

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
MCDOWELL COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR SESSION – June 10, 2024**

Assembly

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met in Regular Session on Monday, June 10, 2024, at 5:00 p.m., in the Commissioner's Board Room, 69 N Main St., Marion, NC.

Members Present

David N. Walker, Chairman; Tony Brown, Vice-Chair; Lynn Greene and Patrick Ellis

Members Absent

Chris Allison

Others Present

Ashley Wooten, County Manager; Sena A. Allison, Clerk to the Board; Fred Coats, County Attorney; The New Manna Boys Baseball Team, Chip Cross, President of the Marion Rotary Club and Teresa Stephens, Vice President of Affordable Communities the Givens Estate.

Call to Order

Chairman Walker called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. The Prayer was given by Commissioner Ellis. The Pledge of Allegiance was given by Commissioner Greene.

Approval of Minutes

Vice Chair Brown made a motion to approve the May 13, 2024 Regular Session minutes; the May 20, 2024 Regular Session minutes; with a second by Commissioner Greene. By a vote of 4-0, the motion passed.

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to approve the Closed Session minutes for January 8, 2024, February 12, 2024, April 29, 2024, and May 13, 2024; with a second by Commissioner Greene. By a vote of 4-0, the motion passed.

Approval of Agenda

Vice Chair Brown made a motion to approve the Agenda; this was seconded by Commissioner Ellis. By a vote of 4-0, the motion passed. The County Manager requested to table Item D. under New Business.

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to table Item D.; with a second by Commissioner Greene. By a vote of 4-0, the motion passed.

Recognition of New Manna Baseball Team

Chairman Walker invited Head Coach Aaron Wagner to the podium to give the accounts of winning the NC Christian School Association State Championship. Coach Wagner spoke on behalf of the team, giving account of their undefeated season and details of their last three playoff games.

The Board members each gave congratulations to the team and their service to Christ in playing sports. They drafted a framed Resolution to present to the team, naming and distinguishing the coaches and team players. Chairman Walker read the Resolution as the coaches and players came in front of the board room as he read off their names and titles. At that time the Commissioners had their pictures taken with the team to commemorate the occasion.

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to approve the Resolution honoring the New Manna Baseball Team, with a second by Commissioner Greene. By a vote of 4-0, the motion passed.

WHEREAS, the McDowell County Board of Commissioners wishes to recognize the outstanding performance by the student athletes and the coaches of the New Manna Christian School Boys Wind Baseball team during the 2024 Baseball season.

WHEREAS, the New Manna Christian School Boys Baseball team advanced through the North Carolina Christian School Association, Finishing the season winning the NCCSA 1A West, with an undefeated record.

WHEREAS, the Playoff game #1 victory of 10-0 against Scotland Christian (Laurinburg) at home

WHEREAS, the Playoff game #2 victory of 4-2 against New Life Christian (Rocky Mount) in Wilson, NC

WHEREAS, the Playoff game #3 Championship Game victory of 5-3 against Oak Level Christian (Stokesdale)

WHEREAS, it is appropriate and fitting for the McDowell County Board of Commissioners to recognize and congratulate Head Baseball Coach Aaron Wagner; Assistant Coach's Brandon Wilson and Wayne Stafford. The Team players are: Hunter Buchanan (7th grade), Jayden Vallini (8th grade), Noah Davis (8th grade), Brycan Stewart (8th grade), Mason Kidd (10th grade), Brody Davis (11th grade) All-Region, Derek Crowder (11th grade), Tommy Honeycutt (11th grade) All-State, Michah Wagner (11th grade) All-State, Cavot Payne (12th grade), Troy Hendley (12th grade), Matthew Demick (12th grade), Canon Stamey (12th grade), Charles Ray (12th grade) All-Region and Jake Addison (12th grade) All-State.

BE IT RESOLVED by the members of the McDowell County Board of Commissioners that the student athletes and coaching staff of New Manna Boys Wind are to be congratulated on winning the North Carolina Christian School Association State Championship.

