

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
MCDOWELL COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
SPECIAL SESSION – May 8, 2024**

Assembly

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met in Special Session on Monday, May 8, 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 and Lynn Greene

Members Absent

Chris Allison and Patrick Ellis

Others Present

Ashley Wooten, County Manager and Sena A. Allison, Clerk to the Board

Call to Order

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

Charlotte Water IBT Request

Chairman Walker opened this meeting in regards to a public meeting by the Charlotte Water to be held in Hickory, NC this evening (May 8, 2024) in regards to the Charlotte Interbasin Transfer Request. This is a request to increase from 33 million gallons per day to 63 million gallons per day from the Catawba River Basin in order for Charlotte to handle their growing area. The Chairman cited he wanted the Board to have on record their position concerning IBT, and wanted to personally state for himself that he does not appreciate that one basin is requesting to take water out of our basin to help subsidize the growth for their area. He voiced this is an overreach to take from our supply, and this would later affect the future generations from having adequate supply for our needs. Chairman Walker declared we need to protect the interest of our children, grandchildren and the citizens who have been good stewards of the resources we have and that he is 100% opposed to any basin transfer amount and wants to stand up to this with a no, as a board and to be public on the stance of opposing.

Chairman Walker turned the floor over to Vice Chair Brown for his opinion. Vice Chair Brown gave his statement in claiming the water resources here are viable to our area and he does not want to put our water supply in jeopardy in order for another County to make money off of. Vice Chair Brown stated he is in favor of the Resolution opposing Charlotte’s request.

The Chairman turned the floor over to Commissioner Greene to give his stance, in which Mr. Greene stated he was in agreeance, and the Board’s first obligation is to protect the citizens

of McDowell County. He said the idea of emptying Lake James to satisfy someone else's supply was unjust and he suggests they figure out a way to use the water that is downstream versus taking the water out of our County.

Vice Chair Brown added a fact that makes it worse is the State owns so much of our County that we are deprived of revenue we should be allowed as it stands.

Chairman Walker brought to attention that in 2002, Charlotte Water received approval to transfer 33 million gallons per day from the Catawba River Basin, in 2005, Concord and Kannapolis requested 36 million gallons per day from the Catawba River Basin and then in 2007, 10 million gallons per day was approved for Concord/Kannapolis only reducing that number during a drought. He declared now in 2024 - the request for them wanting another 30 million gallons per day is troubling. He said the IBT should be a temporary measure to accommodate growth, not a permanent way to sustain growth. He admonished Charlotte needs to come up with sustainable growth policies and not take from others.

Chairman Walker asked the County Manager if we would like to add anything to the discussion, in which Mr. Wooten regarded the meeting that Charlotte Water has called as a presentation of information and to receive comments. Mr. Wooten told that he and other staff would be present to communicate the Boards opposition. He specified having spoken with the Western Piedmont Council of Governments President, Anthony Starr to be able to speak at this meeting and he will stay plugged in to any upcoming meetings that will possibly be an eventual hearing by the Environmental Management Commission. The County Manager assured there will be a partnership with Burke County, Catawba and others regarding this IBT request. Mr. Wooten was told by the Chairman to use the strongest terms possible on the stance of the Board's united front for opposition to their request.

RESOLUTION TO OPPOSE THE CITY OF CHARLOTTE INTERBASIN TRANSFER REQUEST

WHEREAS, North Carolina Environmental Management officials are currently reviewing a request from the City of Charlotte to modify their certificate increase their current transfer of 33 million gallons per day to 63 million gallons of water per day from the Catawba River Basin to the Rocky River Basin; and

WHEREAS, this latest request is a trend of additional interbasin transfer water usage from the Catawba River as evidenced by the following:

Charlotte/Mecklenburg's previously approved certificate of 33 million gallons per day interbasin transfer to the Rocky River in 2002; and

Concord and Kannapolis's previously approved certificate of 10 million gallons per day interbasin transfer to the Rocky River in 2007; and

WHEREAS, the net effect of the aforementioned actions will result in a total increased usage of 73 million gallons per day from the Catawba River Basin to the Rocky River Basin; and

WHEREAS, the Catawba River and its tributaries are not an unlimited supply of water as evidenced by previous years of drought conditions experienced most notably by the Upper Catawba Basin and the entire State of North Carolina; and

WHEREAS, McDowell County and the Western Piedmont Region is considered a growth area for the North Carolina with additional water needs in the future; and that there's a valid concern that interbasin transfers of this magnitude may effectively subsidize growth in receiving areas using the limited water resources of the Catawba River Basin; and

WHEREAS, issues of equity and sustainability are in question, as it involves one region bearing the environmental and infrastructural costs of supporting growth in another region, and it is essential to consider the long-term implications and fairness of such resource allocations; and

WHEREAS, reducing the flow of the Catawba River by transferring water could lead to greater concentrations of pollutants in the river, a reduced flow rate diminishing the river's natural ability to dilute and transport pollutants, and have detrimental effects on aquatic ecosystems, recreational activities, and public health within the Catawba River Basin; and

WHEREAS, the McDowell County Board of Commissioners is concerned the proposed interbasin transfer will limit the amount of water available for withdraw to support growth in our area due to regulation limits under state and federal laws; and

WHEREAS, the McDowell County Board of Commissioners does hereby express its concern about the long-term availability of water within the Catawba River Basin and believes transferring water from the Catawba River Basin to the Rocky River Basin could indeed limit future growth opportunities for local communities in the Catawba River Basin; and

WHEREAS, the Catawba Wateree Water Resource Management Group is actively working to update its water supply master plan for the entire river basin and Charlotte should wait until that process is complete; and

WHEREAS, previous studies for the Catawba River called for the elimination of interbasin transfers as a strategy to protect the river and water supplies during drought conditions and an IBT should be a temporary measure to accommodate growth and not a permanent solution; and

WHEREAS, the 2015 Water Supply Master Plan for the Catawba River projected Charlotte's current IBT would be sufficient through 2065 and that Charlotte should not increase its IBT for its growth needs over the next 30 years; and

WHEREAS, Charlotte should instead use that time to implement water infrastructure and policies to eliminate its current IBT certificate issued in 2002; and

WHEREAS, water availability is crucial for sustaining economic development, agriculture, and quality of life in growing communities and if water is diverted elsewhere, it may constrain the ability of communities within the Catawba River Basin to support their own development and population growth; and

WHEREAS, our region should not be forced to give up its potential growth opportunities to subsidize Charlotte growth with our water resources; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the McDowell County Board of Commissioners requests that the North Carolina Environmental Management Commission deny the City of Charlotte interbasin transfer request to modify their certificate to transfer 63 million gallons of water per day from the Catawba River Basin to the Rocky River Basin.

Adopted this 8th day of May, 2024.

Vice Chair Brown made the motion to adopt the Resolution to Oppose the City of Charlotte Interbasin Transfer Request, second by Commissioner Greene. By a vote of 3-0, the motion passed.

Adjournment

Vice Chair Brown made a motion to adjourn, second by Commissioner Greene. By a vote of 3-0, the motion passed to adjourn at 11:40 a.m.

Attest:

Sena A. Allison
Clerk to the Board

David N. Walker
Chairman