

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF MCDOWELL COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR SESSION – October 17, 2022**

Assembly

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met in Regular Session on Monday, October 17, 2022, at 11:30 a.m., in the Commissioner's Board Room, 69 N Main St., Marion, NC.

Members Present

Tony Brown, Chairman; David Walker, Vice-Chairman; Brenda Vaughn; Chris Allison; Patrick Ellis

Members Absent

None

Others Present

Ashley Wooten, County Manager; Victoria Craig, Clerk to the Board; Lake Silver, Management Assistant

Verizon Wireless Easement

Verizon Wireless is proposing to construct a cell tower south of Marion on a knoll that borders County-owned property. While the tower would be on private property, part of the ice fall zone is on the County parcel. The Board requested a \$500 monthly payment for the easement. The company counter-offered with a one-time \$5,000 payment.

Kenny Wray, Verizon Wireless, and Jeremy Holt, Chase Real Estate Services, negotiated with Board members about finding a payment that both Verizon and the Board could agree on.

Kenny Wray continued to emphasize the need for McDowell County Emergency Services personnel to be able to have adequate service to perform for the safety of citizens. Mr. Wray informed the Board that the projected cell tower would help communication tremendously for emergency services and constituents.

Vice-Chairman Walker informed Kenny Wray that McDowell County Emergency Services have switched providers. Ashley Wooten, County Manager, clarified that the company Emergency Services, under William Kehler's supervision, went with was First Net. It was also discussed how the Sheriff's Department is testing out First Net as well.

Commissioner Ellis mentioned that along with emergency services, churches and local residents have complained about service in the County for the past 12-15 months. Mr. Ellis also emphasized that the ice fall zone will not be able to be used during the term of the lease with Verizon, which would be 25 years. There are now both service issues and land issues that the County is facing with Verizon.

Vice-Chairman Walker made a motion to grant the easement for a total payment from Verizon of \$25,000 at \$1,000 a year for 25 years. Commissioner Allison made a second for discussion and asked if anyone from the Planning Department would like to speak. Verizon representatives interjected and informed the Board that the lease price that's being requested would typically be what Verizon would pay for an entire site. The Planning Board didn't have input on the matter aside from currently working on the temporary cell service site at Temple Baptist Church in Marion. Commissioner Allison asked where the Board originally got the value of \$500 per month for the easement. Ashley Wooten informed him that it was based on recommendations by individuals who were familiar with the easement.

Jeremy Holt requested to speak and explain the process he goes through to get to the easement amount that was presented to the Board, which was a total payment of \$5,000 for a 25-year lease. He spoke about the price that land is selling for in the area. The ice fall zone is just under one acre and according to his research, one acre was going for \$6,000 to \$13,000. The Board pointed out personal sales they have made recently with rural land and it was north of \$25,000. Mr. Holt told the Board that the land in discussion isn't buildable land, which is why the proposed price was less than what the Board requested.

Vice-Chairman Walker called the question and requested to vote. Chairman Brown asked Verizon representatives if they would be interested in a 15-year \$15,000 contract. Jeremy Holt told the Board that he would have to submit that request before giving an answer. Kenny Wray stated that Verizon would do a maximum amount of \$7,500.

Chairman Brown referred back to the previous motion made by Vice-Chairman Walker, which was seconded by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed requesting a \$25,000 25-year lease for the Verizon easement.

Freedom Life Grants

Transitional Housing Project

Freedom Life and other partners have been working for many years on a transitional housing concept for hard-to-house individuals. The housing would come with a programming component requiring the residents to attend classes, treatment, etc. to remain in their homes. CDBG funding has been identified as a possible solution to help get the project off the ground. The proposed resolution would allow for a grant application to be filed by the November 1st deadline. Staff would assist Freedom Life with the grant preparation. The property in discussion is at 3224 Hwy 70 E, Marion. There is a potential to have more than 24 units on these 8 acres of land.

Vice-Chairman Walker made a motion to approve the resolution supporting the CDBG grant, second by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed.

