

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
MCDOWELL COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
REGULAR SESSION – October 9, 2023**

**Assembly**

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met in Regular Session on Monday, October 9, 2023, at 4:00 p.m., at the Historic Carson House, 1805 US 70, Marion, NC.

**Members Present**

Tony G. Brown, Chairman; David N. Walker, Vice-Chairman; Chris Allison; Patrick Ellis; Lynn Greene

**Others Present**

Ashley Wooten, County Manager; Charity Turner-Coates, Clerk to the Board; Linda Onufrey; Daphne Carter; Doug Swain; Martha Jordon; Fred Coats, County Attorney

**Call to Order**

Chairman Brown called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

The invocation was given by Vice Chairman Walker.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Ellis.

**Approval of Minutes**

Vice Chairman Walker made a motion to approve the September 11, 2023, Regular Session minutes and the Closed Session minutes; the September 18, 2023, Regular Session minutes and the Closed Session minutes; and the Recessed Session minutes on September 26, 2023. Commissioner Allison seconded the motion. By a vote of 5 to 0, the motion passed.

**Approval of the Agenda**

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to approve the October 9, 2023 agenda. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Greene. By a vote of 5 to 0, the motion passed.

The Carson House update was moved after the Citizen Comment section by Chairman Brown.

### **Tag Office Update**

Chairman Brown recognized Linda Onufrey and Daphney Carter for the purpose of discussing adding Wildlife services to the tag office. The application has been submitted to Wildlife Services and the County is waiting on approval. Discussion followed and the Board agreed this service would be beneficial to the citizens of the County. The Commissioners expressed their appreciation for the good job that is done by the County Tag Office.

A motion was made by Commissioner Ellis to accept Wild Life Services and was seconded by Vice Chairman Walker. By a vote of 5 to 0, the motion passed.

### **City Of Marion Request**

County Manager Wooten explained to the Board the City of Marion is requesting funding assistance to replace the engine for a 2009 brush truck in the amount of approximately \$23,000.00. The County would and the City of Marion would split the cost 50/50. The County's portion would be approximately \$11,751.40. Discussion followed and the Board agreed it was more cost-efficient at this time to replace the engine, as compared to purchasing a new brush truck.

A motion was made by Commissioner Greene to approve half of the cost of a new engine purchase and was seconded by Commissioner Ellis. By a vote of 5 to 0, the motion.

Commissioner Ellis did ask for a line-item budget from the City and Vice Chairman Walker stated he would like to know the remaining balance of the debt.

### **Mill Creek DWR Grant**

Previously the Board had agreed to act as the fiscal agent for a Division of Water Resources grant. This would help design a small park in downtown Old Fort. The grant was awarded in the amount of \$50,000. The total cost is \$100,000. The remaining balance is being covered by a grant from the McDowell TDA.

A motion was made to accept the engineer's contract by Vice Chairman Walker and seconded by Commissioner Allison.

Vice Chairman Walker noted there was no County funding involved. By a vote of 5 to 0, the motion passed.

### **Glenwood Parade Road Closure Request**

The Glenwood Ruritan Club is asking for a road closure ordinance to be adopted in order to hold the annual Christmas parade on November 25, 2023.

A Motion was made by Vice Chairman Walker to adopt the ordinance and was seconded by Commissioner Ellis. By a vote of 5 to 0, the motion passed.

### **Water Project Updates**

County Manager Wooten updated the Board on the water-related projects and the budgetary impact on the County.

Mobilization of the Nebo Phase One has begun and the Universal water and sewer extension has started.

Hoppy Tom Hollow has been permitted and is ready to bid and the Nebo Phase 2 will be submitted for permitting soon.

The grant for the East End Project was awarded, and the engineering contract has been signed.

An Appalachian Regional Commission grant to extend water around Exit 90 has been awarded and the engineering selection process has begun.

The State budget granted \$4,000,000 to McDowell County for water projects. Discussion followed as to how to proceed with the funding.

The Board agreed to direct the funding to the West Marion Community and West Marion Elementary. There was a discussion about water contamination in the Arrowhead Development.

The Board will be asking the school system to contribute \$500,000 to help with the cost of the water project for West Marion Elementary School.

A motion was made by Commissioner Greene to direct funding for water projects toward the West Marion Community and West Marion Elementary School. The motion also includes asking the McDowell County School System to contribute in

the amount of \$500,000. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ellis. By a vote of 5 to 0, the motion passed.

### **Broadband Update**

County Manager Wooten updated the Board on the Broadband (CAB), explaining additional information should be available soon pertaining to the number of additional residents who will be served.