Rotary Presentation

Chairman Walker welcomed Chip Cross, President of the Marion Rotary Club to speak to the Board and recognized what an outstanding organization he represents. Mr. Cross spoke on behalf of the Rotary Club in wanting to thank the Board for their service to the community. He told that the Rotary Club was formed for fellowship and community service and how much their Club has grown this year – with mention of Ashley Wooten and Mike Conley as being members who were present in the Board Room. He read aloud a Letter of Appreciation to the Board, highlighted that the Board serves our County as a role model and having the same creed as the Rotary Club of “Service above Self”. The President then read a letter that the Rotary Club wrote to each of the Board members individually.

He spoke on the volunteers they have in various projects, then told of accomplishment for this year in raising \$60,000.00 at their auction; almost being at the point to get to send 1 million meals to Ukraine, with 240-wheel chairs. They sponsored a surgical team to go to the Dominican Republic for children born with cleft palates and have sent funds to Honduras. In addition, the Club donated \$20,000.00 to MTCC along with other organizations to be able to have a \$75,000.00 scholarship available for the college plus partnering labor and donations for ramps built for the community.

Chairman Walker thanked Mr. Cross stating the Board should be recognizing the Rotary Club for their work, leading to Vice Chair Brown saying how rare it is to get thanks for the job they do. Commissioner Ellis gave thanks and also was appreciative for Mr. Cross speaking on all the volunteers and the work they do. Commissioner Greene spoke on having a desire to serve the county and how the Board could not do what they do without volunteers such as they have.

At this point, Chairman Walker turned the meeting over to Vice Chair Brown, as he had a prior commitment he needed to leave for.

Budget Public Hearing

Vice Chair Brown declared the meeting a public hearing and recognized Ashley Wooten to speak. Mr. Wooten referenced the budget had been presented to the Board on May 23rd and this is the time for the public to make comments on the budget if they desire, making it clear to the public, this is not the approval to the budget by the Board as they have until the end of the month to make changes.

Vice Chair Brown asked for anyone who would like to speak on the right side of the room, in regards to the budget in which Jonathan McKenzie came to the podium to speak on the safety of McDowell County Schools.

Mr. McKenzie requested an investment in Fast Reliable Communication Devices with a set of protocols to ensure the safety of the students and faculty. He has been told that some of the elementary schools have had success receiving State and Federal grant money in funding this type of program and is proposing before school goes back into session, that all schools be provided with an application for the faculty’s phones for communication or some sort of quick response device that can admit any potential danger within the school. Mr. McKenzie asked to have all the schools design a plan that would include their Resource Officers and spoke on an

incident on May 31st where 2 administrators were injured by a student at McDowell High School, thus this investment would be adventitious to any risk litigation to the schools. He proposed donating his time to serve on a committee that can organize a plan of this nature and he then spoke of his appreciation to the Board and the good people of our community for their service. Vice Chair Brown asked Mr. McKenzie to send a copy of what he is proposing to the County Manager and explained the Board has a monthly meeting with the Superintendent, school board members, MTCC faculty and trustees and will present this at the next meeting. Commissioner Greene told Mr. McKenzie he would give the County Manager the name of the Safe Schools Coordinator to be in contact with him.

At that time Vice Chair Brown asked if there was anyone on the left side of the room who wanted to speak in regards to the budget, in which no one did. Vice Chair Brown declared the Board meeting out of public hearing setting.

Commissioner Greene made a motion to come out of public hearing, with a second by Commissioner Ellis. By a vote of 3-0, the motion passed.

Givens Estates Project

The County Manager introduced Teresa Stephens, the Vice President of the Givens Estates Affordable Housing to update the Board for the Givens Estates project in the Clinchfield area. Ms. Stephens told that this is a project that has been going on for the past 3 years, in which they have been meeting with folks in the County and the City to get to know the needs and wants this community have. She specified meeting with Neil Gurney of Gateway Foundation to look at property for their project. She told that a consultant and an architect mentioned to look at any old textile mills, whereas the Clinchfield Mill was within the search. The Vice President spoke in regards to the pursuit of funding and the struggles they have come against to obtain affordable housing, along with great support from the citizens of the County to have this completed. Ms. Stephens gave a slide presentation showing the site plans and specifying funding they have applied for.

Commissioner Greene made a motion to address a letter of support for the Givens Estates Clinchfield Project, with a second by Commissioner Ellis. By a vote of 3-0, the motion passed.

Commissioner Greene asked what is the goal of the timeline for the project, in which Ms. Stephens said if they get an award early next year, they will start working on tax credits and will hope to start construction in 2026. Andrew Crosson, Project Development Coordinator spoke on the delays to the application and he mentioned working closely with Tommy Laughter, the Regional Representative for NC Congressman Charles Edwards who was present in the board room. Commissioner Ellis thanked them for their due diligence in working for the County and how he is looking forward to the Givens Estate coming in our community as the Asheville, NC Estates is an admirable habitation.

Water Project Update

Mr. Wooten gave updates on the Nebo Phase 1 ending soon, Hoppy Tom Hollow starting and gave the bids for Nebo Phase 2A and 2B. He cited the funding is from the American Rescue Plan Act as passed through the state of North Carolina.

Nebo Phase 2A and 2B bids have been opened. The certified bid tabulation is attached. The same contractor, TP Howard Plumbing was the low bidder for both projects. Phase 2A is \$2,310,000.00 and Phase 2B is \$1,890,000.00.

The other bids for 2A were:

Cooper Construction:	\$2,467,291.00
Huntley Construction:	\$2,569,199.00
Buckeye Bridge:	\$2,788,884.00
Piedmont Utility:	\$3,042,373.54

The other bids for 2B were:

Cooper Construction:	\$1,945,280.00
Huntley Construction:	\$2,089,982.00
Buckeye Bridge:	\$2,431,476.00
Piedmont Utility:	\$2,544,703.92

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to accept the awards for Phase 2A and 2B to TP Howard Plumbing as presented, with a second by Commissioner Greene. By a vote of 3-0, the motion passed.

Mr. Wooten mentioned the East end project around the Marion Lake Club area has been sent to the permitting office, the Exit 90 project is under design, and a private developer who is doing a small extension for a development on US 70 for around 5- 10 homes will begin soon. He lastly told of staff meeting tomorrow to select the engineering firm for the Providence area, going towards West Marion Elementary and hopefully will have a contract for the July meeting.

Broadband Update

Mr. Wooten updated the Completing Access to Broadband (CAB) with telling that a committee selected a company to be awarded for our area, by which a recommendation has been sent to the NC Department of Information Technology. This will be reviewed by the company and in a few weeks, with an announcement that can be made public.

Building Update

Mr. Wooten began with the DSS building project; that plans have been shared with the County's legislative delegation for the goal to receive State funding assistance. The Transfer Station and 911 Center have had opportunity for Federal Funding to which Congressman Edwards has endorsed, as a start towards the projects. The Recreation Center project is under construction, with completion scheduled for 5-6 months. Mr. Wooten mention the City of Marion will shoot off fireworks on the 4th at the ballpark, and staff has asked the City to assist in patrolling the site for any possible injuries or mishaps to the citizens, wherein the City Manager has ensured their cooperation. He told lastly that an Animal Shelter location has been proposed on 226 South. At that time, Vice Chair Brown thanked Representative Tommy Laughter for his assistance in securing grants for the County.

Charlotte Interbasin Transfer Request

Mr. Wooten updated he had met with the City Manager, County and City Representatives from Western Piedmont Council of Governments on working to present options and alternatives to the disapproval of the Request. He told of the next public meeting of July 15^t in Morganton in which staff will attend and he will let the City and Town know for their interest.

NCACC Legislative Goal Process

The County Manager began with telling the NC Association of County Commissioners will have a conference where a representative can be sent to bring forth goals to go over. The NCACC is asking for these to be submitted by August in order to prepare the session, that will start in January 2025. Mr. Wooten mentioned the Chairman had given a goal to be brought forth on State's consideration for Universal Pre-K and included in the agenda an example for the Commissioners to brief and to get back to him their goals for submission.

Youngs Fork Watershed Project

Mr. Wooten gave an update, stating plans have been made for the Universal property that has a creek flowing through, and some erosion issues that could cause a detrimental impact to the property if not addressed. He outlined how the creek goes through a culvert that is 50 years old, along with 2 dams that discharge into the creek. Mr. Wooten cited that funding came through from the General Assembly to address the needs and how in the last meeting the Board approved an administrative contract with a firm called Resource Institute that will monitor the work and the firm selected is Jennings Environmental. The design-build contract is for \$4.5 million dollars, being funded by a State appropriation.

