

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF AVERY**

The Avery County Board of Commissioners met in a Board Workshop on Monday, December 12, 2016 at 9:00 a.m. in the Linville Room at Cannon Memorial Hospital, 434 Hospital Drive, Linville, NC. The purpose of the workshop was to discuss and take any action necessary for the following items:

1. Electronic Board Communications
2. Employee Staffing Levels
3. Recreation Advisory Committee
4. Repair and Maintenance of County Buildings
5. Board Policy Revisions
6. Personnel Policy Revisions
7. County Manager Responsibilities
8. C&D Landfill Construction/Closure
9. Courthouse Parking
10. Swimming Pool Project
11. Agricultural Building Project
12. Economic Development

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 9:02 a.m.

Chair Hicks turned the meeting over to Tim Greene, County Manager.

Electronic Board Communications

Mr. Greene explained to the board that conducting county business on cell phones and emails (county or private) is considered a public record. Discussion.

Over the last several years there has been discussion about using Ipads for the board agenda packet. Blake Vance stated that in one year the Ipads would pay for themselves just in the paper not counting the labor, etc.

Discussion regarding the Ipads.

Consensus of the Board for the County Manager to get estimates on how much Ipads would be and to talk with the County Attorney about legal issues with Ipads.

Employee Staffing Levels

Mr. Greene stated that there had been some talk with the Sheriff's Office about adding a drug task force officer or getting some help there.

Chair Hicks stated that she had been researching this since it was brought up in the budget workshop. The way that you are going to take care of the drug problem is to help the person get off the drugs. If we go with a drug task force officer, I would like to see a monthly report to see how many he has arrested and see how it works.

Tim Phillips said "you have to stop the source and the supply. I am an advocate for getting a drug task officer in there. I think it is better to be under the direction of the Sheriff's Office."

Woody Young stated that he was not in favor of how the drug task force officer was set up before. My opinion is that if we need another drug officer in the Sheriff's office. It is our job to protect the citizens of Avery County.

Blake Vance said I agree with Woody.

There was considerable discussion.

Sheriff Frye was contacted to attend this board workshop as soon as he could.

Recreation Advisory Committee

Tim Phillips stated that Robbie Willis, Parks and Recreation Director, was trying to write grants to help support the pool project and the grant people want a Recreation Advisory Committee back in place. There is a list of names that is interested in being on the Recreation Advisory Committee.

Consensus by the Board to have the Recreation Advisory Committee on the January Regular Meeting agenda.

Recess

Chair Hicks called for a brief recess.

Chair Hicks called the meeting back to order after a brief recess.

Repair and Maintenance of County Buildings

Woody Young stated that a concerned citizen had called him about the condition of the EMS Building in Newland. We are talking about housing professionals 24 hours a day. The question is are they not keeping it clean or is the building in bad shape? My suggestion would be to ask the County Manager to go and look at it. Mr. Greene stated that it is an old building and it is not the best of quarters. Mr. Young said we are talking about life saving people that need an adequate place to live. I think we need to look at this to see what needs to be done. Mr. Greene said that it is a matter of priorities.

Mr. Young asked if possibly the county buildings could be on a rotation schedule to get painted routinely, carpet replaced; if you have the schedule then you know what you will need to spend in the future.

Board Policy Revisions

Mr. Greene stated that there are three things in the Board Policy; longevity compensation, vacation buyback policy and retiree benefits. We talked about the board policy a few months back and these need to be in the Standard Operating Procedures. I suggest that we move these three things out of the Board Policy and into the Standard Operating Procedures. We will talk with legal counsel to make sure there is no problem with that. We are not changing anything in these just switching them to the Standard Operating Procedures.

Recess

Chair Hicks called for a brief recess.

Chair Hicks called the meeting back to order after a brief recess.

Employee Staffing Levels

Sheriff Kevin Frye entered the workshop at this time after the Board had requested him to come and talk about the drug officer. Sheriff Frye stated that the drug task force has been an asset in the past. It has provided us a way to utilize that position to help fight drugs in Avery County but it has never lived up to the potential that it could working under a board. I believe it would work better under one agency and having one boss. I do believe since the Sheriff's Office is the largest agency that covers all the county it would be better to have this position under our auspices. I still think there are opportunities available that we could get other agencies to help fund this position. Currently there is \$15,000 or more that I can access immediately to put into funding this position that has been raised through the DART committee that they have on hand right now that we can utilize for this position to help offset the costs. The other thing I would like to mention to help offset the costs is the statewide misdemeanor confinement program. That program, by the end of the fiscal year, will almost completely fund the drug officer and moving the part-time position in administration to a full-time position.

