the Board

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Tony Brown  
Chairman