

**State of North Carolina
County of Avery**

The Avery County Board of Commissioners met in Regular session on Monday, May 2, 2016 at 6:00 p.m. in the Commissioners Board Room, Avery County Administrative Complex, 175 Linville Street, Newland, NC.

Members Present: Martha Hicks, Chair; Maxine Laws, Vice-Chair; Reo Griffith; Faith Lacey; Blake Vance

Call To Order

Chair Hicks called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.
Bobby Hodges led in prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance.

Proclamations and Awards

Commissioner Reo Griffith presented to the Avery County Board of Commissioners and the Avery County taxpayers a plaque from the Oasis Shrine Club for the largest contributor in Avery County. This is the only \$1000.00 plaque in Avery County.

Chair Hicks read aloud the following statement:

The time limit for any comment to the Board is three minutes. Board members are not expected to comment or take any action on matters during public comment. Any individual speaking during public comment shall address the entire Board. Any person who willfully interrupts, disturbs, or disrupts the session will be asked to leave the meeting. If you would like to speak to an agenda item, you must sign up on the sheet with the clerk. Time limit to speak to an agenda item is also three minutes. Please silence all cell phones or electronic devices.

Public Comments

Michael Hardy, Chair of the Avery County Historical Society and Museum, announced that there would be a dedication of the Linville Depot on May 29, 2016 from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. and invited the board members.

Vanessa Henley, Avery County Drug Treatment Court Coordinator, thanked the Board for reviewing the proposal for the budget. Ms. Henley introduced one of the recent graduates of drug treatment court, Jennie Baldwin Reid.

Jennie Baldwin Reid stated that she was an addict and was arrested on June 19, 2013 on drug charges. On November 30th I received a plea that included the drug treatment program. This was not an easy transition. If you want recovery, you must work for it. While in this program I was held accountable for my actions but more than that I was shown compassion and empathy. I was given structure, consistency and stability. I started to believe in myself and developed a new attitude. The drug treatment team did not look down on me or judge me. They reached out to me and gave me a chance to learn to live free from drugs. Drug court saved my life. I now have my license, a car, a

career, stable housing and my families trust. I have a connection to friends in recovery that has become my extended family. Thank you to the community of people that support drug treatment court.

Board Appointments

Avery County Planning Board

These positions have been advertised. There will be two people coming off of the planning board that has served two terms. These are three year terms. The two applicants that we received are Daryl Smith and Amy Vaughn.

Motion by Maxine Laws and second by Blake Vance to appoint Daryl Smith and Amy Vaughn to the Avery County Planning Board for three year terms. Motion unanimously approved.

Review of Application for the Child Fatality Board

There is one application from Dean Gibbs for review for the Child Fatality Board.

Avery High School Science Lab Project – Dr. David Burleson

Dr. David Burleson explained to the Board that a few months back that several people had asked that the students be relocated from the basement of the 100 pod out of the science labs. Those students have been out of the science labs for most of the year. The only problem there is not a science lab upstairs. We went to work figuring out the costs for a science lab upstairs that could be shared by the science teachers. The furnishings themselves are right at \$60,000 and that is from Correction Enterprises. All of that, if we change facilities, can be taken with us. The plumbing price was from Haynes Plumbing which we have used to jet the lines. This is a cost of \$28,000. That is plumbing to be used for the science labs. The propane gas would cost approximately \$2,000 and the science lab set up would cost around \$10,000 to prep the room. That is a grand total of \$100,000. It would take about twelve weeks for the materials to get here and put in.

Chair Hicks advised that there was a budget amendment for \$100,000 for the science labs in the Finance Officer Report that will be considered later in the meeting.

Pyatte Community Center- Tim Singleton

Tim Singleton, Pyatte Community member, explained to the Board that there were some needs at the Pyatte Community Center. There are three churches locally that help with a lot of needs with fundraising, etc. We have some projects inside the building that need attended to which would be hot water heater, some flooring but the main concern is the paving of the community center basketball court. I have looked into two estimates of getting it paved. This has not been resurfaced since 1992 and with the freeze and thaw in the winter this definitely needs some attention. If there is anything that anyone could suggest that could help us with through the county we would greatly appreciate it. Mr. Singleton said that the paving would be approximately \$10,000 and that his request is for up to \$12,600.

