

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF MCDOWELL COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
RECESSED SESSION MAY 13, 2021**

Assembly

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met in Recessed Session on Thursday, May 13, 2021, at 6:30 p.m., at the William Harold Smith Building.

Members Present

David N. Walker, Chair; Brenda Vaughn; Chris Allison; and Patrick Ellis

Members Absent

Chairman Tony Brown

Others Present

Ashley Wooten, County Manager; Cheryl Mitchell, Clerk to the Board; Alison Bell, Finance Director

Call to Order

Vice Chairman Walker called the meeting to order.

McDowell Rescue Squad

Chief Brian Gentry requested a 2-cent tax increase which would raise the tax rate to 0.0305% for the Rescue Squad. The rate would allow the Rescue Squad to increase the salaries of their employees by 5.5% plus an additional \$10,000 per employee to compete with county employee salaries. The Rescue Squad would also use the increase to purchase rescue and turn out gear, replace monitors, and other needed updates and purchases. A copy of the request is with the agenda materials.

Chief Gentry noted the Rescue Squad employs six fulltime employees currently and one fulltime vacancy; ten part-time employees; and 25 junior volunteers.

Commissioner Ellis thanked Chief Gentry for the service the Rescue Squad had provided to the county over the years. He asked if there was a one-year; three-year; or five-year plan for asset replacement. He noted the request was for a 65% increase and needed to see what their immediate needs were, and what were their future needs.

Vice Chairman Walker agreed with Commissioner Ellis the Board would need the list of items broken down to the most immediate needs to the future 1-year, 5-year, etc. needs. He added the Board appreciated all the work done by the Rescue Squad.

Marion Fire Dept.

Mayor Steve Little; City Manager, Bob Boyette; Julie Scherer, CPA, Finance Director;

Chief Ray McDaniel; and Asst. Chief Corey Presnell presented a request to increase the Marion Area Fire District tax rate from .08 to .0987 effective with the 2021-2022 Fiscal year. The request was due to the City taking on a greater share of costs for five full-time firefighter positions hired through a Federal SAFER grant and the purchase of needed rescue equipment.

Mr. Boyette noted the call volume between the City and Marion Area Fire District was split close to 50-50. The funding is based on call volume. To maintain the equitable split for the new funding a tax increase would be 1.8 or 1.9 cent.

Marion Fire Department is a combination paid and volunteer fire department consisting of 12 full time employees, six part-time employees, one part-time administrative, and 13 volunteer firefighters. The Fire Department responds to emergencies in the City Limits and the six-mile Marion Area Fire District. The fire insurance rating for the City of Marion is a Class 5 and the rating for the Marion Area is a Class 6.

The SAFER grant at 75% Federal and 25% local covers 11/21/2019—10/31/2021. From 11/1/2021 the local match will be 65% and the Federal will be 35%, and thereafter will be funded locally 100%.

Commissioner Ellis would like to see a strategic plan for the Marion Area Fire district.

No action was taken on both requests.

Commissioner Vaughn made a motion to recess at 6:06pm to the Fire Commission meeting at 6:30pm, second by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 4-0 the motion passed.

Attest:

Cheryl L. Mitchell, Clerk to the Board

David Walker, Vice Chairman