

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
COUNTY OF MCDOWELL COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
REGULAR SESSION – JULY 18, 2022**

**Assembly**

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met in Regular Session on Monday, July 18, 2022, at 11:30 a.m., in the Commissioner's Board Room, 69 N Main St., Marion, NC.

**Members Present**

Tony Brown, Chairman (entered the meeting at 11:41 a.m.); David N. Walker, Vice-Chair; Chris Allison; Patrick Ellis

**Members Absent**

Brenda Vaughn

**Others Present**

Ashley Wooten, County Manager; Lake Silver, Management Asst.

**Call to Order**

Vice-Chair Walker called the meeting to order at 11:34 a.m.

**DSS Report**

Mr. Wooten reviewed numbers provided by the DSS staff, which were required to be collected by the board to be reported back to DHHS. Areas that are on the radar based on the DSS report are child support and the number of children in foster care.

Anna Lee, HR Director, and Mr. Wooten met with the DSS supervisors to check in on how things were going. Mr. Wooten will meet with DSS every Thursday morning to check in with staff.

**Soil & Water Grant Approval**

The Soil & Water District applied for and received \$929,020 in grant money. This funding will be used to rehabilitate the Lowder Dam and to do stream clearing activities. The District is quasi-independent, the County is fiscally responsible for its operations.

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to accept as presented, second by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 3-0 the motion passed.

**Terminating the State of Emergency**

Governor Cooper is terminating the Statewide State of Emergency for Covid-19 effective August 15<sup>th</sup>. Staff suggests that the board discontinue the local State of Emergency effective July 18<sup>th</sup> at 12 o'clock noon.

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to approve the discontinuance as presented, second by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 3-0 the motion passed.

*Chairman Brown entered the meeting at 11:41 a.m.*

### **ARPA Allocation Update**

Under the American Rescue Plan, the county had around \$566,000 of unallocated funding. Staff is recommending the utilization of all funds for Capital Improvements following the expenditures guidelines given by the State. The unallocated funding has been shifted to a Capital line item. The Water line item has been adjusted to reflect two water/sewer projects: The ARC grant match for the interchange area project and the Universal Sewer Project.

Vice-Chair Walker made a motion to approve the American Rescue Plan as presented, second by Commissioner Allison.

Commissioner Ellis requested Mr. Wooten to send Capital Improvements to the Board prior to specifically allocating the ARPA funds.

Vice-Chair Walker amended his motion to include Commissioner Ellis' request, second by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 4-0 the motion passed.

### **Water Projects Update**

McGill Associates continues to work on the permitting for Phase I of the Nebo Water System expansion. They are able to start on the Phase II design once they receive the approved service area. Phase I has an estimated cost of \$4,587,950 and Phase II at \$5,198,700.

One area that is not on the current map of the Nebo Water System expansion is the group of subdivisions around the Lake Club. Representatives of each of the communities have reached out over time, especially lately, to express interest in service. Several of these neighborhoods have failing wells and have described the need as extremely serious. Mr. Wooten expressed that the predicament is that the County has not yet built infrastructure on private roads or gated communities. There is potential funding available via the \$11 million of state funds to extend lines to the communities around the Lake Club. However, there would likely not be enough funding for extensions to other similarly situated communities such as The Arbor, Plantation Point, and perhaps others.

The Board discussed the high need for the updated water system in the West Marion Elementary area in addition to the Nebo Water System expansion. Staff is currently waiting on the engineer to provide plans. Commissioner Ellis has been in communication with MCS to see about a potential partnership in the matter.

Vice-Chair Walker made a motion that the subdivisions in Nebo who approached administration staff do their due diligence and contact an engineering firm and have a cost estimate proposal study done to be brought back to the County at which time the Board will try to identify grant funding to help, second by Commissioner Ellis. By a vote of 4-0 the motion passed.

## **Solid Waste Update**

Over the past year, staff discussed with the Board some feedback being received regarding the Solid Waste Enterprise finances. More specifically, the Local Government Commission has expressed reservations that the General Fund continues to subsidize the solid waste system.

Most counties have implemented a household user fee that is assessed on every improved residential property. The fee should be high enough to cover the cost of the collection and disposal of solid waste that is not covered by commercial/industrial customers. That total cost would be at least \$2,232,675 (plus more for any necessary facility improvements, vehicle/equipment debt, etc.), so a figure closer to \$2,500,000. There are at least 17,682 residential units, with a high likelihood that there are more since the system doesn't show the number of apartment units in a building, only that there is one building on the parcel. A fee at that level would be around \$140 per residential household.

Commissioner Ellis made mention that this fee isn't for home owners only, it's meant for renters as well. Mr. Wooten stated that the property owner would need to pass the information on to the renter regarding the fee.

Vice-Chair Walker made a motion to look at the option if cost does not exceed \$5,000 to upgrade the system, second by Commissioner Allison.

Mr. Wooten requested the Board add to the motion to include a Solid Waste Collection ordinance.

Vice-Chair Walker made a motion to amend the previous motion to allow staff time to work on the ordinance, second by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 4-0 the motion passed.

## **Closed Session**

Mr. Wooten requested the Board go into Closed Session pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11(a)(6).

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to go into Closed Session at 12:22, second by Vice-Chair Walker. By a vote of 4-0 the motion passed.

Vice-Chair Walker made a motion to go out of Closed Session at 12:32 p.m., second by Commissioner Ellis. By a vote of 4-0 the motion passed.

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to have the County Manager, Ashley Wooten, be the temporary interim DSS Director, second by Vice-Chair Walker. By a vote of 4-0 the motion passed.

Vice-Chair Walker made a motion to designate Lake Silver as Deputy Clerk to the Board, second by Commissioner Ellis. By a vote of 4-0 the motion passed.

## **Adjourn**

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to adjourn at 12:34pm, second by Vice-Chair Walker.  
By a vote of 4-0 the motion passed.

Attest:

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Ashley Wooten  
Deputy Clerk to the Board

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Tony G. Brown  
Chairman