Commissioner Griffith questioned if at one time in the past the County had given money to Carey's Flats Community. Tim Greene, County Manager, stated that the money was budgeted but they never requested the money.

Chair Hicks stated that this was something that would be talked about in the upcoming budget meetings.

Senior Community Service Employment Program – Julie Wiggins

Julie Wiggins, High Country Council of Government Area on Agency director, spoke to the Board regarding the Senior Community Service Employment Program. There is the opportunity to compete for funding from the US Department of Labor for an employment program. We are in the official bid for the funding. The program would either start July 1 or October 1 of next fiscal year. The program is for age 55 and older. If people are laid off or need to regain new employment skills this is an opportunity for them to be subsidized to go back and regain skills. What we would be doing is paying for the individuals to work in government or nonprofit settings. The Department of Labor has determined that Avery County would receive three participants and we would help with the recruitment, selection and placement. The program would bring in about \$345,000 to the region and the required match is about \$44,000. I am asking from Avery County for \$3,276.00. It is an ongoing program and we anticipate it lasting for four years. Ms. Wiggins stated that she had confirmation from five of the seven counties.

Chair Hicks stated that it sounds like a good program for the seniors. This is something we will consider in the budget workshops. Thank you for being here today.

Avery County C&D Landfill Sediment Basin No.2 Construction – Eric Foster

Eric Foster, Avery County Solid Waste director, explained that the Sediment Basin No.2 Project is part of a five year plan that Smith-Gardner implemented for the landfill. This includes a sediment basin and a cascade. We already have a cascade now at the landfill in a different sediment basin. This one covers the water that is coming from the borrow area and from on top of the mountain. It helps filter the water that is put in the creek. This is surface water. The bid that came in on March 28, 2016 was \$192,925.00. We budgeted \$140,000 for this particular project. Based off of conversations with the County Manager and County Attorney, the best course would be a budget amendment to cover the remaining bid amount.

Tim Greene, County Manager, stated that any time a project is done, architects or engineers will give you cost estimates and usually they are close but sometimes they will have it estimated too high or too low. One option could be to reduce the scope of work and rebid the entire project but it is going to cost several thousands of dollars to do that or another option is to pass a budget amendment in the amount of \$53,000. This is a subtitle D landfill which means that it is construction and demolition debris.

Chair Hicks advised that the budget amendment would be considered in the Finance Officers Report.

Tax Administrator Report – Phillip Barrier
Tax Collections Report

The Tax Collections Report for the month of April is \$155,715.35.

Motion by Blake Vance and second by Maxine Laws to approve the Tax Collections Report for the month of April as presented. Motion unanimously approved.

Regular Releases

The Regular Releases for the month of April is \$648.46.

Motion by Blake Vance and second by Maxine Laws to approve the Regular Releases for the month of April as presented. Motion unanimously approved.

Sales Report

There are 31 sales this April versus 30 sales last year.

Mr. Barrier advised that the Board of Equalization and Review began meeting on April 11th. There were 23 appeals heard.

Avery County Humane Society – Joe Magid

Joe Magid, Avery County Humane Society, thanked the Board for letting him speak on behalf of the Avery County Humane Society. We request that the Avery County Humane Society be included in the Avery County budget. In the past we have received approximately \$50,000 annually which covers the operating cost of the shelter for about one month. We would like to ask for this amount of money again. The costs of taking in stray or homeless animals for 30 days are over \$400 and that is if there are no major medical issues. Adoption fees for these animals range from \$0 to \$85 dollars for healthy young animals so this difference can only be made up from generous donations from the community. Last year the Humane Society hosted over 1600 visitors from all over the Southeast. Many of these visitors left with a new member of the family. The ACHS was able to find homes for 675 unwanted pets. These are animals that would have otherwise been homeless. The shelter also helps control the overpopulation problem by helping to fix 358 dogs and cats for the residents of Avery County. These were at low cost and 182 of them were free. As of last month in 2016 we had fixed over 145 animals around Avery County. We have a partnership with Mountain View Correctional Institution which allows us to place 22 dogs into our new “Leash on Life” program. This pairs a dog that is unable to get adopted with a prison inmate. These inmates work closely for several weeks teaching them obedience and socialization skills. Currently, all but one of these animals has been adopted out. This program has been wonderful for everyone involved in it. Mr. Magid informed the Board of other services that the Humane Society provided.

