

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
MCDOWELL COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
SPECIAL SESSION – May 23, 2024**

**Assembly**

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met in a Special Session on Thursday May 23, 2024, at 8:30 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 / Budget Officer; Sena A. Allison, Clerk to the Board and Lydia Effler, Register of Deeds

**Call to Order**

Chairman Walker called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

**Request from the Register of Deeds**

County Manager Ashley Wooten conferred the request by Ms. Effler, the Register of Deeds, in asking the Board for their approval to hire a family member Maggie Frye, who is related to her, to work in the Register of Deeds office. Mr. Wooten noted that such an approval is required by NC General Statute 153A-103.

Commissioner Allison made a motion to approve the request for familial hiring by Ms. Effler, with a second by Commissioner Greene. With a vote of 3-0, the motion passed.

**Presentation of the 2024-2025 Budget Recommendation**

Chairman Walker recognized County Manager and Budget Officer Ashley Wooten to present the recommended budget he and Alison Bell the Finance Director have compiled for review as required by NC General Statute 159-11. He gave the proposal as follows:

**FY 2024 Accomplishments**

- Staff continues to oversee American Rescue Plan Act investments made by the Board.

- Broadband development continues. Spectrum received a GREAT grant that is partially supported by \$100,000 in ARPA funds provided by the County. A CAB grant will be awarded by the end of the fiscal year.
- A strategic planning process was initiated.
- Bids were awarded for the Hoppy Tom Hollow Road Water Project.
- A grant of \$2,836,740 was received from the State to construct water lines around NC 126 and the Lake Club (East End Project).
- Grants were received to extend a water line to West Marion Elementary.
- Construction began on the Recreation Center Improvement Project, which will feature a brand new pool and improved parking and access. Construction began for Nebo Water System Phase 1A and 1B Expansion Projects for the extension of over four miles of water lines.
- Forza X1 purchased approximately 11 acres of property at the Universal Technology Park in order to construct their manufacturing facilities.
- Water and sewer lines were built to serve the building sites at the Universal Technology Park.
- The Shooting Range continues to receive rave reviews from patrons. The Range hosted a large youth tournament with several hundred participants.
- The playground at the Maple Leaf Complex was completed.
- Black Bear Park and Campground opened to the public. The day use area and campground have proven to be very popular. Paving was completed at the Mental Health Building and the Sugar Hill Convenience Center.
- The County's engineers have prepared a transfer station repair plan that will be initiated in FY 2024.
- Design and planning of various building projects continued during the year including, DSS, the Services Building, the Animal Shelter, and others.
- The former EMS Station 1 was demolished clearing the way for future development.

#### FY 2025 Budget Priorities

- Recruit and retain high quality staff through salary and benefit adjustments
- Maintain education funding at appropriate levels
- Establish reserves for capital projects
- Make targeted position enhancements
- Increase the health insurance reserves

#### FY 2025 Budget Process

- Department heads meet with Budget Officer (County Manager) to review budget needs.
- Budget Officer meets with Finance Director to review departmental needs and estimated revenues.
- Budget Officer presents budget recommendation to Board of Commissioners.
- Budget Officer makes recommended budget available for public inspection.
- Board of Commissioners hold public hearing to receive public input.
- Board of Commissioners approve final budget before June 30.

FY 2025 New Expenditure Impacts

Public Safety

EM Operating and Capital	\$42,870
Sheriff's Office Operating and Capital	\$103,093
911 Salaries and Benefits	\$55,096
Sheriff's Office Salaries and Benefits	\$146,471
Detention Salaries and Benefits	\$59,404
Total:	\$406,934

County Organization Improvements

Current Year raise and benefit impacts	\$570,034
Health Insurance	\$200,400
Retirement System rate increase	\$290,800
Additional Tax Assessing Staff	\$60,000
DSS Medicaid Staffing	\$31,762
NEO Gov Software	\$26,760
Total:	\$1,179,756

County Facilities and Equipment

EMS Capital Debt	\$93,511
Sheriff Capital Debt	\$147,821
Waste Collections Capital Debt	\$22,420
Total:	\$263,752

Community and Economic Development

Transportation Capital (Vans)	\$210,000
Recreation (Includes Black Bear Camp)	\$83,092
Facility Maintenance	\$72,700
Animal Services	\$74,898
Total:	\$440,690

Community and Economic Development

Increased Waste Disposal Cost	\$38,173
Health Department Operations	\$30,180
Total:	\$68,353

**Budget Highlights**

The County Manager noted that the recommended budget does not include a tax increase (or decrease). The rate is recommended to remain at .5675 cents. He noted that the budget would grow from \$61,795,078 (Fiscal Year 2024) to \$63,705,502 (Fiscal Year 2025), an increase of \$1,910,424 or 3.09%.

Mr. Wooten noted that there is a 3% cost of living adjustment recommended for County employees. He also stated that the budget allows for the creation of four positions at the Department of Social Services, three positions at the McDowell County Sheriff's Office, one

position at the 911 Center, and one position in Tax Assessing. Mr. Wooten pointed out that most of the new positions have corresponding revenues that cover all or part of the salary/benefit impacts.

The County Manager acknowledged that the School funding is recommended to increase 3.01% for the Current Expense (\$289,000) and the College is recommended to increase 2.14% for the Current Expense (\$25,000), 100% for the Old Fort Project (\$13,500), and 7.54% for Capital Outlay (\$11,500).

Mr. Wooten acknowledged the June 10, 2024 public hearing and the authority of the Board of final approval by June 30, 2024. The County Manager turned over the proposed budget to the Board, to review and specified if they desire to have a meeting with any departments, staff or he and the Finance Director that is the prerogative of the Board.

### **Adjournment**

Vice Chair Brown made a motion to adjourn, second by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 4-0, the motion passed to adjourn at 9:30 a.m.

Attest:

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Sena A. Allison  
Clerk to the Board

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David N. Walker  
Chairman