

12-03-2025 Agenda

McDonald County Commission

Bryan Hall, Presiding

417-223-7516

Jessica Cole, Clerk

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Rick Lett
Western Commissioner

Jamey Cope
Eastern Commissioner

Public notice is hereby given that a meeting of the County Commission of McDonald County **December 3rd, 2025** from 8:00am-2:00pm to consider and act upon the matters on the following tentative agenda and such other matters as may be presented at the meeting and determined to be appropriate for discussion at that time.

8:00am General Business of the County

9:00am Salary Commission Meeting

11:00am John Newby

Executive Session

The County Commission may, as part of a regular or special County Commission Meeting, hold a closed session to discuss legal action or litigation, leasing, purchasing, sale of real estate, or personnel matters. Authority is RSMo Section 610.021 – 610.022, as amended.

Posted: 12-03-2025

8:00a.m.

12-03-2025 Minutes

McDonald County Commission—Minutes

December 3rd, 2025

Present:

Bryan Hall - Presiding Commissioner

Jamey Cope - Eastern Commissioner

Rick Lett - Western Commissioner

Jessica Cole - County Clerk

General Business

The Salary Commission met to discuss McDonald County Office Holders salaries. Discussed was the change in assessed valuation that took effect back in 2024. When a change in assessed valuation occurs this allows the change in base pay salary for office holders per RsMo 50.333. The Salary Commission has to meet at least once prior to November 30th and originally met on October 20th in which a 4% COLA was discussed and passed. At today's meeting, the discussion was held regarding a \$2000(4.65%) increase to the base pay schedule for Office Holders as listed in RsMo 50.333 (7) would also take effect.

Clerk Cole stated her concerns that should the Salary Commission vote to approve this increase, she questioned whether it be applied during the current term or the following term of all office holders. She stated that this being a mandated allowed increase by the law if it should take immediate effect or until the beginning of the next terms. After several discussions and statements from the Public Administrator and Prosecuting Attorney, The members of the salary commission read section 7 of the RsMo 50.333 stating:

"...Such increase shall be expressed as a percentage of the compensation being paid during the term of office when the vote is taken, and each officer or office whose compensation is being established by the salary commission at that time shall receive the same percentage increase over the compensation being paid for that office during the term when the vote is taken. This increase shall be in addition to any increase mandated by an official's salary schedule because of changes in assessed valuation during the current term. "

With no further discussions, Salary Commission moved to approve the \$2000(4.65%) increase to the base pay schedule for Office Holders as listed in RsMo 50.333 (7) this would be in addition to the previously approved 4% COLA. These increases are to take effect January 1, 2026 for those in their current term and subsequent terms.

After the Salary Commission meeting, the Office Holders discussed updates within each office. In the Clerk's office, the tax credit position has been filled and has started sending out applications to Senior Citizens who will be eligible to receive a tax credit to their real estate taxes incoming tax year 2026. Also discussed was the language debate on whether or not the County is to place additional language to apply a tax credit to all applicants in McDonald County for real estate.

The Commissioners met with the McDonald County Chamber of Commerce to discuss projected regional growth and its impact on the I-49 corridor. During the meeting, the Chamber proposed adding a dedicated budget line to support economic development and new businesses to the County. Specifically, they requested a partnership to provide \$2,000 per month for a Destination Marketing Organization (DMO). The Chamber projects this partnership to become self-sustained after the first year of investment. This funding would help establish a foundation for marketing and development efforts along with Grant writing opportunities. The Commissioners acknowledged the proposal and stated they would review the request alongside other departmental budgets before making decisions for 2026.