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to take the design-build contract as presented, with a second by Commissioner Greene. The motion passed by a vote of 3-0.

Vice Chair asked Mr. Wooten for an ensure that there would be no County money spent on this project, in which Mr. Wooten relayed there would not be.

Courthouse CRAVE System

Mr. Wooten told that CRAVE is a system for the courthouse where cameras are installed to allow victims, especially children, to testify in cases where the potential offender is. He said a system was installed in the newer court room approximately a year and a half ago, in which a Dogwood Heath Trust grant paid for, and a second system would be the responsibility of the County. This will be approximately \$8,600.00.

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to accept the CRAVE system as presented, with a second by Commissioner Greene. The motion passed by a vote of 3-0.

Fireworks Approval

The County Manager told the Commissioners, who are required to approve all fireworks shows that are within the County (NC General Statute 14-413) and he has included a list of the Fireworks Displays for the Board.

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to approve the Fireworks list as presented, with a second by Commissioner Greene. The motion passed by a vote of 3-0.

A brief discussion on fireworks done by private individuals was had, in which Commissioner Greene stated anything that leaves the ground in NC requires a permit. Mr. Wooten did say the ones the Board are approving have the proper requirements, including insurance and bonding.

Budget Update

Mr. Wooten went over the budget amendments listed:

GF 51 - Transfers between numerous line items under \$3,000.

GF 52 - Transfers between line items and appropriates revenue in Emergency Services.

GF 53 - Transfers between line items and appropriates revenue in the Sheriff's Office.

GF 54 - Transfers between line items in Parks and Recreation.

DS1 - Appropriate designated fund balance for debt payments.

ENT3 - Transfers between line items and allocates revenue in the Waste fund.

There are two project budget ordinances/amendments:

EMS Base Construction and Base Addition Amendment 3 and Golden Leaf Site 2 Ordinance

Commissioner Greene made a motion to accept the budget amendments as presented, with a second by Commissioner Ellis. The motion passed by a vote of 3-0.

Administrative Items

Mr. Wooten spoke on a Resolution for vehicle financing, which is for one RAM truck for Public Services, one Chevrolet Tahoe for Emergency Services, and eight Ford Explorers for the Sheriff's office, along with the EMS write offs.

Commissioner Greene made a motion to accept the administrative items as presented, with a second by Commissioner Ellis. The motion passed by a vote of 3-0.

Board Appointments

The County Manager went over Board Appointments as Stacy Buff to be appointed to the Foothills Workforce Development Board.

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to approve the Board Appointee, Stacy Buff to the Foothills Workforce Development Board, with a second by Commissioner Greene. The motion passed by a vote of 3-0.

Mr. Wooten spoke of a Board of Commissioner vacancy to the America250 Committee, in which will be discussed in next month's Board meeting, as there will be County staff attending the upcoming scheduled meetings as well. He lastly requested to reassign Chad Marsh as an MTCC Board Trustees, being his term expires at the end of this month.

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to approve the Chad Marsh gets reappointed as an MTCC Board Trustee, with a second by Commissioner Greene. The motion passed by a vote of 3-0.

Tax Matters

Mr. Wooten spoke of tax matters with the usual refunds.

Motor Vehicle Tax Refunds: \$932.03

Releases Over \$100: \$0.00

Releases Under \$0.00

Refunds: \$372.93

Discoveries: \$0.00

Commissioner Greene made a motion to accept the Tax Matters as presented, with a second by Commissioner Ellis. The motion passed by a vote of 3-0.

Citizens Comments

Chris Price spoke on Ethics.

Closed Session

Vice Chair Brown asked for a motion to go into a closed session under [NCGS 143-318.11 (a) (3)].

Commissioner Greene motioned to approve closed session at 6:05 p.m., with a second by Commissioner Ellis. By a vote of 3-0, the motion passed.

Out of Closed Session

Commissioner Ellis motioned to come out of closed session at 6:14 p.m., with a second by Commissioner Greene. By a vote of 3-0, the motion passed.

Adjournment

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to adjourn, with a second from Commissioner Greene. By a vote of 3-0, the motion passed to adjourn at 6:15 p.m.

Attest:

Sena Allison
Clerk to the Board

David N. Walker
Chairman