### **Capital Updates**

County Manager Wooten provided the Board with updates on several capital projects.

The bids for the Recreation Center Project are pending and various configurations of options are available based on funding. There was discussion on having a workshop to further discuss Recreation Center Projects. Commissioner Ellis requested for any workshop to be held after 5:00 p.m. if possible.

The project architect has completed the drawings that would allow for the Probation/Parole staff to relocate to the second floor of the Services Building. Options are currently being explored that would lower the cost.

The architects have developed a working floor plan for the animal shelter and can now move to the next step to have the CAD drawings put together.

Staff is currently seeking quotes to remove the remnants of the foundation of the EMS building on Garden Street.

### **Budget Reports**

County Manager Wooten provided the Board with monthly budget information. The information included the June through July sales. There was discussion in reference to the local economy doing well and going strong.

### **Administrative Items**

- There were EMS write-offs totaling \$64,400.33.

Vice Chairman Walker made a motion to approve the administrative items, including the EMS write-offs, and was seconded by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 5 to 0, the motion passed.

## **Board Appointments**

There was a second reading for the Juvenile Crime Prevention Council for the vacant faith-based seat.

Sarah Brewer turned in her resignation to serve on the Juvenile Crime Prevention Council.

This is the second reading for two vacancies on the Historic Preservation Commission. The members must have a demonstrated interest and background in history and must reside outside the corporate limits of the Town of Old Fort and the City of Marion.

This is the first reading for one vacancy on the Transportation Advisory Board.

This is the first reading for two vacancies on the Planning Board.

Kaylaney Herrera was approved by the Board to serve as a Student member of the Juvenile Crime Prevention Council.

Ms. Kim Moran was approved by the Board to serve on the Historic Preservation Committee.

County Manager Wooten informed the Board that Library Director Marlan Brinkley is requesting a change to the by-laws to allow for meeting dates to be moved.

A motion was made by Vice Chairman Walker to allow the Library by-law change and was seconded by Commissioner Greene. By a vote of 5 to 0, the motion passed.

## **Tax Matters**

County Manager Wooten presented monthly tax releases, refunds, and discoveries.

Refunds- \$449.83

Releases under \$100.00 – \$31.41

Releases over \$100.00- \$2,718.97

Discoveries- \$4,502.80

Vehicle Refund- \$2,266.32

Vice Chairman Walker made a motion to approve tax matters, seconded by Commissioner Ellis. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed.

### **Citizen Comment**

There were no citizen comments.

### **Historic Carson House Update**

Chairman Brown recognized Martha Jordan to provide the Board with an update on the Historic Carson House. Ms. Jordan explained it is the goal of the Carson House to promote and provide historical education. The Carson House recently welcomed approximately 400 fourth graders from the McDowell County School System. The volunteers who work with the Carson House are very well-trained and highly qualified, according to Ms. Jordan. Some of the upcoming events scheduled at the Carson House were shared with the Board.

Mr. Doug Swaim then spoke with the Board and explained that approximately 12 years ago plans were made to build a Welcome Center at the Carson House. The process of building has begun. England Builders from McDowell County has been selected as the contractor for this project and the goal is to begin building in April 2024. The Welcome Center will be added to the back of the house. It is expected to take 9 to 10 months to complete. The Carson House is continuing to raise funds for this project.

The Commissioners expressed their appreciation to the staff of the Historic Carson House.

A motion was made by Vice Chairman Walker to meet inside the Historic Carson House every other year and for the Board to cover the expense of the meal that was being provided by the Carson House to the Board as a token of appreciation to the Carson House staff. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Allison and by a 5 to 0 vote, the motion passed.

### **Commissioners/Staff Reports**

County Manager Wooten did present to the Board, the suggestion of the County participating in the Green Light Project to honor Veterans.

Vice Chairman Walker made a motion for all County buildings to participate in the Green Light Project and the motion was seconded by Commissioner Ellis. By a vote of 5 to 0, the motion passed.

The Commissioners discussed moving the Regular Session meeting on October 16, 2023, to the McDowell County Department of Social Services.

Vice Chairman Walker made a motion to move the meeting to McDowell DSS on October 16, 2023, and the motion was seconded by Commissioner Greene. By a vote of 5 to 0, the motion passed.

**Adjournment**

A motion was made by Vice Chairman Walker to adjourn at 4:48 pm., and seconded by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed.

Attest:

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Charity Turner-Coates  
Clerk to the Board

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Tony G. Brown  
Chairman