County Treasurer Fuller provided a current asset report to Commissioners acknowledging three of the County funds running in deficit (Health (-30,361.75), Assessment (-19,751.12), and Law Enforcement (-423,990.21). After review Commissioner Cope moved to issue a Court Order to Treasurer Fuller to transfer the following \$305,000.00 from General Revenue into the Law Enforcement Fund and \$41,862 from General Revenue into the Assessment Fund effective today. Commissioner Lett second the motion. All were in favor. Motion Passed. They will await to see Sales Tax Distributions before moving any more



MCDONALD COUNTY / CHAMBER TOURISM VISION & STRATEGY

**Presented By:
McDonald County Chamber**

October 6, 2025

MCDONALD COUNTY / CHAMBER TOURISM VISION & STRATEGY

A Partnership for Economic Growth and Community Prosperity

McDonald County stands at a crossroads of opportunity. While long-term economic development strategies require patience and sustained effort, our community cannot afford to wait. We need immediate action that generates revenue, creates jobs, and builds momentum for our future. This strategic partnership between the McDonald County Chamber and the County represents a proven, actionable approach to economic development that will deliver measurable results while we work toward our longer-term goals.

CREATING THE MCDONALD COUNTY DMO

Building a Destination Marketing Organization That Works for Our Community

What Exactly is a DMO?

A Destination Marketing Organization (DMO)—also known as a tourism board, tourism authority, or visitor's bureau—serves as the strategic engine that drives tourism growth and economic prosperity. Think of it as your county's storyteller, brand ambassador, and economic catalyst all rolled into one. DMOs don't just attract visitors; they transform communities by creating jobs, generating tax revenue, and building pride in what makes our region special.

From crafting compelling narratives about our natural beauty and outdoor recreation to leveraging cutting-edge digital marketing strategies, a professionally managed DMO brings expertise and focus that individual businesses and government entities simply cannot achieve alone. It's the difference between hoping tourists discover us and actively guiding them to our doorstep.

The Power of Strategic Destination Marketing

Destination marketing is far more than advertising—it's the art and science of positioning McDonald County as a must-visit destination. It combines market research, brand development, social media engagement, influencer partnerships, public relations, and targeted advertising campaigns to reach the right visitors at the right time.

When executed effectively, destination marketing creates a rising tide that lifts all boats. Every hotel, restaurant, retail shop, attraction, and service provider benefit from increased visitor traffic. It's not just about promoting our county; it's about creating sustainable economic growth that touches every corner of our community.

Why Destination Marketing Matters Now More Than Ever

Today's travelers are sophisticated consumers with countless destination choices at their fingertips. Without professional marketing, even the most beautiful destinations can be overlooked. McDonald County possesses natural assets that rival or exceed many well-known tourism destinations, but we're competing against places with million-dollar marketing budgets and professional tourism teams.

A DMO levels the playing field. It enables us to tell our story with authenticity and precision, connecting with travelers who will fall in love with what we offer. More importantly, it transforms casual interest into committed visits and first-time visitors into lifelong advocates who return year after year and bring others with them.

The Economic Engine: How DMOs Drive Prosperity

The economic impact of a well-functioning DMO extends far beyond tourism dollars. When visitors come to McDonald County, they:

- Fill hotel rooms and campgrounds, generating occupancy tax revenue
- Dine at our restaurants, supporting local food producers and service workers
- Shop at our stores, contributing to sales tax revenue
- Use our services, from gas stations to guide services
- Discover our community and some become future residents or business investors

This creates a powerful multiplier effect. Every dollar spent by a visitor circulates through our local economy multiple times, supporting jobs, funding public services, and enabling business expansion. For counties heavily reliant on agriculture or limited industry, tourism offers a proven path to economic diversification and stability.

The data tells a compelling story: communities that invest in professional destination marketing see returns of 7:1 or higher on their marketing spend. More visitors mean more jobs, more tax revenue, and more opportunities for our residents—without raising taxes on local property owners.

SUSTAINABLE FUNDING: HOW DMOs OPERATE

Understanding DMO funding is essential to appreciating both their sustainability and fairness. The most successful DMOs utilize multiple funding streams that create financial stability without burdening local taxpayers:

1. Public Partnership Support

Local governments and counties provide foundational support through budget allocations or dedicated funding mechanisms. This investment demonstrates commitment to economic development and ensures the DMO can plan strategically for long-term success.

