

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF MCDOWELL COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
SPECIAL SESSION – MAY 28, 2021**

Assembly

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met in Special Session on Friday, May 28, 2021, at 11:30a.m., at the Universal Conference Room.

Members Present

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

Member Absent

Patrick Ellis

Others Present

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

Call to Order

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

Budget Presentation

Mr. Wooten presented his 2021-2022 budget presentation to the Board. He started his presentation with an overview of fiscal year 2021 accomplishments:

- Emergency Services Station 4 was completed and the Headquarters is on track to open this fall/winter.
- Public Shooting Range project was initiated and scheduled to open late fall. The facility is funded via 90% state funds, and 10% county funds
- Several economic development public hearings resulted in several dozen new jobs
- Purchase of the former Kirksey Funeral Home for relocating county administration
- Board granted two salary adjustments during the year 6.25% for general employees and 7.75% for public safety employees.
- Organization overcame many difficult challenges associated with the pandemic
- Emergency Services, Health Dept and many volunteers administered thousands of COVID tests throughout the year
- Staff and volunteers vaccinated thousands of McDowell County residents

Vice Chairman Walker added during the pandemic funding was not cut to the schools or the College.

Per McDowell County peers the County:

- employs 34 fewer employees than the average
- budgets \$11,685,863 fewer dollars than the average
- tax rate is 12.41 cents below the average
- property tax revenues are \$5,134,292 below the average
- average General Expenditure per Capita is \$209 below the average

New Expenditure Impacts

Public Education	\$ 418,708
Public Safety	\$ 640,154
County Facilities and Equipment	\$ 255,620
County Organization Improvements	\$1,719,600
Community and Economic Development	\$ 508,485

The 2021-2022 proposed budget was for \$49,728,636, which was an increase of 8.36%. The proposed tax rate remained the same at 58.75 cents for the General Fund. Property tax income remains the largest single source of revenue.

Mr. Wooten noted the American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding would be on the June 14th agenda to get some direction from the Board. Chairman Brown requested more information regarding the American Rescue Plan (ARP).

Mr. Wooten noted there were specific target areas of expenditures in the ARP:

- COVID response
- Investments in community social welfare programs
- Investments in public health and economic impacts on low income communities
- Infrastructure--water, sewer, and broadband

In summary the percentages of the expenditures of the proposed budget were:

Public Safety	27%
Human Services	24%
Education	22%
General Government	13%
Environmental Protection	4%
Cultural and Debt Service	3%
Recreation	4%
Economic and Industrial Development	3%

Mr. Wooten noted the Solid Waste Fund Allocation was \$1,302,451, and most other counties were charging a household user fee. He added it would be a good study for an intern.

Vice Chairman Walker made a motion for a study to be done on other counties Solid Waste Fund allocation and bring results back to a future meeting, second by Commissioner Allison. Discussion followed on the County budgeting over \$1M each year to balance the fund. By a vote of 4-0 the motion passed.

Notable Capital Requests

- DSS is spread over three facilities, and all are at capacity. Staff recommended a space needs analysis of the future needs.
- Board had previously directed a move of Probation/Parole to the Administration Building. Staff recommended an HVAC system upgrade before a move is made.
- 911 Center has no room for expansion, and staff recommended planning for a future standalone facility.
- The State has requested an expansion of the Animal Shelter due to its limited capacity.

Consensus of the Board was to obtain quotes on replacing HVAC in Admin Bldg.

Chairman Brown requested the Board review the budget recommendations and let the County Manager know their thoughts regarding the budget.

Mr. Wooten noted there would be a budget public hearing on June 14th at 5:00pm at the Universal Conference Room. He added the Board would need to approve the budget by June 30th at their meeting.

Mr. Wooten recommended a workshop meeting on Monday, June 7th to review the budget recommendation. Also, following the public hearing he recommended the Board meet again to decide on the tax rate.

Vice Chairman Walker noted he and Chairman Brown had asked for a budget recommendation to have a one cent reduction in the tax base. He noted he would vote against the budget recommendation if there was not a one cent recommendation.

Chairman Brown added when the 3.75 cent tax increase was implemented the consensus was to reduce the rate as soon as possible, and he would also like to see a one cent tax reduction.

Adjournment

Commissioner Vaughn made a motion at 12:31pm to recess to June 7th at 11:30am at the Universal Conference Room, second by Vice Chairman Walker. By a vote of 4-0 the motion passed.

Attest:

Cheryl L. Mitchell
Clerk to the Board

Tony G. Brown
Chairman