Blake Vance stated that he had talked with the director last year about using local providers for the spay and neuter program. Has there been any talk about that or looking into that? Mr. Magid answered not to his knowledge. There is not any other

economical way to handle the volume of spay and neuter that we do. We have in the past partnered with retired vets that did the service for free but in order to use a local veterinarian that would not be cost effective with the funds available. The Humane Alliance in Asheville this is all that they do so they are able to do it at a much lower cost than most local veterinarians.

Mr. Vance said that he had talked to some of the local vets and that they collect sales tax, pay property taxes, etc. , I don't feel good about taking their tax money and then giving it to somebody that is offering the same service that they are for a discounted price or for free. I would really like to see some serious consideration of local providers.

Chair Hicks thanked the Avery County Humane Society and stated that their request would be considered in the upcoming budget process.

County Manager Updates – Tim Greene

Pruitt Health Lease

Mr. Greene stated that Pruitt Health was supposed to be out of the health department by April 30th and evidently they had turnover in corporate and they had not secured a place to go. I have informed them that they need to find a place within the next 30 to 60 days. Our attorney has drawn up a new lease.

Motion by Blake Vance and second by Maxine Laws to approve the new lease for Pruitt Health and authorize the county manager to sign. Motion unanimously approved.

Avery Square Update

The sidewalks should be completed by the end of this week. The next step would be to get the landscaping and the gazebo. Avery Hospice is donating the gazebo. I engaged Mike Gragg to draw up plans for the gazebo. Hospice is in charge of bidding that out and awarding that bid. That will probably not be done by Memorial Day. Everything else should be in place by Memorial Day. The flagpoles are leaning and we are aware of that. The monument company will take care of that when the benches are installed. The flagpoles will be leveled at that time.

Professional Selection Committees---Swimming Pool Project; Agricultural Building Project

Mr. Greene stated that two professional selection committees needed to be formed for the two projects that were beginning; the Swimming Pool Project and the Agricultural Extension Building Project. The County Attorney has given us his opinion on how we need to form these committees. Also, Section 10.3 (2) of the Avery County Board of Commissioners Board Policy provides that the Professional Selection Committee shall have among its members "two Avery County Commissioners, alphabetically on a rotating basis for all five members and then to repeat the cycle". The Attorney states that in his opinion the rotation should occur per project in the order that the board passes a motion to create a Professional Selection Committee for each project.

Further, it is the best practice to pass a motion to create the Professional Selection Committee as to each project.

Mr. Greene stated that for the Swimming Pool Project the committee members would be Commissioner Reo Griffith and Commissioner Martha Hicks, the County Manager (Tim Greene), Finance Officer (Nancy Johnson) and then the Department Head Director (Robbie Willis). This committee would interview architects and present that to the full board and then it is up to the full board to select the architect.

The Agricultural Building Project committee members would be Commissioner Faith Lacey, Commissioner Maxine Laws, County Manager (Tim Greene), Finance Officer (Nancy Johnson) and the Department Head (Jerry Moody).

Maxine Laws asked to step aside from the committee because of some health related issues. Blake Vance will take Commissioner Laws place on the Agricultural Building Project.

Motion by Blake Vance and second by Maxine Laws for the committee members of the Swimming Pool Project Committee to be Reo Griffith, Martha Hicks, Tim Greene, Nancy Johnson and Robbie Willis. Motion unanimously approved.

Motion by Maxine Laws and second by Blake Vance for the Agricultural Building Project committee members to be Faith Lacey, Blake Vance, Tim Greene, Nancy Johnson and Jerry Moody. Motion unanimously approved.