2. Lodging Taxes: The Tourism Industry Funds Tourism Marketing

This is the cornerstone of sustainable DMO funding and represents a model of fairness and effectiveness. Lodging taxes—applied to hotels, motels, campgrounds, and vacation rentals—ensure that the tourism industry itself funds tourism promotion. Here's why this approach makes sense:

- Visitors, not local residents, pay these taxes
- The tax is only collected when rooms are occupied
- It creates a virtuous cycle: marketing brings more visitors, more visitors generate more tax revenue, more revenue enables better marketing
- It's standard practice in successful tourism destinations nationwide

3. Business Membership Programs

Local businesses, attractions, and tourism-related entities can join as DMO members, paying annual dues in exchange for promotional benefits, networking opportunities, and inclusion in marketing materials. This creates buy-in from the business community and ensures the DMO remains responsive to local needs.

4. Grants and Sponsorships

DMOs actively pursue grants from government agencies, foundations, and private organizations supporting tourism development. Corporate sponsorships from businesses wanting to align with the destination's appeal provide additional resources for major campaigns and special events.

5. Public-Private Partnerships

Collaborative partnerships between public entities and private stakeholders leverage the strengths of both sectors. These partnerships bring together resources, expertise, and networks that neither sector could access alone, creating comprehensive approaches to destination marketing that maximize impact.

6. Integrated Funding Strategy

The most resilient DMOs combine multiple funding sources, creating financial stability that can weather economic fluctuations and enable both immediate initiatives and long-term strategic planning.

COUNTY CHAMBER / COUNTY PARTNERSHIP PROPOSAL

An 8-Step Roadmap to Tourism-Driven Economic Growth

Step 1: Formal DMO Establishment

The Chamber initiates the 12-month process to establish a formal DMO structure, meeting requirements for a dedicated budget and full-time professional tourism staff. This foundational step positions McDonald County to access state and federal tourism resources while establishing credibility with the travel industry.

Step 2: Professional Tourism Staffing

Within 2-3 months, Chamber has on staff a full-time tourism professional with expertise in destination marketing, digital strategy, and tourism development. This dedicated staff member becomes the face of McDonald County tourism, building relationships with travel writers, tour operators, and tourism partners while executing strategic marketing campaigns.

Step 3: Shared Investment Partnership

The Chamber and County commit to equally sharing the cost of the full-time employee, including salary, benefits, travel, and mileage expenses, with the County's obligation capped at \$2,000 per month. This 50/50 partnership demonstrates unified commitment to economic development. The partnership will also reach out to other communities and counties to help offset costs, reducing the burden on both primary partners.

Step 4: Sustainable Funding Through Lodging Tax

The Chamber works collaboratively with the County to implement a 3% overnight lodging tax, structured to ensure sustainability and community benefit.

- 1% dedicated to DMO staff compensation
- 1% dedicated to DMO/County tourism marketing and promotional efforts
- 1% dedicated to river safety and security infrastructure

This structure ensures visitors contribute directly to the services and promotion they benefit from, while local taxpayers see no increase in their tax burden.

Step 5: Transition to Self-Sustaining Operations

As lodging tax revenue begins flowing, the goal would be that at the end of three (3) years, that 1% portion dedicated to staff compensation can reduce and eventually eliminates the County's \$2,000 monthly tourism staff investment. This transition to self-sustaining operations frees up County funds for other priorities while maintaining and expanding tourism development efforts.

Step 6: Collaborative Marketing Excellence

The Chamber/DMO partners with the County on comprehensive marketing, advertising, and tourism initiatives. This includes digital campaigns, content creation, event promotion, infrastructure improvements, and visitor experience enhancements that position McDonald County as a premier destination.

Step 7: Business Community Engagement Program

The DMO creates a structured program connecting local businesses with tourism opportunities. This includes:

- Tourism-ready certification programs
- Cooperative marketing opportunities
- Visitor data and trend analysis
- Training on capturing tourism dollars
- Networking events connecting businesses with tourism partners

This ensures tourism growth translates into increased sales tax revenue and business prosperity throughout the County.

Step 8: Regional Partnership Expansion

Once operational, the Chamber/DMO engages with surrounding counties—particularly Barry County—to explore multi-county DMO participation. Regional collaboration expands marketing reach, increases funding capacity, and positions the broader area as a cohesive destination, benefiting all participating communities.