Narcan Grant

Vaya Health forwarded information out to regional counties about a grant opportunity related to Naloxone/Narcan distribution. The grant will provide counties up to \$70,000 a year for three years for Narcan purchases as long as the county provides matching funds.

Danny Hampton informed staff that this type of program is exactly what was discussed at the October 3rd Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) meeting for the Opioid Settlement, specifically being able to use the local settlement funds to bring in other funding.

Vice-Chairman Walker approved the County match from the Opioid Settlement Funding, second by Commissioner Ellis. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed.

Operation Green Light

The National Association of Counties and the NC Association of County Commissioners are recognizing veterans through Operation Green Light from November 7-11. The goal is to light up public buildings that week to show veterans the community appreciates their service.

Tony G. Brown, Chairman
David Walker, Vice Chairman
Brenda Vaughn, Commissioner
Chris Allison, Commissioner
Patrick Ellis, Commissioner



Ashley Wooten, County Manager
Victoria Craig, Clerk to the Board
Donald Fred Coats, County
Attorney

McDowell County

A Resolution Supporting Operation Green Light for Veterans

WHEREAS, the residents of McDowell County have great respect, admiration, and the utmost gratitude for all of the men and women who have selflessly served our country and this community in the Armed Forces; and

WHEREAS, the contributions and sacrifices of the men and women who served in the Armed Forces have been vital in maintaining the freedoms and way of life enjoyed by our citizens; and

WHEREAS, McDowell County seeks to honor these individuals who have paid the high price for freedom by placing themselves in harm's way for the good of all; and

WHEREAS, approximately 200,000 service members transition to civilian communities annually; and

WHEREAS, an estimated 20 percent increase of service members will transition to civilian life in the near future, and

WHEREAS, studies indicate that 44-72 percent of service members experience high levels of stress during the transition from military to civilian life, and

WHEREAS, active Military Service Members transitioning from military service are at high risk for suicide during their first year after military service; and

WHEREAS, McDowell County appreciates the sacrifices of our United States Military Personnel and believes specific recognition should be granted; therefore, be it

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, with designation as a Green Light for Veterans County, McDowell County hereby declares from October through Veterans Day, November 11th 2022, a time to salute and honor the service and sacrifice of our men and women in uniform transitioning from Active Service; therefore, be it further

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that in observance of Operation Green Light, McDowell County Board of Commissioners encourages its citizens in patriotic tradition to recognize the importance of honoring all those who made immeasurable sacrifices to preserve freedom by displaying a green light in a window of their place of business or residence,

Adopted this 17th day of October, 2022.

Attest:

Victoria Craig
Clerk to the Board

Tony G. Brown
Chairman

Vice-Chairman Walker made a motion to approve the Resolution for Operation Green Light, second by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed.

DSS Update

Ashley Wooten, County Manager and Interim DSS Director, presented the monthly DSS updates to the Board. In the month of September, there were 99 children in McDowell County's foster care placement. Staff is looking into some miscalculations of the program integrity claims, which is why there was no update this month.

A contract proposal was presented to the Board from Vanguard Staffing to provide staffing for the Child Welfare services if and when necessary. There would be no costs incurred until staffing is required.

Vice-Chairman Walker made a motion to approve the Vanguard contract, second by Commissioner Vaughn. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed.

Parks Master Plan Update

The Board has previously authorized submitting a grant to make enhancements to the Maple Leaf Complex, specifically by adding an area for a playground and picnic shelters. The 2-page Maple Leaf Park Master Plan needs to be included in an update to the 2014 Parks and Recreation System Master Plan.

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to include the two pages to the Master Plan, second by Commissioner Vaughn. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed.

Closed Session

Vice-Chairman Walker made a motion to go into Closed Session at 12:15 p.m. pursuant to N.C. G.S. 143-318.11 (a) (3) and (6); second by Commissioner Ellis. By a vote of 5-0 the motion passed.

Commissioner Vaughn made a motion to go out of Closed Session at 12:31 p.m., second by Commissioner Ellis. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed.

No action was taken.

Adjournment

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to adjourn at 12:32 p.m., second by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed.

Attest:

Victoria Craig
Clerk to the Board

Tony G. Brown
Chairman