

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
MCDOWELL COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
REGULAR SESSION – April 15, 2024**

**Assembly**

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met in Regular Session on Monday, April 15, 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 and Lynn Greene

**Members Absent**

Patrick Ellis

**Others Present**

Ashley Wooten, County Manager; Sena A. Allison, Clerk to the Board; Leslie Bryant, ONEDIGITAL Representative and Bobbie Sigmon; DSS Director

**Call to Order**

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

**Health Insurance Renewal**

Chairman Walker declared Leslie Bryant and staff to present the Health Insurance portion of the meeting, in which Ashley Wooten recognized an overview of what the meeting would cover, starting with a reminder that the County is self - insured with some exceptions and the health claims are paid by local funds. He specified that MedCost is our third -party administrator and staff is recommending on the renewal date of July 1, 2024 that we stay with MedCost. The County Manager mentioned the Board would get an overview with other staff as well, to be able to make changes, if needed and turned the floor over to Leslie Bryant with ONEDIGITAL.

Ms. Bryant began with stating costs are made up by the number of medical claims, pharmacy claims and stop loss reimbursements that occur. She cited this is a risk mitigation that factors in how to cap the risk and told of the County's yearly analysis being: Year to date (YTD) through February, net claims of \$3,231,463, YTD fixed costs of \$643,345, YTD per employee per year cost of \$17,095, with a current high cost claimant of 22, that are more than the \$90,000 and 5 members who have crossed the \$90,000 level. She itemized that the stop-loss provider reimburses the County when that \$90,000 level goes over. Ms. Bryant cited with the detail, their company thought that was the appropriate level to renew at. She went on to make some recommendations on excluding GLP-1 medications for weight loss only for

insureds with Diabetes and implement the Better Choice Program, as well as addressing top chronic conditions such as Diabetes/Pre-diabetes/Weight Loss. A brief discussion was had with other staff and on the risks of taking GLP-1 and then coming off of the medication, a diet plan called Virta, the budget, savings to the County and the cost mitigators in devising the data. Ms. Bryant expressed one great decision the Commissioners had done was to put a transplant policy in place.

Commissioner Greene made a motion to accept the proposal with the recommendations presented, second by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed.

### **DSS Update**

Chairman Walker introduced Bobbie Sigmon, the DSS Director to give updates. Ms. Sigmon started with April being Child Abuse Prevention month and asked for a Proclamation in recognition to the stated. She recognized the pinwheels placed all over Town, in honor of this. Commissioner Allison made a motion to accept the Proclamation, second by Vice Chair Brown. With a vote of 5-0, the motion passed. Ms. Sigmon then read aloud a Proclamation to be signed, detailing increased efforts by the community to support this cause. The DSS Director went on to go over this month's child welfare assessments, the number of children in foster care is 95, with 1 child at the DSS office now and 1 child who spent the night at Meg's Place last month. Commissioner Greene asked what was preventing our County – who is at 23.6%, to reaching the goal set of 41% for children who enter foster care, to be discharged to permanency within 12 months.

Ms. Sigmon listed several factors, with some being the parent/guardians case plan completed, housing, mental health providers and completion of the programs. Commissioner Greene spoke on some cases going beyond that 12-month period in which Ms. Sigmon gave an example where relapsing does happen under drug abuse cases, and there are meetings with attorney's, supervisors and program managers to go over the case, where the court may or may not take the recommendations they provide, and which the court ultimately makes the final decision of the case. A general discussion on the status of Adult Protective Services, Child Support and Energy Programs. This includes CIP where the County could not utilize all the monies the State appropriated due to not as many citizen enrollments for the plan. She explained this money is distributed through a portal and is controlled by the State, whereas if not as many people sign up for the assistance, and the money can only be used for the CIP program, the overages go back or sent elsewhere for other County's use. Ms. Sigmon went over the Food and Nutrition Services applications and recertifications, whereas they are getting a substantially high number of applicants, which have a high approval rate. She went over the number of clients served under various situations, the Medicaid applications for Family and Children and Adult Medicaid for the year so far is extremely higher than compared to last years submissions.

The DSS Director moved on to having filled some of the positions that had vacancies within the DSS department as well as went over the WNC Child Welfare Data showing the percentages of other Counties' reunification rates. Lastly, Ms. Sigmon spoke about Senate Bill 625, in addressing this Bill coming up and a general discussion on the what the Bill concerns. She specified a law within the Bill that addresses a child being in the hospital for mental health

issues, where the child is released by the hospital for reasons deemed as behavioral issues, whereas the DSS has 5 days for placement of child, in which the DSS can be held liable for costs that occur. Chairman Walker acknowledged to send a letter to the House, Senate and Speaker of the House voicing the County's objection.

### **Administrative Items**

The County Manager presented tax releases to the Board and went over a Resolution for reimbursement for Sheriff's Office vehicles.

Mr. Wooten addressed a previous matter on hiring a particular person for a Trail Coordinator. This would be a part time position and an employee of the Chamber of Commerce. Mr. Wooten spoke with the Chamber, who has agreed to house this employee and also spoke with both the City and Town on their participation, which still have to get votes in order to give their final answers. The proposal for the salary of \$30,000.00 would be as follows: \$18,000.00 from County, \$6000.00 from City and \$6000.00 from Town. He recognized an agreement would be signed with the Chamber in providing the duties and work details for the position with a small urgency, as the proposal start date for this position would be May 1, 2024. Mr. Wooten explained for the County's part, the funds would come from either of 2-line items that could be used from the budgeted \$20,000.00 for Friends of Flonta Flora State Trail or the \$25,000.00 budgeted for Trail Initiatives.

Chairman Walker stated he would support the position if the City and Town would agree to their asked participation with a detailed job description. A general discussion was had on this not being a County employee, as well as pros and cons of hiring for this post.

At that time Chairman Walker asked for a motion in the tax releases, Commissioner Greene motioned, second by Commissioner Allison and by a vote of 5-0, the motion passed. Commissioner Greene moved to accept the Resolution on the Sheriff's office vehicles, second by Chris Allison. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed.

The discussion went back to the Trail Coordinator position, in which Vice Chair Brown made a motion that the position is in contingent on City and Town to pay the asked amounts on their part and that our part would come from 1 of the 2 budgeted items the County has. Second by Commissioner Allison, with a statement by Chairman Walker of how the Trails generate tax revenue for the County and for the position to be detailed as a grant writer with goals throughout the year. Vice Chair Brown emphasized that his position would be to use the funds that are already in the budget, not create more funds to pay for this employee. By a vote of 4-1, the motion passed.

### **Adjournment**

Commissioner Greene made a motion to adjourn, second by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed to adjourn at 12:25 p.m.

Attest:

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Sena A. Allison

Clerk to the Board

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David N. Walker

Chairman