GRANT WRITING AND FUNDING ASSISTANCE

Maximizing Resources for Community Development

A critical yet often overlooked function of a professionally staffed DMO is grant research, writing, and management support. Many communities leave millions of dollars in potential funding on the table simply because they lack the expertise, time, or resources to pursue available grants effectively.

Comprehensive Grant Support Services

The McDonald County DMO will provide grant writing and funding assistance to communities, county departments, and eligible organizations throughout McDonald County:

Grant Identification and Research

- Continuous monitoring of federal, state, and foundation grant opportunities
- Matching community needs with appropriate funding sources
- Maintaining a calendar of grant deadlines and application cycles
- Building relationships with funding agencies and program officers

Professional Grant Writing

- Developing compelling narratives that align with funder priorities
- Preparing required documentation, budgets, and supporting materials
- Ensuring applications meet technical requirements and deadlines
- Coordinating with community partners and stakeholders

Target Funding Areas

- Tourism infrastructure improvements (trails, parks, signage, facilities)
- Historic preservation and downtown revitalization
- Small business development and entrepreneurship programs
- Community facilities and public spaces
- Transportation and connectivity projects
- Environmental conservation and outdoor recreation
- Arts, culture, and heritage programming
- Workforce development and training initiatives

Grant Management Support

- Assisting with grant compliance and reporting requirements
- Tracking grant-funded project timelines and deliverables
- Coordinating with multiple funding sources for complex projects
- Building institutional knowledge for future funding success

Building Local Capacity

Beyond direct grant writing, the DMO will:

- Train local staff and volunteers in grant fundamentals
- Maintain templates and resources for common grant types
- Foster partnerships that strengthen grant applications
- Document success stories that support future funding requests

This comprehensive approach ensures that McDonald County communities have professional support to compete effectively for funding that can transform infrastructure, create jobs, and enhance quality of life for residents and visitors alike.

OPPORTUNITY ZONE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Leveraging Federal Tax Incentives for Transformative Growth

McDonald County's designation as an Opportunity Zone under federal legislation would represent a powerful but time-sensitive tool for economic development. Opportunity Zones offer substantial tax incentives to investors who commit capital to qualified projects within designated areas, creating unprecedented potential for community transformation.

Understanding Opportunity Zones

Opportunity Zones were created to spur economic development in economically distressed communities by providing tax benefits to investors who invest eligible capital into Qualified Opportunity Funds (QOFs) that finance projects within designated zones. The incentives include:

- Temporary tax deferral for capital gains reinvested in Opportunity Zones
- Step-up in basis for capital gains invested, reducing ultimate tax liability
- Permanent exclusion from taxable income of capital gains from Opportunity Zone investments held for at least 10 years

The McDonald County Chamber/DMO's Role in Opportunity Zone Activation

The Chamber/DMO will serve as a central coordinator and resource hub for Opportunity Zone development:

Investment Attraction and Promotion

- Marketing McDonald County's Opportunity Zones to investors, developers, and Qualified Opportunity Funds
- Creating compelling investment prospectuses highlighting opportunity areas and development potential
- Attending and presenting at investment conferences and networking events
- Building relationships with fund managers seeking Opportunity Zone projects

Project Development Support

- Identifying and vetting potential development projects that qualify for Opportunity Zone investment
- Connecting local property owners and entrepreneurs with potential investors
- Facilitating partnerships between community stakeholders and external developers
- Providing site selection assistance and due diligence support

Technical Assistance and Navigation

- Educating county officials, business owners, and community members about Opportunity Zone benefits and requirements
- Assisting with Qualified Opportunity Fund formation and compliance
- Connecting stakeholders with legal, financial, and tax professionals specializing in Opportunity Zones
- Tracking regulatory changes and guidance affecting Opportunity Zone investments

Strategic Planning and Coordination

- Working with County leadership to identify priority areas and project types within Opportunity Zones
- Coordinating Opportunity Zone strategy with comprehensive planning and zoning efforts
- Ensuring infrastructure readiness for anticipated development
- Balancing economic development objectives with community character preservation

Community Engagement

- Educating residents about Opportunity Zone benefits and potential community impacts
- Gathering community input on desired development types and priorities
- Ensuring local businesses and entrepreneurs can participate in Opportunity Zone growth
- Promoting inclusive development that benefits existing residents and businesses

Target Investment Sectors for McDonald County

The DMO will actively promote and support Opportunity Zone investments in sectors aligned with McDonald County's strengths and needs:

- **Tourism and Hospitality Infrastructure:** Hotels, resorts, campgrounds, and tourist attractions that capitalize on natural assets
- **Commercial Real Estate Development:** Retail centers, mixed-use developments, and downtown revitalization projects
- **Industrial and Business Parks:** Facilities that create jobs and expand the tax base
- **Affordable Housing:** Workforce housing that supports economic growth while addressing community needs
- **Outdoor Recreation Facilities:** Outfitter operations, equipment rentals, and adventure tourism businesses
- **Arts and Cultural Venues:** Facilities that enhance quality of life and attract cultural tourists
- **Infrastructure and Utilities:** Broadband, transportation, and utility improvements that enable further development

Measuring Success and Impact

The DMO will track and report on Opportunity Zone development outcomes:

- Number and value of Opportunity Zone investments attracted
- Jobs created and retained through Opportunity Zone projects
- Tax revenue generated from new development
- Business starts and expansions within Opportunity Zones
- Quality of life improvements for residents

By providing professional staff dedicated to Opportunity Zone activation, McDonald County positions itself to capitalize on this time-limited federal incentive program, potentially attracting millions in investment capital that can fundamentally transform the county's economic trajectory.

INVESTMENT, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND RESULTS

This Chamber/County partnership represents a strategic investment in McDonald County's future—one that pays dividends through increased tax revenue, job creation, and community vitality. It demonstrates responsible stewardship of public resources by:

Creating Accountability: A professional DMO operates with measurable goals, transparent reporting, and clear performance metrics. The Chamber and County will receive regular reports on visitor numbers, marketing reach, tax revenue generation, grant funds secured, and economic impact.

Ensuring Sustainability: The transition to lodging tax funding ensures long-term viability without ongoing general fund commitments, freeing up resources for other county priorities.

Telling Your Story: This partnership enables county leadership to demonstrate proactive economic development that grows revenue without increasing taxes on residents—a compelling narrative for constituents.

Building Momentum: Tourism development creates immediate economic activity while positioning McDonald County for long-term growth through improved infrastructure, enhanced quality of life, and increased visibility.

Maximizing Opportunities: Through grant writing support and Opportunity Zone activation, the DMO helps McDonald County access resources and investments that would otherwise remain out of reach. The time for action is now. Every day without professional destination marketing is a day our competitors gain ground. Every grant cycle we miss is funding that goes elsewhere. Every year without Opportunity Zone development is investment capital lost to other communities.

This proposal offers McDonald County a proven path to economic prosperity—one that respects taxpayers, supports local businesses, preserves our natural assets, and builds the vibrant, thriving community we all envision for our future.

Let's move forward together.

01-12-2026 Minutes

McDonald County Commission—Minutes

January 12th, 2026

Present:

Bryan Hall - Presiding Commissioner

Jamey Cope - Eastern Commissioner

Rick Lett - Western Commissioner

Jessica Cole - County Clerk

General Business

Presiding Commissioner Hall moves to allocate funding for the following Community Programs who sought funding from the 2026 County Budget.

Presiding Commissioner Hall moved to allocate \$20,000 for a DMO for the McDonald County Chamber with 2026 Budget appropriations.. Western Commissioner, Rick Lett Seconds. All in Favor. Motions Carried.

After discussion, Presiding Commissioner Hall proposed to allocate \$7500 towards I'm your Huckleberry Animal Rescue. Jamey Cope second the motion. All in favor. Motion Carried.

9:00am - Gregg Sweeten with Emergency Management had a phone conference with Commissioners and FEMA representative, Jason Stalder.