Discussion regarding the statewide misdemeanor confinement program. Mr. Greene stated that the SMCP is a good program.

Sheriff Frye also requested that a staffing analysis be done for the Avery County Sheriff's Office. I believe we are at the minimal staffing level but I don't want it to just be my word.

Consensus of the Board to put the drug officer position and administration position on the agenda for the January board meeting.

Board Policy Revisions Continued

Mr. Greene stated that on the "delegated authority for the County Manager" it is my opinion that it would be good to get the Board out of the hiring and approval process.

One reason is if the Board is in the hiring process you are going to get people coming to you all and putting you in the middle of it. A majority of the board members agreed that they would like to approve department heads but not necessarily all county employees and to put this on the agenda for the next meeting.

Mr. Greene stated that the nepotism policy in the board policy was different than the one in the personnel policy and the County Attorney would look at this.

Mr. Greene stated that there is nothing in the board policy regarding nominations and voting such as if there is multiple nominations after the first vote then the low vote getter is eliminated. The majority of the board members agreed to have this on the agenda at the next meeting.

Personnel Policy Revisions

Mr. Greene stated that the Personnel Policy on the first page said “the Board of Commissioners hereby grants the County Manager the authority to revise this document as deemed appropriate with or without notice”. Mr. Greene said that this needed to be struck out and that any changes that were made he would bring before the board.

Mr. Greene referred to several pages of the Personnel Policy that needed changes. One section that needs to be changed is the “Secondary Employment”. The County Attorney will take a look at this. Another section that needs to be changed is Section 6 “Employment of Relatives”. Avery County being a small, rural county we will have relatives working for the county so this is something that needs to be addressed. The Board Policy and Personnel Policy are not aligned so the County Attorney needs to look at this.

The County Attorney will need to take an extensive look at the drug policy in the Personnel Policy and the Standard Operating Procedures.

Discussion regarding holiday pay and holidays for county departments.

Mr. Greene stated that Avery County has a county manager form of government and a county manager as the chief administrator. All 100 counties in North Carolina have a county manager form of government. As such, the county manager, clerk and county attorney are appointed by the Board so we work for the Board; we don’t work for any one individual. We are here at your disposal. We are here to carry out and administer the policies the Board sets forth.

C&D Landfill Construction/Closure

Mr. Greene stated that the bids had come in on the Cell 3 construction at the landfill. We had budgeted \$100,000 and the bids came in higher than what we had budgeted. Our cell 3 construction is on hold for the moment. We have a construction and demolition landfill. All of the garbage we haul to Bristol. Every so often we open up a cell which is approximately an acre of land and when that gets full we close it and have to open up another cell. The problem is we are starting to go up the hill and the higher

we go up the more issues we have with water. We have got cell 3 and we need to discuss this later about how we want to handle this. There are some decisions we need to make. We will have a workshop and talk about this issue.

Courthouse Parking

Mr. Greene stated that if the consensus of the Board was to do something that it can be discussed or can be discussed in the budget process. Faith Lacey asked the Board to be recused from the discussion regarding the Kelly Johnson property. Mr. Greene advised that today we are not voting on anything we just need to decide if we need to discuss this further. Consensus of the majority of the Board to talk about this in closed session in January.

Swimming Pool Project

Mr. Greene advised that there was \$1,000,000 in cash set aside for the swimming pool; \$620,000 for grants which may or may not materialize. As a for instance, there were several of us went over and looked at some swimming pools. At that time we liked the one at Highlands. The one at Highlands was built for 1.8 million. Mary Isaacs with Isaacs Architects, thought one like that would be around 2.3 million. Some of the pools we are looking at are around 2 million. We have 1 million set aside. Faith Lacey questioned how many people would need to be employed and how many hours it would be open because that would be a monthly expense. Mr. Greene said that at this point it would be if it was going to be an indoor. At this point the architects are looking at what the community is wanting in a pool and then they will draw some schematics with options and bring to the board and then there will be another community meeting.

Agricultural Building Project

Discussion regarding the agricultural building project and possibly scaling back the plans. Blake Vance stated that he had advocated for a big community room but after thinking about the other projects that the county is involved in and also a few years ago dipping into the money that had been saved for these projects with the tax cut, it is likely we will have to raise taxes and I believe at this time we need to put our emphasis on the offices and a small meeting room with the potential to add on a bigger one at some point. Mr. Greene said that where we are at on the agricultural building is the "wish list". If we were to build everything that the community wanted it would take an 11,000 square foot building at approximately 2 million dollars so that would make us at least 1 million dollars short. Mr. Greene stated that Mike Trew, