

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
MCDOWELL COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
RECESSED SESSION – June 28, 2024**

Assembly

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met in a Recessed Session on Friday, June 28, 2024, at 11:30 a.m., in the Commissioner’s Board Room, 69 N Main St., Marion, NC.

Members Present

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

Members Absent

None

Others Present

Ashley Wooten, County Manager; Sena A. Allison, Clerk to the Board and Fred Coats, County Attorney.

Call to Order

Chairman Walker called the meeting to order at 11:30 a.m.

FY 2025 Budget & Fee Schedule Approval

Ashley Wooten began with the Budget, citing the primary change being a request to hire an additional employee for the Board of Elections. The Budget was adjusted to have a 19-hour position, as well as additional part time hours for the ability to assist with the upcoming election. Mr. Wooten went over the fee schedule adjustments that were amended:

- Tipping Fees – Recommended increase of 6% due to Republic increasing our cost
- Water System – Recommended increase of 10% due to the City of Marion increasing our cost.
- Building Permits – Recommended increase of 5% due to increased staffing costs.

Mr. Wooten stated the budget was ready to be approved, in which Chairman Walker thanked he and Alison Bell for their effort on making a position within the budget for the Board of Elections. He also commented on how the Board would have liked to have given the employees a certain percentage to their pay, but the Board was not prepared to raise the property tax rate for the County. Commissioner Greene stated he would prefer not to have an increase to his pay this year and to let his part go towards off setting items needed.

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to approve the budget, subject to the exception of the Commissioners increase in pay for this year, with a second by Commissioner Greene. By a vote of 2 to 3, the motion failed.

Commissioner Allison stated he was voting against the budget approval due to the previous year's budget approval, the Board accepted to have 1/3 of staff go through a pay scale study in order to have all positions looked at once every three years and this was not completed.

Vice Chair Brown spoke to having looked at other States and Counties pay for their Commissioners in which he does not think the salary they are paid justifies the work each Commissioner does. The Vice Chairman made a motion to keep the pay of the Commissioners as the budget states and to accept the budget proposal as is, with a second by Chairman Walker. Commissioner Greene told he would not hold up the budget up over the pay issue. By a vote of 4 to 1, the motion passed.

Chairman Walker asked Mr. Wooten to give the Board a refresher on the pay scale study.

FY 2024 Budget Amendments

Mr. Wooten gave 2 Project Ordinance Amendments which are the American Rescue Plan Act Amendment 14 and Accessibility for Parks Amendment 2 (Maple Leaf Playground).

There are several budget amendments for FY 2024:

GF 55 - Transfers between numerous line items under \$3,000.

GF 56 - Records anticipated insurance reimbursement and appropriate reserves for repairs to the lower level.

GF 57 - Increases real estate tax and related expenditures in the Register of Deeds office.

GF 58 - Increases revenue received and increases estimated expenditure line items in the Sheriff's Office.

GF 59 - Increases revenue received and increases estimated expenditures in Parks and Recreation.

- GF 60 - Increases grant revenue and transfers between line items in EMS.
- GF 61 - Increase grant revenue and transfers between line items at DSS.
- GF 62 - Increases grant revenue and transfers between line items at the Senior Center.
- GF 63 - Increase reimbursement revenue and expenditures offset for sales tax.
- GF 64 - Transfers between line items under \$3,000.
- GF 65 - Appropriate Medicaid reimbursement for EMS.
- GF 66 - Transfers between line items in Finance.
- GF 67 - Appropriate jail phone revenue at the Sheriff's Office.
- GF 68 – Transfers between line items at DSS.
- GF 69 – Appropriates revenue to cover anticipated food expenditures.
- GF 70 – Transfers between various line items in numerous departments.
- GF 71 – Transfers between line items under \$3000.
- FD4 – Allocates estimated sales tax and DMV collections to the fire districts.
- ENT4 – Transfers between line items and allocates revenue in the Waste Enterprise Fund.
- 911F3 – Transfers between line items in the 911 Fund.
- SI1 – Allocates revenues for the Self Insurance Fund.

Commissioner Greene made a motion to approve the Budget Amendments as presented, with a second from Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed.

Policy Items

Mr. Wooten presented a new policy on timesheets for employees, beginning when the new HR system called NEOGOV. The policy requires each employee will have to submit a timesheet in order to be paid. A general discussion was had on the laws of NC Labor. Mr. Wooten asked for the 1st reading on this to be waived, as per the timing of the system coming online, and to adopt this policy.

Commissioner Greene made a motion to accept the policy, with a second by Vice Chair Brown. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed.

The County Manager mentioned the Chairman had asked for information on parental leave for the County, which states parents are allowed to take sick, vacation, or comp leave after the birth of a child and once this is used the employee is covered under the Family Medical Leave Act. He went over what the State allows for parental leave and cited there are 8-10 counties who have implemented paid parental leave. Chairman Walker asked the Board to consider adopting the States plan as a benefit to employees, with the exception of our current policy requirement of acquiring insurance benefits after 30 days of hiring.

Commissioner Greene made a motion to table the discussion in order to do more research, with a second by Vice Chair Brown. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed.

Mr. Wooten told the Commissioners staff would do more research on the County level regarding parental leave policies and present their findings to the Board.

Opioid Items

Mr. Wooten went over 2 items under the Opioid Settlement, with the first being a lawsuit settlement offer with the Kroger Corporation. The Board had previously approved this settlement and the State and litigation team have asked for a Resolution to be endorsed and signed in anticipation of funding. Mr. Wooten cited the proposed monies to the County are approximately \$20,000.00 per year for 10 years.

Commissioner Allison made a motion to approve the Resolution, with a second by Commissioner Greene. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed.

Mr. Wooten went on to the second item, being a requirement to sign a Resolution each time the Board authorizes the expenditure of the settlement funds, in this case towards the approval of funding to the Emergency Services Department for a Substance Use Disorder Coordinator for July 1, 2024.

Commissioner Allison made a motion to approve the Resolution, with a second by Vice Chair Brown. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed.

Carson House Fee Waiver Request

Mr. Wooten presented a request by the Historic Carson House for consideration of the waiver for the building permit fee of \$5100.00 in regards to their new visitor center.

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to approve the waiver, with a second by Commissioner Greene. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed.

DHHS MOU

Mr. Wooten began with the discussion in the last meeting, in regards to the request for approval of the revision to updated laws that govern the DSS by the General Assembly, that state certain expectations, requirements and conditions the DSS is to adhere to. The Board tabled the approval at that time, for the Director of DSS to present the findings of other Counties

on their concerns or actions towards the MOU. He stated the Counties that responded to the Director, were going to endorse the revisions but are sending a letter of concern along with their decision. Commissioner Greene expressed his understanding is the MOU does not hinder the DSS in any way, and gave his reluctance to sign a document and then send a letter with changes that need to be made. Commissioner Greene mentioned he had heard of other County Commissioners signing the document with their DSS Director not signing. Mr. Wooten responding, they knew of one County that had their County Manager sign on behalf of the Board, as a result of the DSS Director not signing. Commissioner Greene recommended that if the Board does decide to sign, the DSS Director would be required to sign as well. Commissioner Allison stated he did not think the letter should be sent without the review by the Board first, in which Commissioner Greene asked if they were under a time constraint and Mr. Wooten replied the request was to have by the end of the month of June, or as soon as possible in the month of July. Vice Chair Brown asked if the letter had been prepared, in which Mr. Wooten stated it had not been.

Vice Chair Brown made a request the letter be drafted and presented to the Board for review, with a second by Commissioner Greene. The motion passed, by a vote of 5-0.

Closed Session

Chairman Walker declared the Board into a closed session under NCGS 143-318.11 (a)(4).

Out of Closed Session

Commissioner Ellis motioned to come out of closed session at 12:34 p.m., with a second by Commissioner Greene. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed.

Adjournment

Vice Chair Brown made a motion to adjourn, with a second from Commissioner Ellis. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed to adjourn at 12:35 p.m.

Attest:

Sena Allison
Clerk to the Board

David N. Walker
Chairman