

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF AVERY**

The Avery County Board of Commissioners held a Budget Workshop on Monday, May 21, 2018 at 2:00 p.m. in the Commissioners Board Room, Avery County Administrative Complex, 175 Linville Street, Newland, NC. The purpose of the workshop was to discuss the FY Budget 2018/2019.

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 2:00 p.m.

Chair Hicks led prayer.

Phillip Barrier, County Manager, said he had some questions for the Board that he needed consensus on after meeting with the Sheriff's Office, Fire Commission and Board of Education.

Mr. Barrier asked about adding two new deputies to the Sheriff's Office.

Chair Hicks stated that she thought there should be one deputy and one resource officer.

Faith Lacey said she didn't think we should do anything until cameras is put in the school and locked doors on the schools. I think we need a resource officer in every school.

Blake Vance stated that he thought the emphasis should be on school resource officers.

Tim Phillips said that he is for protecting the schools.

Wood Hall Young, Jr. stated that he wanted to throw back out that he would rather fund two resource officers rather than two road deputies. I would like for us to have a resource officer at every school. For less than \$100,000 we can put metal detectors in every school. I would rather spend \$100,000 for metal detectors and \$120,000 for resources officers than \$110,000 for road deputies.

Ms. Lacey again stated that somehow some way we need to get a resource officer in every school.

There was discussion regarding pros and cons of metal detectors in every school.

Consensus by the Board not to fund the two road deputies.

Mr. Barrier stated that he would have Dr. Taylor and Sheriff Kevin Frye here on Thursday to discuss the resource officers and metal detectors.

Consensus to cut two glocks because we are not adding two new road deputies.

Blake Vance stated that it was his opinion that grants need to be done on a separate budget amendment. Mr. Young stated that he thought grants did not need to be shown in the budget.

Discussion regarding jail expenses.

Mr. Barrier questioned if he could get a consensus to cut the food budget from the jail from \$300,000 down to \$200,000.

Consensus to cut the food budget down to \$200,000 from \$300,000.

Consensus to leave the medical expenses for the jail at \$100,000.

Mr. Barrier stated that we will revisit the resource officers when Sheriff Kevin Frye comes to the next budget meeting.

Mr. Barrier asked if there was any discussion on the Fire Commission budget.

Wood Hall Young, Jr. and Faith Lacey both stated that they would like to see the fire tax at 7 cents. Mr. Barrier stated that this would give them \$68,000 buffer. Mr. Vance stated that he had set through the fire commission budget workshop and the fire commission was meticulous and they watch every single dime. Mr. Young stated that we are fortunate that these men are willing to do this and it takes a lot off of the Board of Commissioners.

Consensus by the Board to leave the fire tax at 7 cents.

Mr. Barrier stated that he would like to discuss the salary study. This would become effective July 1.

Consensus by the Board to include the salary study in the budget for 2018/2019.

Commissioner Vance said "let the record show that in the past five years above step increases the county has invested now over \$1,000,000 in their employees."

There was discussion regarding longevity. Commissioner Vance commented that the baseline should be set at \$500 and then leave the rest alone.

Consensus to give a baseline of \$500 for the longevity and leave the rest at the percentage.

Consensus to go by the state holiday schedule which will add one more paid holiday to the schedule.

Consensus by the Board to adjust the vacation accrual rate for 12 hour and 24 hour shifts.

Consensus by the Board to sign the contract with BCBS for health insurance coverage.

Recess

Chair Hicks called for a brief recess.

Chair Hicks declared the meeting to be back in session after a brief recess.

Discussion regarding Solid Waste. Mr. Barrier stated that the director of solid waste had asked for a heavy equipment operator at the landfill. Discussion about leasing a road tractor. Mr. Foster is getting a number on how much it is going to cost to lease the road tractor and will have this number by Thursday.

Discussion about Senior Services. Commissioner Vance stated that the senior center is in desperate need of a storage building and the director was going to look into an estimate of what it will be.

Discussion regarding Agricultural Extension Services. Alicia Hicks has been a WAMY employee that was paid with a grant which will no longer be. WAMY will reimburse us for the 15 weeks that she does the Summer WOW program. She is licensed. She will now be an employee of Agricultural Extension Services. Jerry Moody cut everything he could cut to keep the Summer WOW program and keep Ms. Hicks as an employee.

Discussion regarding Veteran's Office part-time position. Chair Hicks asked if there was enough work for a part-time position in the Veteran's Office. Mr. Barrier said yes along with the part-time in the finance office. Chair Hicks questioned why we needed another part-time person in the Veteran's Office. Mr. Barrier stated that we will have the office open five days a week. Commissioner Vance asked for a job description. Mr. Barrier stated that the job description was being worked on.

Discussion regarding DSS. Commissioner Vance asked why cell phones were going up so much. Mr. Barrier stated that the workers were using their personal cell phones and it was becoming a safety issue.

There was discussion regarding cell phones.

Discussion regarding Parks and Recreation. Mr. Barrier stated that a lot of the capital is things that he has asked Parks and Recreation to include in their budget to work on the Rock Gym.

Discussion regarding Transportation. We are getting all of those vehicles this year. This is a 90/10 grant. Chair Hicks stated that she thought that we needed to space the vehicles out.

Mr. Barrier stated that there had been some concern about not funding drug court. He said that they had asked for \$15,000 for this year and we had funded them \$12,000 last year. Tim Phillips stated that we have talked about the opioid crisis a lot but now have decided not to fund drug court. I think it is something we need to look at, maybe not fund the full \$15,000. Chair Hicks commented we have talked about drug abuse and now we are not funding anything. Faith Lacey stated that we agreed on nonprofits earlier and we don't need to reconsider any now. Ms. Lacey stated that Watauga County had done away with their drug court. Wood Hall Young, Jr. said "we have done a resolution stating that the opioid crisis was a nuisance so I think we need to be consistent in what we are doing." Commissioner Vance stated that he was not against drug court at all but that we had all set a precedence with deciding on the grants previously and should not go back on that. Ms. Lacey agreed with Mr. Vance.

Consensus by a majority of the Board to fund drug court at \$5,000.

Recess

Chair Hicks called for a brief recess.

Chair Hicks declared the workshop to be back in session after a brief recess.

Mr. Barrier stated that we had been through the capital tab and through the individual department budget tab. We have changed the tax rate of the fire commission to 7 cents. When we get all of the changes done we will send you the updated copy for Thursday. Do I have consensus on the tax rate being at 55 cents just like it was last year so that we will have some money to go toward the high school?

Commissioner Vance stated to leave it where it is at 55 cents.

Mr. Barrier stated that on Thursday we will be talking to Dr. Taylor again and to the Sheriff to clear up some issues. We will also talk about solid waste again. We will get the commissioners a clean copy of the budget and then go back through it again.

The revenue neutral rate is 45.45 ad valorem, fire tax was 0.663, total of 52.08 but we are going to stay at 55 cents.

Consensus by the Board to keep the tax rate at the current tax rate of 55 cents.

Adjourn

Motion by Blake Vance and second by Martha Hicks to adjourn this meeting at 6:00 p.m. Motion unanimously approved (5-0).

Martha Hicks, Chair
Avery County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST: _____
Cindy Turbyfill, Clerk