

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
MCDOWELL COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR SESSION – March 18, 2024**

Assembly

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met in Regular Session on Monday, February 19, 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; Kitty Wilson, MPSA Director; Bobbie Sigmon, DSS Director and Anna Lee, HR Director.

Call to Order

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

MPSA Update

Chairman Walker recognized Kitty Wilson to give an update on the MPSA (McDowell Partnership for Substance Awareness). Ms. Wilson gave an overview of the program starting with the logo which is a Lotus and the five sides of focus areas being Advocacy, Prevention, Harm Reduction, Treatment and Sustained Recovery. The Director stated that last year the MPSA was accepted as a non-profit in N.C. and they have applied to be a 501C3 organization as well as applied for a trademark for their name and logo. Ms. Wilson told of them supporting the Interact Recovery Community Center opening in 2023 with supplies and have been active in outreach programs including providing a scholarship for a workshop. The MPSA created a coloring book, (that can be purchased on Amazon) for children on health and safety around substance abuse.

The Director spoke on research projects and have produced a Strategic Plan in collaboration with UNC Center for Health and Wellness. She concluded with the focus for MPSA in 2024 as centering on connections, relationships, becoming a trusted source for information and education in the proper way to communicate about substance abuse and sustained recovery in hopes of success and a positive impact for McDowell County.

DSS Update

The Chairman recognized Bobbie Sigmon, the DSS Director to give an update. Ms. Sigmon spoke on Child Welfare Identifying Assessments and Foster Care. She highlighted that the Federal Government is considering moving the guideline of child placement from the current 12 months to 18 months. This would be to ensure higher percentage rates of the goals are being met, that they (the Federal Government) are not currently meeting. She noted the reasoning to them determining difficulties with individual circumstances that arise within each case. Chairman Walker asked her what specific barriers are leading to the extension on placement times. The Director cited one barrier being substance abuse instances that take up 30% of DSS cases. Ms. Sigmon gave an example for reference of the longevity for admitting the child's parent, guardian or whomever the caregiver is into a recovery program with a successful release, in order to be awarded custody back to them. She also told of steps that are made towards custody placement where cases are moving forwards and delays happen due to court proceedings or other obstructions that happen unforeseen. The Director allowed that some cases are at a two-year mark and holding.

Chairman Walker brought up the new foster home that just opened recognizing the Live Like Megan Foundation and naming the home Meg's Place. The Chairman proclaimed that he and the Commissioners were honored in taking part in the ribbon cutting ceremony on March 8th and he how blessed the County is to now have a home for children to come to while they are waiting for placement.

A general update on Adult Protective Services, Child Support, Energy Programs and Food and Nutrition Services, Medicaid applications was given by Ms. Sigmon.

HR Update

Chairman Walker recognized Anna Lee, the County's HR Director to give an update for her department. Ms. Lee gave a presentation requesting policy updates to language that she remodeled and added in the current policy manual. The Director stated she would like to elevate the advantage of becoming a County employee and promote the reduction of turn over. She specified having reached out to all 100 Counties in N.C. to see what their current benefit packages, insurance and paid leave were, in which 48 responded. Ms. Lee gave some examples of added incentives that would be an advantage to future hires considering working for the County, along with current employees feeling more valued. The Director is seeking from the Commissioners the approval to reduce the current 90 day waiting period for employees to be able to receive benefits, to a 30-day waiting period to be effective immediately and permission to review personal leave and employee health benefits at a later date.

Commissioner Greene made a motion to approve the requested reduction in days of benefits and a review of other listed items for a later date, second by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 4-0 the motion passed.

Administrative Items

Chairman Walker recognized the County Manager, Ashley Wooten to give an update on Administrative items, in which he went over project ordinances for Recreational Improvement Project Amendment #2, the Hoppy Tom Hollow Road Water Project #1, the Universal Industrial

Park Water and Sewer Project Amendment #3 and the American Rescue Plan Amendment #12. He went over a budget amendment GF 25, a previously approved expenditure for the DSS building planning and scoreboards. Mr. Wooten requested approval of items and added a reimbursement resolution for a vehicle for Building Inspections in the review.

Vice Chair Brown made a motion to approve the requested items, second by Commissioner Greene. By a vote of 4-0 the motion passed.

Recreation Center Bids

Mr. Wooten moved to the Recreation Center Improvement bids that were opened on March 14th in which there were two responding bidders, one being Hickory Construction and the other being Beam Construction. Beam Construction was the low bidder for the project at \$4,305,500.00, including additional costs of \$18,000.00 to be negotiated by Staff. A general discussion was had on the bids including outfield restroom building, skate park disassembly, storage and an Alternate that was higher than what is allowed by State Funding. The County Manager went over the suggested funding breakdown, the Bid Tabulation and the sources where funds will be coming from. These are comprised of funds from; State Funding, American Rescue Act and Interest Earnings. Mr. Wooten is requesting to use those funding sources, allow Beam Construction be awarded this project and grant staff to negotiate the additional cost in the contract. Chairman Walker stated he would like to chose Alternate two and four listed on the Bid Tabulation, that Beam Construction outlined.

Bidder	Base Bid	Alternate 2	Alternate 4
Beam Construction	\$3,700,000	\$596,000	\$10,500
Hickory Construction	\$4,512,000	\$938,000	\$23,000

Commissioner Greene made a motion to receive the bids, to approve the requested bid offer of \$4,306,500.00, to award Beam Construction the project, as well as granting Staff to negotiate the \$18,000.00 additional cost in the contract. Second by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 4-0 the motion passed.

Adjournment

Vice Chair Brown made a motion to adjourn, second by Commissioner Allison. By a vote of 4-0 the motion was approved to adjourn at 12:42 p.m.