Finance Officer Report – Nancy Johnson

Budget Amendment

A budget amendment is needed for the Board of Commissioners Department to add one employee to the group insurance.

Motion by Maxine Laws and second by Blake Vance to adopt the budget amendment for the Board of Commissioners department in the amount of \$2600.00 with a debit of \$2600.00 to Group Insurance (10.4100.0700) and a credit of \$2600.00 to Fund Balance Appropriation (10.3990.0000). Motion unanimously approved.

Budget Amendment

The Avery County Department of Solid Waste requests a budget amendment of \$53,000 for additional costs of the Sedimentation Basin #2 and cascade at the landfill. Bids received were higher than expected.

Motion by Maxine Laws and second by Blake Vance to adopt a budget amendment for the Solid Waste Department in the amount of \$53,000 with a debit of \$53,000 to Landfill-Cell Expansion (10.5800.7455) and a credit of \$53,000 to Fund Balance Appropriation (10.3990.0000). Motion unanimously approved.

Budget Amendment

A Budget Amendment is needed for the Medical Examiner Department in the amount of \$9,500.00. Autopsies have more than doubled this year and fees have increased.

Motion by Blake Vance and second by Martha Hicks to adopt a budget amendment for the Medical Examiner Department in the amount of \$9,500 with a debit of \$9,500 to Professional Services (10.6000.0400) and a credit of \$9,500 to Fund Balance Appropriation (10.3990.0000). Motion unanimously approved.

Budget Amendment

The jail needs a budget amendment of \$2,675.00 for expenses incurred for safekeeping of an inmate for medical reasons.

Motion by Blake Vance and second by Martha Hicks to adopt a budget amendment for the Jail in the amount of \$2,675.00 with a debit of \$2,675.00 to Inmate Housing/Contract Service (10.5200.5400) and a credit of \$2,657.00 to Fund Balance Appropriation (10.3990.0000). Motion unanimously approved.

Budget Amendment

The Avery County Board of Education has requested funds in the amount of \$100,000 for the purchase of Science Lab furniture/cabinets.

Motion by Faith Lacey and second by Reo Griffith to adopt a budget amendment for the Avery County Board of Education in the amount of \$100,000 for science lab furniture/cabinets with a debit of \$100,000 to Avery County Schools Capital (10.7000.6115) and a credit of \$100,000 to Fund Balance Appropriation (10.3990.0000). Motion unanimously approved.

Approval of Minutes

Motion by Maxine Laws and second by Blake Vance to approve the Regular Session Minutes February 1, 2016; Closed Session Minutes February 1, 2016; Regular Session Minutes March 7, 2016. Motion unanimously approved.

Agenda Consent Items

Mr. Greene explained that High Country RPO gave us an opportunity to prioritize projects and I took the liberty to do this. There are two roundabouts that I don't think anyone is interested in and we have not prioritized those. David Graham told me which projects has the most points and I have used those as my starting point. The first project that I recommend as priority #1 is the widening of the highway from Foscoe down to Linville and the second one would be widening the road from Tynecastle to Banner Elk and I think it would be up to where Hickory Nut Gap Road is and the third project is building a hangar at Avery County Airport. That would require a 10% county match. That terminal building would be a community hangar to allow fire, EMS, sheriff to use that facility. These would be the three projects that I would recommend. If any commissioner has any other thoughts on that, we can change those.

Reo Griffith stated that Slippery Hill Road has not been fixed. Heaton has been fixed and the road at Crab Orchard. Mr. Greene stated that he had spoken to Jerry Coombs regarding the Slippery Hill Road and it is scheduled to begin soon.

Upcoming Meetings

The meeting for the first Monday in July will be rescheduled to Tuesday, July 5, 2016 due to the Independence Day holiday. Reo Griffith stated that the first meeting in June he would be out of town teaching. Mr. Greene stated that we would talk about the public hearing for the budget during the budget process.

Adjourn

Chair Hicks adjourned the meeting at 7:25 p.m.

Martha Hicks, Chair
Avery County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST: _____
Cindy Turbyfill, Clerk