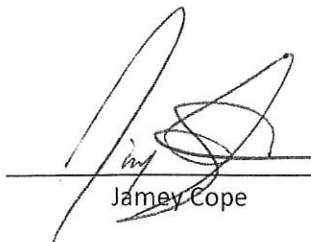
Later Commissioners discussed the annual report received from the Missouri University Extension office. Per RsMo 262.600. Eastern Commissioner, Jamey Cope opted to allow the Extension office to keep the funds that remained from the 2025 budget allocations and would revisit this the upcoming year. Bryan Hall second the motion. All were in favor. Motion passed unanimously.

In the appropriations received for approval, Commissioner Cope asked if \$4000 Ozark Drug Taskforce Membership dues could be paid with Opioids Funding. After reviewing of the Local Resource Guide, they found this was an acceptable use of Opioids funds. With that they reallocated those membership dues from the Law Enforcement Budget over to the Opioids expenditures. With how tight funding is in the Law Enforcement Fund any allocations they can shift from law expenditures to another fund is a huge help for those departments who share the law enforcement sales tax as their major source of funding. On Wednesday January 14th Commissioners will be honoring three of their long time serving Road Crew Employees who have retired from County Employment. They welcome anyone to come and go from 10am-12pm.

ADJOURN

Commission will reconvene on January 14th, 2026

SIGNATURES



Jamey Cope

Approved



Bryan Hall

Wednesday January 14th, 2026



Rick Lett

Book PP pg. 610



McDonald County Commission

Bryan Hall, Presiding Commissioner

417-223-7516

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commission@olemac.net

Jamey Cope
Eastern Commissioner

Rick Lett
Western Commissioner

January 21, 2026

Dear USDA Grant Committee,

I am writing to express my support for the USDA grant application submitted by the McDonald County Chamber of Commerce. This grant is vital for the enhancement of our digital infrastructure, particularly in updating many of our community or business websites, linking community calendars to spread the word of community events, and enhance our social media initiatives and platforms.

As County Commissioners, we understand the critical importance of effective communication and engagement with our residents. By modernizing our digital presence and impact, we can ensure that all citizens have access to city information, but most important is the impact it could have on our ability and efforts to encourage new businesses to consider McDonald County as a great place to conduct business.

Our community thrives on active participation, and a modern digital presence will facilitate this engagement. The USDA grant will enable us to work with local businesses and potential businesses in updating our digital presence in what has become a digital world, create a more connective community calendar, ensuring all events and info are in one central place, as well as encourage communication between the city, businesses and the community we serve.

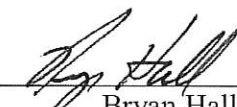
We are confident that this grant will have a significant positive impact on our community, enhancing transparency, promoting civic engagement, and improving the overall quality of life for our residents. We are urging the USDA to approve this grant application and support McDonald County in its efforts to update our websites and overall Countywide digital online presence.

Thank you for considering this important request. Should you require any additional information or have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the County Commission.

Sincerely,

McDonald County Commission


Jamey Cope
Eastern Commissioner


Bryan Hall
Presiding Commissioner


Rick Lett
Western Commissioner

Resolution 2026-01

Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) for the Division of Tourism

WHEREAS, County of McDonald, a legitimate department, agency, or representative of McDonald County, is engaged primarily in the marketing and promotion of tourism; and

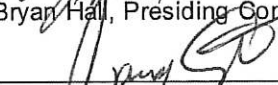
WHEREAS, this organization has shown and demonstrated evidence of its on-going tourism marketing activities and plans for promotion of McDonald County; and

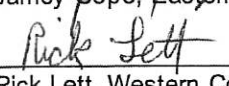
WHEREAS, this organization requires formal acknowledgement and recognition by the governing body of the county to become a qualified participant in the programs administered by the Missouri Division of Tourism:

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MCDONALD COUNTY COMMISSION AS FOLLOWS;

The McDonald County Commission hereby supports McDonald County Chamber of Commerce Director, John Newby as the designee and recognized as the single representative organization to solicit and service tourism in McDonald County, Missouri for participation in the Missouri Division of Tourism programs.


Bryan Hall, Presiding Commissioner


Jamey Cope, Eastern Commissioner


Rick Lett, Western Commissioner

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand, in

McDonald County, Missouri this 4th day of February, 2026

