

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
MCDOWELL COUNTY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
REGULAR SESSION – December 15, 2025**

**Assembly**

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met in Regular Session on Monday, December 15, 2025, in the Commissioners' Board Room, 69 N. Main Street, Marion, NC.

**Members Present**

Chairman, Tony Brown; Vice-Chair, Lynn Greene; Commissioner Trisha Garner, and Commissioner David Walker

**Members Absent**

Commissioner Patrick Ellis

**Others Present**

Ashley Wooten, County Manager; Fred Coats, County Attorney; Tammy Wylie, Tax Assessor; Dr. Jordan Laney, Beyond 1842 Project Director; Sarah Brewer, Human Services Director

**Call to Order**

Chairman Brown called the meeting to order at 11:30 am.

**Property Tax Appeal**

Tax Assessor Tammy Wylie presented the Commissioners an appeal of 2025 real property taxes from Ms. Brandi Hillman of Old Fort. Ms. Hillman's home sustained significant damage in Hurricane Helene and was determined to be uninhabitable according a structural engineer. She had this data before January 1, 2025, but for uncertain reasons did not file a timely appeal with the Board of Equalization and Review.

After hearing from Ms. Wylie, Commissioner Walker made a motion to grant Ms. Hillman's appeal. Vice-Chair Greene seconded the motion. By a vote of 4-0, the motion passed.

**Beyond 1842 Project**

Dr. Jordan Laney introduced herself and noted that she was speaking to the Commissioners about the Beyond 1842 Project that was initiated as part of the American 250 commemoration. Dr. Laney stated that the McDowell Arts Council Association (MACA) had sought and received a \$30,000 grant to start the Beyond 1842 Project, which is focused on obtaining oral histories from McDowell County residents. Dr. Laney has coordinated the project with the help of five trained interviewers. She noted that the project website where interviews will be hosted will hopefully be available for visiting for many years to come.

## **Human Services Update**

Human Services Director Sarah Brewer began her update by thanking the Commissioners for their support and kindness. Ms. Brewer presented the monthly Memorandum of Understanding MOU data for review. This is the data that the agency collects to share with the NC Department of Health and Human Services, the Commissioners, and the public.

Ms. Brewer noted that there was one amended item that she was starting to track in the category of number of children in foster care residing in the county. She noticed that the numbers did not match other sources of data and learned that the number on the MOU data included young adults who had aged out of foster care.

Ms. Brewer also noted that she will be working with staff to increase the number of licensed foster homes in the county since that number had fallen to a number that she felt was unacceptably low. There are twenty people enrolled in the class that begins in January, according to Ms. Brewer.

In addition, Ms. Brewer touched on the recent transition to the Healthy Blue Care Together Medicaid program. The goal of this new program is to have improved care coordination with all of the children in foster care, but especially those with complex needs. She is hoping that the organization will be able to have embedded staff present in the building to assist with the agency when challenges arise with placement, etc.

Chairman Brown asked Ms. Brewer for a general list of the group homes being utilized by the agency for children in foster care. Mr. Brown encouraged Ms. Brewer to make contact with the new Ebenezer Home for Children that just opened near Old Fort.

## **Administrative Items**

Mr. Wooten presented three items for consideration. The first item is an extension to the auditing contract with the independent firm of Thompson, Price, Scott, Adams & Co. The extension moves the due date from December 31, 2025 to February 12, 2026. The additional time is needed due to a late release of 2025 compliance supplements, according to the firm.

Commissioner Walker made a motion to approve the auditing contract extension. Vice-Chair Greene seconded the motion. By a vote of 4-0, the motion passed.

The seconded item presented by the County Manager is a grant opportunity to extend a water line and to construct a water storage tank near Randolph Road. This funding is available to Helene-impacted communities. Mr. Wooten presented the authorizing resolution:

### **Resolution by Governing Body of the Applicant**

**WHEREAS,** McDowell County has a need for and intends to plan and construct a project described as the McDowell County Water System Resiliency Improvements, and

**WHEREAS,** McDowell County intends to request State loan and/or grant assistance for the project,

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, BY THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF MCDOWELL COUNTY:**

That McDowell County arrange financing for all remaining costs of the project, if approved for a State loan and/or grant award.

That McDowell County will provide for efficient operation and maintenance of the project on completion of construction thereof.

That McDowell County will adopt and place into effect on or before completion of the project a schedule of fees and charges and other available funds which will provide adequate funds for proper operation, maintenance, and administration of the system and the repayment of all principal and interest on the debt.

That the governing body of McDowell County agrees to include in the loan agreement a provision authorizing the State Treasurer, upon failure of McDowell County to make a scheduled repayment of the loan, to withhold from McDowell County any State funds that would otherwise be distributed to the local government unit in an amount sufficient to pay all sums then due and payable to the State as a repayment of the loan.

If applying for a regional project, McDowell County will partner and work with other units of local government or utilities in conducting the project, including the City of Marion.

That Ashley Wooten, McDowell County Manager, and successors so titled, is hereby authorized to execute and file an application on behalf of McDowell County with the State of North Carolina for a loan and/or grant to aid in the study of or construction of the project described above.

That the County Manager, and successors so titled, is hereby authorized and directed to furnish such information as the appropriate State agency may request in connection with such application or the project: to make the assurances as contained above; and to execute such other documents as may be required in connection with the application.

That McDowell County has substantially complied or will substantially comply with all Federal, State, and local laws, rules, regulations, ordinances, and funding conditions applicable to the project and to Federal and State grants and loans pertaining thereto.

Adopted this the 15<sup>th</sup> day of December 2025 at the McDowell County Administrative Offices, 69 N. Main Street in Marion, North Carolina.

Commissioner Walker made a motion to approve the resolution authorizing the grant submission. Commissioner Garner seconded the motion. By a vote of 4-0, the motion passed.

The last item presented by Mr. Wooten involved the 6,600 square feet space available for rent in the lower level of the Senior Center building. He noted that there had been quite a bit of interest in the space once FOR RENT signs had been placed around the property. He asked for guidance on the preferred tenant mix since one of the prospective tenants indicated their desire to utilize the space for a substance use treatment center.

After a brief discussion, the consensus of the Board was to tell the prospective tenant that a treatment center would not be a good fit for the space since the adjacent area is being used for a day program for disabled youth and adults and the upper level is used for seniors.

**School Item**

Commissioner Walker asked that an item related to schools be discussed. Mr. Walker motioned that the County Manager should contact the School Superintendent to arrange for a tour of Marion Elementary and Eastfield Elementary with an architect to determine if either school could be used for a Department of Social Services building. Ms. Garner seconded the motion. By a vote of 4-0, the motion passed.

**Closed Session**

Vice-Chair Greene made a motion at noon to go into Closed Session pursuant to NCGS 143-318.11 (a)(6) in order to discuss personnel matters. Commissioner Walker seconded the motion. The vote to go into Closed Session was 4-0.

Commissioner Walker made a motion to return to Open Session at 12:33 pm. Commissioner Garner seconded the motion. The vote to return to Open Session was 3-0 (Vice-Chair Greene did not return to the Board Room after the Closed Session).

**Adjournment**

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Walker, seconded by Commissioner Garner. By a vote of 3-0, the motion passed, and the meeting adjourned at 12:35 pm

Attest:

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Ashley R. Wooten  
Deputy Clerk to the Board

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Tony Brown  
Chairman