

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
MCDOWELL COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR SESSION – May 11, 2026**

Assembly

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Monday, May 11th, 2026, in the Commissioners' Board Room, 69 N. Main Street, Marion, NC.

Members Present

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

Members Absent

None

Others Present

Ashley Wooten, County Manager; Madalyn Robinson, Clerk to the Board; Fred Coats, County Attorney; Tracy Hayes, Vaya Health CEO/Area Director; Dr. JW Kelley, McDowell Tech Community College President; Kim Effler, Chamber CEO/President

Call to Order

Chairman Brown called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm. Commissioner Walker led the group in prayer. Commissioner Ellis led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Walker moved to approve the April 13th and April 20th regular session minutes and the April 23rd and 29th special session minutes with a second from Commissioner Ellis. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed.

Approval of Agenda

Commissioner Walker moved to approve the agenda with the addition under New Business as G. Property Tax Resolution and a recognition of law enforcement for National Police Week after Ms. Hayes' presentation. Commissioner Ellis seconded this motion. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed.

America 250 Award

Madalyn Robinson presented an overview of events hosted by the McDowell 250 Committee and recognized students for their participation in the America 250 NC Statewide County Flag Challenge. Events include the April Kickoff, Two Lights for Tomorrow, various local festivals, a Constitution Day event for students at Foothills Community School, a monthly Speaker Series on local history, and a community clean-up of Greenlee Park. Ms. Robinson highlighted the community gift giveaway on July 4th, where people can pick up a small gift to commemorate the 250th. The McDowell 250 Committee will have a booth at the Mountain Gateway Museum's Annual Ice Cream Social from 2-4 pm and on Main Street in Marion from 6-9 pm. These buttons and stickers will be available while supplies last.

Ms. Robinson moved on to the recognition of students participating in the County Flag Challenge. In the fall of 2025, the America 250 NC team invited fourth-grade students from across North Carolina to design county flags that reflect how they see their region of the state. The goal was to inspire students to think critically about local history, culture, and geography through symbolism. McDowell County had four participating elementary schools, and our committee received 53 entries in total. The McDowell 250 committee voted on the winning designs, and two students' designs were sent to the America 250 NC team to be recognized on the state level. Ms. Robinson recognized those two students, along with the two winners from the remaining elementary schools, and provided a small gift to the four students. In partnership with the City of Marion, all 53 student submissions will be on display at City Hall on Main Street starting on June 1st in celebration of the 250th.

Chairman of the McDowell 250 Committee, Doug Swaim, expressed his thanks to the County Commissioners and committee members at the conclusion of the presentation.

Vaya Health Update

Tracy Hayes, area director and executive officer for Vaya Health, gave an update on Vaya Health and thanked the Board for Mr. Wooten and Commissioner Garner for their service on the Vaya Health Board and Vaya Region 3 Board respectively.

Vaya Health currently covers 32 counties, including McDowell. Vaya Health is a Public Local Management Entity dating back over 50 years. Vaya started as an area authority in the early 1970's, running facilities where people could receive services with psychiatrists and psychologists on staff. Over time, the NC General Assembly amended the statute that governs Vaya, but it remains a local government entity that is accountable to the Counties they serve. They currently manage two separate health plans for the NC Department of Health and Human Services. In July 2024, they launched a new whole-person integrated care plan for people with serious mental illness, severe substance use disorder, intellectual developmental disabilities, and traumatic brain injury. Managing whole-person care includes physical health care,

pharmacy care, and long-term services and supports, which gives a better window into what is happening with a person. Vaya manages state-funded services for people who aren't eligible for Medicaid, who might be underinsured or have no insurance at all. Vaya supplements those state funds with County Maintenance of Effort funding. Vaya manages a behavioral health plan for people who have been carved out of managed care. The General Assembly made the decision to launch managed care in North Carolina for Medicaid, and more than 50% of the Medicaid beneficiaries are now enrolled in a Medicaid managed care plan. There are still large groups of people who are not enrolled in Medicaid managed care who need mental health, substance use, or other services, and Vaya manages those services for the department.

Vaya does various other things to support communities, including crisis intervention team training for law enforcement and first responder partners. Vaya recently facilitated a sequential intercept model mapping (SIM), which they have done in numerous counties. Sequential intercept model mapping helps communities visualize how individuals with mental health and substance use disorders work through the criminal justice system. Many people with mental health and substance use challenges are interfacing with law enforcement, and Vaya works to find the best ways to help support those individuals and help support law enforcement as they interact with those individuals. Sequential Intercept Model Mapping looks at six distinct intercept points: community and crisis services, law enforcement and emergency services, initial detention and initial court hearings, jails and courts, re-entry back into the community from being incarcerated, and community corrections and community support. Through this process, McDowell County was able to help identify where the gaps are, what resources are available, and what opportunities are available to divert people into treatment. McDowell SIM identified twelve priorities for change, and Ms. Hayes covered the top three during the presentation.

McDowell SIM: Top Three Priorities for Change

1. Improve access to mental health services in jail
2. In-County detox and crisis stabilization
3. Recovery Court

Ms. Hayes referred to the top two priorities because Vaya believes they could support the County and play an important role in achieving these changes. Vaya Health believes it can aid in improving access to mental health services in jail by mapping and understanding what currently exists within the jail (MCSO, IMS, service providers, County stakeholders, peers, others) and by creating avenues for more community-based organizations to work within the jail. Vaya could aid in developing an in-county detox and crisis stabilization facility by identifying specific services needed and the best type of facility to offer them, supporting the transportation needs of law enforcement, and identifying potential funding sources based on identified service needs.

Ms. Hayes presented several ways to strengthen relationships with Law Enforcement:

- Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training and Community Crisis Awareness Training (CCAT) Crisis Response Coalition (free of charge and available upon request)
- Reentry work with Freedom Life
 - Supporting grant submissions and building of transitional housing
 - Advocating for budget adjustments and scope of work to reallocate funding for additional land and housing
- Partnering on BJA grants, including developing co-response teams or Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) teams to be led by the Sheriff's Office/Police Department

Ms. Hayes covered current initiatives in McDowell County:

- Insight Human Services is launching a Child Substance Use Cross Area Service Program (CASP)
 - Clinically managed, medium-intensity ASAM 3.5 residential treatment program for adolescents
 - 24/7 program supports youth with substance use disorders through stabilization, skill-building, family engagement, and long-term recovery planning
- Leading Crisis Response Coalition in support of local crisis management systems
- Conducting Crisis Intervention Team Training with law enforcement
- Attending quarterly McDowell Reentry Council and monthly McDowell Partnership for Substance Awareness meetings
- Participating in multidisciplinary team meetings with McDowell DSS

Ms. Hayes provided upcoming community involvement and training/opportunities:

- Mental Health First Aid Training | May 12
- Spring Forward Community Resource Day | May 16
- Healthy Aging Day | May 18
- Quarterly DSS Directors Meeting | May 20
- McDowell LICC | May 20
- Marion Community Forum | May 21
- Heart Health training | May 28
- Diabetes Management training | May 29
- Consumer and Family Advisory Committee (CFAC) | June 8
- Crisis Response Coalition | June 10
- Crisis Intervention Training for Law Enforcement | Oct. 12-16

Workforce Development Initiatives:

- Intern to Work Initiative:
 - Through grant funding from Dogwood Health Trust (DHT), partnering with App State and Western Carolina to offer \$5,000 stipends to 13 clinical

licensure students completing an internship at one of Vaya's community-based provider locations, including Appalachian Community Services, Appalachian Mountain Health, HIGHTS, Youth Villages, Helping U Heal, Vecino's, and RHA.

- HR Training Series:
 - Through DHT grant funds, Vaya is partnering with WNC Institute to offer virtual training series such as:
 - Recruiting in Today's Climate and How to Attract Quality Talent
 - Cultivating Emotional Intelligence for Proven Success
 - Coaching Employees to Success
 - Winning Through Conflict
 - Retention and Creating a Workforce that Lasts

Ms. Hayes moved on to Hope4NC, a federal grant partnership between SAMHA within HHS and FEMA. The purpose of Hope4NC is to assist individuals recovering from Hurricane Helene's impacts, including crisis outreach and support, group crisis outreach, public education, community networking and support, assessment, referral, and resource connections. The total contacts with survivors to date is 123,526. Vaya has a 90-day plan focused on contracting with 10 community-based organizations to provide crisis counseling services. Vaya participates in all Long-Term Recovery Groups (LTRGs) in affected counties, working collaboratively with Disaster Case Management to assess needs and provide resource linkage support. Vaya is also participating in hurricane-related efforts, including GROW-NC meetings and Western NC Recovery Summit

Ms. Hayes closed with a highlight of crisis service utilization and provided a map showing behavioral health urgent care centers and facility-based crisis centers. There is not one specifically in McDowell County, but we have several very close to the County. These crisis service utilization services help keep people out of the emergency department. Out of the crisis service utilization, 9% go to the facility-based crisis centers, about 34% to walk-in centers, 17% get mobile crisis, and about 39% are at the behavioral health urgent care. From October through December 2025, Vaya's diversion rate was at 93% with about 4,49 individuals in that time frame being diverted into a crisis service.

Chairman Brown thanked Ms. Hayes for her presentation and added that Vaya is involved in local entities in Western North Carolina, and the resources and support they provide are greatly appreciated. Commissioner Walker asked about the detox crisis center and if there was a plan to obtain funding for this. Ms. Hayes relayed that they typically begin with the Division of Mental Health, and the project will likely be more supported when there are matching funds because long-term success depends on community support. Commissioner Walker asked about the match and Ms. Hayes added that the biggest challenge is finding the funding to build the facility and in some of our communities, the County may have a building that they're not using or a property that they're not using that they can contribute as the match. Commissioner Garner thanked Ms. Hayes for the work she does and appreciated her work in supporting law

enforcement, strengthening relationships with law enforcement, and providing resources and training.

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners recognized law enforcement in the room for National Police Week and thanked them for all they do for the County. Members of the Board express their appreciation for the work that's done by law enforcement in so many different areas in the County and municipalities. Law enforcement works tirelessly, and the Board has nothing but respect for the work done to keep the County safe.

MTCC State of the College

Dr. Kelley presented the State of the College report to the Board. The mission at McDowell Tech is to enrich the community through education and work and promote workforce development. Dr. Kelley added that McDowell Tech is glad to participate in the community as an institution and highlighted its involvement with America 250. Before the report, Dr. Kelley had a request for the Commissioners regarding the 250th. Dr. Kelley took the winning flag design from the earlier presentation to MTCC's graphic design department, and they've taken their design skills and created a design based on the winning flag design that will be printed as a flag. This flag will be carried at the front of the parade on July 4th. Dr. Kelley noted that a smaller flag is being printed as a gift to the student. Dr. Kelley requests that after July 4th, the flag be housed in the Commissioner's Board Room for the year. After this year, the flag will be delivered to the student's school. Dr. Kelley hopes to have the flag design ready within the month.

Dr. Kelley provided the annual report to the Board for viewing and noted that there are a lot of great student stories included, demonstrating the impact MTCC is having on the community. Dr. Kelley highlighted enrollment, programs, facilities, and finances.

Dr. Kelley began with enrollment, referencing the College Service Area Participation Ratio at 27%. MTCC has the highest participation and highest reach into the community of any other community college across the state. MTCC is the seventh fastest-growing college in the state. Dr. Kelley added that MTCC looks at comparisons to cluster schools in N. Cluster schools are schools that are most like MTCC across the state. FTE (full-time student) comparisons show that MTCC is trending upwards at a higher rate than cluster schools across the state. Growth has been continuous since 2020. Dr. Kelley added that you could think about MTCC in two big buckets when it comes to enrollment. One is the college credit and the curriculum, and the other is workforce continuing education (short-term training). The trend line is steady in curriculum and FTE, with other cluster schools. Looking at continuing education, MTCC is outpacing our cluster institutions. The other way to look at the institution is from a total headcount. MTCC has a nice trend regarding the number of students, college credit curriculum headcount, and workforce continuing education, with a steady increase in the number of students served

Dr. Kelley covered dual enrollment. There are two different categories in dual enrollment: early colleges and Career and College Promise. Career and College Promise serves McDowell High School, the private schools, and the home schools, allowing students to take classes while they're in high school and at the college at the same time. The CCP program is going to be available for the 9th and 10th graders, providing an exciting expansion opportunity in the coming years. Dr. Kelley is working with Dr. Grit and the school system to find out what they can do to enhance offerings in CTE and workforce development in the high school. McDowell Tech is ranked number one in the state for curriculum course success rate. Dr. Kelley noted that this is due to wraparound support from faculty, advising, the success coaching, career coaching provided to students. New programs include public safety administration, social and human services, LPN to AND, and outdoor economy.

Dr. Kelley gave an overview of the facilities and noted that last year they replaced a roof in the Zelia building and thanked the Commissioners for the support that they provided. Dr. Kelley noted that without McDowell County's help, they would not be able to maintain the buildings and keep them safe for students, staff, and community organizations. Dr. Kelley provided information on the Health Sciences and Public Safety Center.

Health Sciences and Public Safety Center:

Funding - \$25,250,000 - state "local project" appropriation funded from North Carolina's ARPA Temporary Savings Fund (2023 state budget).

Milestones:

- August 16, 2024 – NCCCS State Board Approval.
- November 12, 2024 - Contract Holland and Hamrick.
- March 2025 - MTCC Board approved Hickory Construction Company.
- November 2025 - schematic design presented to the MTCC Board.

Projected:

- Summer 2026 - State Construction Approval.
- Fall 2026 - Ground Breaking.
- Fall 2028 - Grand Opening.
- Spring 2029 – Classes

Layout:

- Ground Floor: Public Safety Training
- Second Floor: Nursing & Mock Hospital
- Third Floor: Administrative Offices, Lecture Hall, and Rooftop Terrace
- Roof: Public Safety Repelling
- More information: <https://mcdowelltech.edu/new-building>

Dr. Kelley highlighted some of the renovations that have been funded by McDowell County. Renovations include bathrooms in the Cedar Building, HVAC in the Maple Building, ADA Campus updates, and Crane Resisitoflex Auditorium.

Dr. Kelley moved on to finances. State Allocations act as the primary operating funds provided by North Carolina to support instruction, faculty/staff salaries, and core educational services. This accounts for 90% of the college budget. County Allocations are local funding that support facilities, maintenance, and capital needs to ensure a safe and effective learning environment. This accounts for 10% of the college budget. MTCC has active and pending grants. Active grants (2021 to Present) total \$5.07 million and support workforce training, student success and basic needs, adult education and literacy, disaster relief, and campus facility improvements. Pending grants totaling roughly \$555,000 will support program planning and development, as well as equipment.

Dr. Kelley thanked the Board again for their support and partnership with McDowell tech. The Board thanked Dr. Kelley for the presentation and the support provided to folks looking to continue their higher education.

McDowell Chamber Update

Kim Effler with the McDowell Chamber presented the state of the McDowell Chamber to the Board. The McDowell Chamber of Commerce is a 501(c)(6) + 501(c)(3) Foundation. The Chamber is a dual engine of advocacy & action, nonprofit, nonpartisan, and business-member driven, focusing on small business support, growth, and sustainability. The Chamber has a three-fold mission: advocate for a thriving business climate, supporting new, growing, and legacy businesses, and leading strategic partnerships for economic development and recovery.

The McDowell Chamber hosted 10 Member Events with 947 total guests, 31 Ribbon Cuttings celebrating local business milestones, welcomed 61 new members, had 444 volunteer hours supporting their mission, served 6,000 at the visitor center, and had 757,000 digital impressions amplifying McDowell businesses. Looking ahead to 2026, the Chamber plans to focus on business growth, recovery and resilience, member programs, advocacy and funding, and strengthening the Chamber's infrastructure and capacity. The Chamber's public policy priorities are disaster recovery, small business support, workforce housing, tourism and economy, and workforce and education. Ms. Effler added that everything done at the chamber aligns with one clear purpose to drive economic growth by connecting businesses with the resources, services, relationships, and advocacy that they need to succeed.

Ms. Effler gave an update on the downtown Old Fort incubator project. This space in downtown Old Fort is designed to support entrepreneurs and small businesses from the ground up. This project will include a co-working space, private offices, conference facilities, and access to educational programming, focused on helping businesses launch, grow, and succeed. The Chamber of Commerce and the Chamber Foundation launched a second phase of the Hurricane Helene mini-grant program in partnership with the Duke Energy Foundation. This was designed to provide direct

support to local businesses as they continue to recover and adapt. After this phase of funding, the organization will have deployed nearly \$ 200,000 in small business funding to businesses in McDowell County. On June 9th, the Chamber will host the first business disaster preparedness seminar for our businesses in McDowell, educating business owners on disaster preparedness. Ms. Effler thanked the Board for their time, leadership, and commitment to McDowell County.

The Board thanked Ms. Effler for her presentations, her accomplishments with the chamber, and the investments she's made into the community.

Water System Project Updates

Mr. Wooten began covering the Water System Project Updates, and referred to the water purchase agreement. The City Manager has indicated that the City Council would like to either amend the current interlocal water purchase agreement or otherwise implement what they call a block structure for billing. A block structure increases the billing rate the higher the usage is. As an example, the April billing was \$9,329. Under the block structure billing, that bill would have been \$15,132. Annually that increase would be approximately \$70,000 a year. That would equate to about \$11 a month per customer on top of any other rate increases the City might impose (a 5% increase is being proposed for July). Staff has requested a meeting to discuss the increase proposed by the City.

Commissioner Walker asked when Mr. Wooten was notified of the increase, and Mr. Wooten added that he was notified the prior week. Commissioner Ellis asked about the school system and if the schools would be exempt. Mr. Wooten has not heard whether schools would be exempt or not. Chairman Brown asked if there were alternative sources of water if the County cannot sustain the 65% increase, and Mr. Wooten recommended initiating contact with Burke County about this matter as an alternative source. Commissioner Walker motioned that Mr. Wooten initiate a conversation with Burke County regarding water, seconded by Commissioner Ellis. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passed. Commissioner Ellis added that he encourages professional courtesy on the various Boards, allowing for communication and partnership opportunities.

Mr. Wooten presented two action items related to the growth of the system in Nebo and Sugar Hill. In the Nebo area, a grant/small loan combination was received for the extension of a line from the end of Randolph Road over to Fairview Road, terminating at NC 226 South at the City's system. This project would also fund the construction of a water storage tank. Regarding the Sugar Hill area, additional funds have been received under the State Revolving Fund program through the NC DEQ Division of Water Infrastructure. That application was in the amount of \$3,538,500. A small portion of the funding is a 20-year loan, with the majority being a principal forgiveness loan with 0% interest. Vice-Chair Greene made a motion to approve resolutions as presented, seconded by Commissioner Ellis. By a vote of 4-0, the motion passed.

Mr. Wooten gave a brief update on the Water Connection Grant. The North Carolina Community Foundation awarded a \$100,000 grant to connect low-income households in the Nebo area to the water system. The grant will pay for the plumbing work and connection costs except for the customer deposit. The application and a press release have been issued.

RESOLUTION BY GOVERNING BODY OF APPLICANT

WHEREAS, the North Carolina Clean Water Revolving Loan and Grant Act of 1987 has authorized the making of loans and grants to aid eligible units of government in financing the cost of construction of wastewater treatment works, wastewater collection systems, and water supply systems, water conservation projects, and

WHEREAS, the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality has offered a State Revolving Loan in the amount of \$7,456,200 for the construction of McDowell County Water Resiliency Improvements, and

WHEREAS, McDowell County intends to construct said project in accordance with the approved plans and specifications,

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

McDowell County does hereby accept the State Revolving Loan offer of \$7,456,200.

That McDowell County does hereby give assurance to the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality that all items specified in the loan offer, Section II - Assurances will be adhered to.

That Ashley R. Wooten, 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, and ordinances applicable to the project and to Federal and State grants and loans pertaining thereto.

Adopted this the 11th of May, 2026 at Marion, North Carolina.

RESOLUTION BY GOVERNING BODY OF APPLICANT

WHEREAS, the North Carolina Clean Water Revolving Loan and Grant Act of 1987 has authorized the making of loans and grants to aid eligible units of government in financing the cost of construction of wastewater treatment works, wastewater collection systems, and water supply systems, water conservation projects, and

WHEREAS, the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality has offered a State Revolving Loan in the amount of \$3,538,500 for the construction of Providence Hill Water Line Extension, and

WHEREAS, McDowell County intends to construct said project in accordance with the approved plans and specifications,

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

McDowell County does hereby accept the State Revolving Loan offer of \$3,538,500.

That McDowell County does hereby give assurance to the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality that all items specified in the loan offer, Section II - Assurances will be adhered to.

That Ashley R. Wooten, 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, and ordinances applicable to the project and to Federal and State grants and loans pertaining thereto.

Adopted this the 11th of May, 2026 at Marion, North Carolina.

Universal Technology Park Grading Project Update

Mr. Wooten gave an update on the Universal Technology Park Grading Project to the Board. Work continues on the Universal Technology Park Grading Project. The contractor has hit rock in the area they expected. They are currently in consultation with the project engineer to determine if there is space in the grant funding to remove a larger amount of rock than what was originally planned. The goal is to create a building pad for economic development purposes.

Register of Deeds Retention Schedule Approval

Mr. Wooten presented the Register of Deeds Retention Schedule for approval from the Board. Register of Deeds, Lydia Effler, has asked that you approve an update to her Retention Schedule as suggested by the Department of Cultural and Natural Resources.

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to approve the request as presented, seconded by Vice-Chair Greene. By a vote of 4-0, the motion passed.

Juvenile Crime Prevention Council Annual Plan

Mr. Wooten presented the Juvenile Crime Prevention Council's annual funding plan for the fiscal year 2027 for review and approval. JCPC is a council that the Commissioners appoint, including members of law enforcement, judicial, and others, to prevent crime from occurring and recurring for youth. Mr. Wooten referred to the plan presented by the council that is recommended for the Board's approval. The County funding is a smaller portion of what is in the provided plan. The total is \$160,000. There is also a request to reappoint several members whose terms are expiring in June.

Vice-Chair Greene moved to approve the request, seconded by Commissioner Ellis. By a vote of 4-0, the motion passed.

Commissioner Board and Committee Appointments

The Clerk to the Board presented the Commissioner Board and Committee appointments. There are 5 applications for the **Transportation Advisory Board** and three vacant seats. This was the second reading for Amy Stevens, Dawna Ledbetter, and Lacey Coward, and a first reading for Jerry West and Eana Palacros. Their applications were printed for the Board to review, and a ballot was provided for Board members to vote for the three vacant seats.

Vice-Chair Greene moved to waive first reading for the applications received, with a second from Commissioner Ellis. By a vote of 4-0, the motion passed. Amy Stevens, Jerry West, and Lacey Coward were appointed to fill vacancies.

Budget Update and Approvals

Mr. Wooten had no amendments and added that the property tax collection rate is 98.99%. No action was taken.

Administrative Items for Review and Approval

Mr. Wooten presented administrative items for review and approval. EMS Transport Write-offs total \$68,751.30 of fees requested to be released. There are water

leak adjustments in the amounts of \$29.07, \$142.83, \$59.19, \$87.95, \$180.00, \$24.00, and an adjustment to rebill account 1901563.0096. Mr. Wooten presented the Van Donation. DSS no longer has use for a 2009 Ford Ecoline Van. Mission Ministries Alliance has been identified as a potential home for the vehicle. They have indicated they would be able to take clients to medical appointments and job opportunities. Commissioner Ellis made a motion to approve the administrative items as presented, with a second from Vice-Chair Greene. Vice-Chair Greene suggested that all county logos be removed and a waiver of as-is statements. Commissioner Ellis updated motion to include discussion from Vice-Chair Greene. By a vote of 4-0, the motion passed.

*RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE DONATION OF SURPLUS COUNTY
PROPERTY TO MISSION MINISTRIES ALLIANCE*

WHEREAS, McDowell County owns a 2009 Ford Van, VIN 1FTSS34L49DA09184, which has been determined to be surplus property no longer needed for County purposes; and

WHEREAS, North Carolina General Statutes § 160A-280 authorize a county to donate surplus personal property to a nonprofit organization for a public purpose; and

WHEREAS, Mission Ministries Alliance is a nonprofit organization that provides services benefiting the public, including assistance to individuals in need of transportation for essential services; and

WHEREAS, Mission Ministries Alliance has requested the donation of said vehicle for the purpose of transporting clients to medical treatment appointments and to employment opportunities; and

WHEREAS, the McDowell County Board of Commissioners finds that the donation of this vehicle will serve a public purpose by supporting access to healthcare and employment for residents in need.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the McDowell County Board of Commissioners that:

- 1. The 2009 Ford Van, VIN 1FTSS34L49DA09184, is hereby declared surplus property.*
- 2. The County is authorized to donate the above-referenced vehicle to Mission Ministries Alliance pursuant to North Carolina General Statutes § 160A-280.*
- 3. The County Manager, or designee, is hereby authorized to execute any and all documents necessary to effectuate the donation of the vehicle, including transfer of title.*
- 4. The donation is conditioned upon the vehicle being used for the stated public purpose of transporting clients to medical treatment appointments and employment opportunities.*

ADOPTED this 11th day of May, 2026.

Property Tax Releases, Refunds, and Discoveries

Mr. Wooten presented property tax releases, refunds, and discoveries. Commissioner Ellis made a motion to approve the releases, refunds, and discoveries as presented, with a second from Commissioner Garner. By a motion of 4-0, the motion passed.

Releases Over \$100: \$101.26
Releases Under \$100: \$0
Refunds: \$41.53
Motor Vehicle Refunds: \$3,123.33
Discoveries: \$0

Property Tax Resolution

Kevin Leonard, executive director of the NCACC, emailed regarding monitoring legislation around property tax reform as it relates to expanding and enhancing discounts for elderly and disabled veterans. The association has sent out a draft resolution regarding the Property Tax Reform that is being discussed by the General Assembly. Mr. Wooten added some language to the draft resolution. The main purpose is to request from the General Assembly the maintenance and support of local decision-making as it relates to property tax, billing, and assessment, and to endorse the passage of the Senate Bill 349. The Bill would decrease the marriage penalty and make changes to the Circuit Breaker Program, removing the deferral. Vice-Chair Greene made a motion to approve the resolution as presented, with a second from Commissioner Ellis. By a vote of 4-0, the motion passed.

A Resolution of the McDowell County Board of Commissioners Supporting Local Property Tax Authority and Supporting Targeted Property Tax Relief Measures for Elderly Residents, Disabled Veterans, and Other Eligible Taxpayers WHEREAS, county governments in North Carolina are constitutionally and statutorily charged with providing essential public services, including public safety, emergency response, education, infrastructure, public health, economic development, and social services; and

WHEREAS, property taxes constitute a primary, stable, and locally controlled source of revenue necessary to fund these essential county services and to meet both ongoing operational needs and long-term capital obligations; and WHEREAS, the authority to levy, assess, and adjust property taxes allows county governments to respond responsibly to changing economic conditions, population growth, service demands, emergencies, and state or federal mandates; and

WHEREAS, counties follow transparent procedures prior to any tax changes by presenting annual budgets on a strict schedule, conducting open meetings for citizen input and questions, and submitting public bond questions for voter consideration; and

WHEREAS, proposals to broadly restrict, cap, freeze, or otherwise limit county property tax authority may reduce local flexibility, undermine fiscal stability, and shift costs to less stable revenue sources; and

WHEREAS, such broad restrictions may result in unintended consequences, including service reductions, delayed infrastructure investment, increased fees, and inequitable impacts on residents; and

WHEREAS, county governments are best positioned to balance fiscal responsibility with service delivery, accountability, and responsiveness to local needs through transparent budgeting and elected representation; and

WHEREAS, the Property Tax Modifications Bill S349 proposes targeted modifications intended to provide meaningful property tax relief and assistance to elderly residents, disabled veterans, and other qualifying taxpayers who may face increasing financial burdens associated with property ownership; and

WHEREAS, the McDowell County Board of Commissioners recognizes the importance of preserving homeownership opportunities and financial stability for senior citizens, disabled veterans, and vulnerable residents while maintaining the fiscal integrity necessary to provide essential county services; and

WHEREAS, targeted relief measures that are carefully structured and supported by the State of North Carolina can provide assistance to qualifying residents without broadly impairing the ability of counties to meet their statutory obligations and service responsibilities;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the McDowell County Board of Commissioners supports the current property tax authority in North Carolina, which enables counties to manage property tax rates within established statutory limits and maintain local fiscal responsibility; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the McDowell County Board of Commissioners opposes broad constitutional or statutory limitations that would unnecessarily restrict county property tax authority and impair the ability of counties to provide essential public services; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the McDowell County Board of Commissioners expresses support for the goals and intent of Senate Bill 349- Property Tax Modifications insofar as the legislation seeks to provide targeted property tax relief and assistance for elderly residents, disabled veterans, and other eligible taxpayers in North Carolina; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clerk to the Board is directed to transmit a copy of this Resolution to members of the North Carolina General Assembly representing McDowell County and to appropriate state officials.

ADOPTED this the 11th day of May, 2026.

Citizen Comment

Kenneth Wegman on Taxes and immigration. Kim Greer on Mission Ministries Alliance.

Commissioner/Staff Reports and Communications

Mr. Wooten asked what the preference was for the budget presentation. The Board agreed on the Friday after Memorial Day at 8:30 AM.

Adjournment

Vice-Chair Greene made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Ellis. By a vote of 4-0, the motion passed