

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
MCDOWELL COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
RECESSED SESSION – June 29, 2026**

Assembly

The McDowell County Board of Commissioners met in recessed session on Monday, June 29, 2026, in the Commissioners' Board Room, 69 N. Main Street, Marion, NC.

Members Present

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

Members Absent

None

Others Present

Ashley Wooten, County Manager; Madalyn Robinson, Clerk to the Board; Fred Coats, County Attorney; Alison Bell, Finance Director

Call to Order

Chairman Brown called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm.

FY 2027 Budget Discussion

Commissioner Walker asked what the 1% increase for the school system equals.

Commissioner Ellis made a motion to do a quarter-cent sales tax referendum for November, and if it passes, to decrease the property tax by one percent. This motion was seconded by Commissioner Walker. Vice-Chair Greene clarified that the property tax decrease is pending based on the results of the quarter-cent sales tax being added to the ballot. Mr. Wooten added that this would lower property taxes for Fiscal Year 2028. Mr. Wooten would anticipate a penny generating more in a future year based on revaluation rates, but urged caution when making commitments on what a future year could hold. Commissioner Walker asked if factors could be added to the motion to modify the motion to stay at the current rate. Commissioner Walker added that the motion could be amended not to exceed what the penny can do currently (June 29th, 2026, for \$650,000). Commissioner Ellis revised the motion not to exceed 650,000; Commissioner Walker amended the second for this motion.

Commissioner Garner added that she has concerns about how this will come across to the public. Commissioner Walker added that they can tie the money to public safety funding and school funding. Vice-Chair Greene added that the whole idea of the quarter-cent sales tax is to increase funding and asked if this wasn't taking the money from somewhere else. Commissioner Garner added that if they're not on the same page about the quarter-cent sales tax being on the ballot, they shouldn't add it to the ballot. Commissioner Ellis stated that this would help avoid cutting services and add employee raises. Commissioner Walker replied that this is the fairest way to support revenue because the people can vote; however, there needs to be a third party to educate the public. Commissioner Garner added that she doesn't know if they could sell this to the public and that this would be taking away property tax revenue. Commissioner Ellis asked if Mr. Wooten could find a third party to advocate for this. By a 4-1 vote, this motion passes.

Yay:

Vice-Chair Greene
Commissioner Walker
Commissioner Ellis
Commissioner Garner

Nay:

Chairman Brown

Mr. Wooten stated that he'd have the resolution to be included on the ballot for approval at Tuesday's meeting.

Chairman Brown added that he'd like there to be a 3% COLA, 2% for college, the Sheriff's Department to get the requested detective position, and EMS to get the requested 911 position. Commissioner Ellis added that he suggested taking \$750,000 out of the jail funds, and excluding those 65 and older from the trash fee. Vice-Chair Greene asked where the list for 65 and older would come from, and Mr. Wooten stated that they could use data that the tax assessing department has for elderly exemptions.

Vice-Chair Greene asked who sets the income level since this is a local ordinance. Doing the solid waste fee this year would be difficult, and this would most likely delay bills. Mr. Wooten suggested implementing the waste fee sometime next year, giving staff time to understand and research income level requirements because the statute does not provide clear guidance. Commissioner Ellis added that they should continue to put pressure on the legislature.

Commissioner Walker made a motion to give a 3% COLA, reduce the health insurance from \$1000 to \$900, add the 911 position and the detective position, give a 1% increase for the school system, 1% for the community college, increase the scale tipping fee from 75¢ to \$80, with the addition of the \$750,000 from the jail revenue funds. Chairman Brown seconded the motion for discussion. The one-time donation of \$750,000 will not be allocated to them without doing what the Sheriff's stipulations were. By a vote of 3-2, the motion does not pass.

Yays:

Chairman Brown
Commissioner Walker

Nays:

Vice-Chair Greene
Commissioner Walker
Commissioner Ellis

Commissioner Ellis made a motion for the 3% COLA, \$500,000 in jail funds this year, \$250,000 next year (over two years), 0% funding increase to the school system and the college, \$1000 per person insurance rate, give the requested 911 operator position, give the requested detective position, and increase from \$75 to \$80 on the tipping fee. This motion was seconded by Vice-Chair Greene for discussion. Commissioner Garner asked what the general fund withdrawal would be, and Ms. Bell replied that this would be approximately a \$250,000 general fund removal. Commissioner Ellis amended the motion to \$750,000 this year from the jail revenue fund, and Vice-Chair Greene amended the second. Chairman Brown added that he'd like to see a 1% increase in funding go to the school. The Board discussed zero money coming out of the fund balance if the \$750,00 from jail revenue funds is used per the amended motion. Vice-Chair Greene added that if the sales tax passes, you could allocate revenue to the school system, college, and waste. Commissioner Walker added that they could amend the budget at a later date to allocate funding for the schools.

Yays:

Vice-Chair Greene
Commissioner Garner
Commissioner Ellis
Commissioner Walker

Nays:

Chairman Brown

Chairman Brown stated that he voted no because the college and school are not receiving a funding percentage increase. Commissioner Walker added that he hopes the general assembly doesn't limit counties to being revenue-neutral and that, with excess revenue, they could give funding to the college. Vice-Chair Greene replied that this is the only way they can increase county employee salaries.

Mr. Wooten will update the budget to reflect the passing vote requirements, and the Board will meet on June 30th at 11:30 am to vote on the final budget.

Adjournment

Commissioner Walker voted to adjourn at 5:46 pm, with a second from Commissioner Ellis. By a vote of 5-0, the motion passes.