

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF AVERY**

The Avery County Board of Commissioners met in a Special Meeting on Monday, January 23, 2017 at 5:00 p.m. in the Commissioners Board Room, Avery County Administrative Complex, 175 Linville Street, Newland, NC. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the design elements of the Agricultural Building Project and take any action necessary regarding this project.

Members Present: Martha Hicks, Chair; Blake Vance, Vice-Chair; Faith Lacey; Tim Phillips; Wood Hall Young, Jr.

Members Absent: None

Call To Order

Chair Hicks called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.
Blake Vance led prayer.

Agricultural Building Project

Tim Greene, County Manager, explained that several months back we began to look at the present Agricultural building which has some problems and an engineer, Glenn Walker was engaged. Mr. Walker drew out some sketches and gave us some estimates on renovating the building. At the time, it was more money than what we wanted to put in the old building. We looked at different locations with Heritage Park being one of them and we thought this would be the best way to utilize this property. The current Ag. Building is 5000 square feet with 2500 square feet of storage. We did have a community input meeting and several people at the meeting brought up the idea of a community room that could host different types of events. We were thinking enough space to seat approximately 200 people. With all of this, we went to the architect and gave him the "wish list". The architects drew this up and it came out that we would need an 11,000 square foot building. The architect came up with a budget which is around 2.5 million dollars. Back in the spring, the Board put \$1,000,000 in a project ordinance for the Ag. building project so as it stands now we are about a million and a half short. We are all concerned with that and at the last meeting with the architect we were looking at how we could lower that cost and it really comes down to the community room. Tonight we are meeting to see how we are going to move forward. Another option would be to do the project in phases.

Chair Hicks stated at the beginning we said we would build the offices. We could do the project in phases.

Blake Vance stated that one of the hurdles that threw us all for a loop was the infrastructure improvements that we are going to need from the Town of Newland. This cost was estimated at about \$600,000; that is a budget "buster". For the past two years, about 10% of our budget has come from our fund balance. It is now a matter of getting to where we can afford what we want to do. There is no question that a new office

building is needed. I have been an advocate of a large community room and there is the need for a large community room. It comes down to can we afford it. We have committed to a new office complex but the community room may be in question purely because of the budget. We have talked to Jerry this week and there may be some options.

Mr. Greene stated that the board needed to start talking about do we want to proceed with this size of building or do we want to scale back or do we want to do it in phases.

Wood Hall Young, Jr. said if we do it in phases it is going to cost more. Every year costs go up. If this is what Jerry says he needs and if it is what the community wants I think that is where we have to look. I think we have to look at the options Jerry has given us to give him time to try to secure additional funds through grants.

Faith Lacey stated that as I recall Jerry asked for a year to try to get grants and if he is willing to work for grants I think that is the way to go.

Discussion regarding grant funds.

Blake Vance suggested that the million dollars be left in the project fund and let Jerry write grants and then see where we are at that point.

Tim Greene stated that one option is to put everything on hold, not do anything and see if we come up with more money. Another option would be to start and just build the office building with the anticipation of at a later date adding a community room. That is where we are at.

Tim Phillips said he was in favor of giving him time to see if he can get grants and approach this thing when we find out about the grants.

Several citizens spoke regarding the benefits of a community room.

Chair Hicks thanked the citizens for their opinions. This project is something that the county needs.

Wood Hall Young, Jr. thanked the citizens for speaking.

Mr. Greene said just for clarification we are putting the project on hold. We are not starting anything and give Jerry time to see if he can get grant money up to a year.

Blake Vance suggested that another meeting be held next month and see how Jerry is proceeding with grants.

Mr. Greene said we may want to meet with the architect and work on the design. Consensus of the Board to meet back with the architect and work on the design.

Wood Hall Young, Jr. said we are committed to this project and we need to have our “ducks in a row” with the design.

Mr. Greene is to get in touch with Boomerang Designs to meet with them and work on the design sometime in February.

Adjourn

Motion by Blake Vance and second by Wood Hall Young, Jr. to adjourn this meeting at 5:57 p.m. Motion unanimously approved.

**Martha Hicks, Chair
Avery County Board of Commissioners**

Attest: _____
Cindy Turbyfill, Clerk