

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF MCDOWELL COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
RECESSED SESSION –APRIL 14, 2022**

Assembly

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met in Recessed Session on Thursday, April 14, 2022, at 5:00p.m., at the Commissioner's Board Room located at 69 N Main Street, Marion, NC.

Members Present

Tony Brown, Chairman; 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; Alison Bell, Finance Officer; Lake Silver, Management Asst.

Call to Order

Chairman Brown called the meeting to order at 5:00pm.

Hankins North Fork Fire Dept.

Barry Stepp, Fire Chief, came before the Board to request a 2-cent tax increase, which would bring their tax rate to 10 cents.

The department has submitted a FEMA grant application for a new fire truck, the average age of their trucks is 22 years old. Due to the increase in lake traffic the department had purchased a 20 ft. Sea Ark boat. The department has been working on lowering their insurance rating from a 9 to a 7 this year, and will be asking the OSFM for a rerating.

The Hankins tax base is \$187M which is the lowest base of the four fire departments that were presenting request tonight. The fire department struggles to add new volunteers due to the required training hours. It is hard to get the training hours in when working and have families to provide for. Five new volunteers had been added since January, bringing their current number of volunteers to 21. A copy of their request is with the agenda materials.

Pleasant Gardens Fire Dept.

Anthony Killough, Board President, requested a 3-cent tax increase, which would bring their tax rate to 11 cents. The increased tax rate would allow the addition of two full-time

personnel and expand the coverage times with a paid firefighter. The additional positions would greatly reduce response times. The department currently has a Class 5 rating. A copy of their request is with the agenda materials.

Mr. Killough added the Board was invited to tour their new building at any time, and invited them to their grand opening which would be held in the next few months.

Ashford North Cove Fire Dept.

Brad Washburn, Fire Chief, presented a request for a 3-cent tax increase, which would bring their fire tax rate to 9-cents. The last tax increase request was seven years ago. The department currently has one fulltime employee providing 24-hr coverage. With the tax increase the department will add 2 personnel 12 hours a day, 7 days a week. The department currently holds a Class 6 rating.

In 2017, the department received their NC Rescue Certification in Medium Rescue. There are 18 volunteer staff; 8 are career Emergency Services staff with 5 of those 8 being paramedics. A copy of the request is with the agenda materials.

Sugar Hill Montford Cove Fire Dept

Joe Washburn, Fire Chief, presented a request for a 2-cent tax increase, which would bring their fire tax rate to 11-cents. The department would like to increase paid staffing to one-person full time (24 hours/7 days a week). The department has a Class 5 rating.

In 2017 the station received their NC Rescue Certification for light rescue. In 2019, the department built and opened Station 2 on Zion Hill Road. The main station was built in 1939 as a school and converted to a fire department in 1974. The station has reached its capacity, and is scheduled for replacement in 2023-24. The property for the new construction has been purchased. A copy of the tax rate request is with the agenda materials.

Commissioner Ellis thanked each fire department representative for giving their 5-year plan.

Mr. Grayson England, Sugar Hill Montford Cove Fire Department Board Chairman, spoke about the excellent quality of services provided by the Emergency Services and fire personnel in the county. There are approximately 300 volunteer fire fighters in the county who put in numerous hours of training and service to the citizens.

Commissioner Allison left the meeting at 6:02pm.

Marion Area Fire Dept Request

Mr. Wooten presented a request from the Marion Fire Dept. to purchase a piece of equipment. The McDowell Fire and Rescue Association purchased and placed an air compressor to be used by the local fire departments in the county. The air compressor has been

housed at the Marion Fire Dept. Most fire departments have since purchased their own air compressors, and the usage is now primarily for the benefit of Marion Fire Dept.

The Association has requested the Marion Fire Dept to purchase the compressor for \$4,000. The County share would be \$2,000.

Vice Chairman Walker made a motion to approve the request, second by Commissioner Ellis. By a vote of 4-0 the motion passed.

Vice Chairman Walker made a motion to adjourn at 6:11pm, second by Commissioner Ellis. By a vote of 4-0 the motion passed.

Attest:

Cheryl L. Mitchell
Clerk to the Board

Tony G. Brown
Chairman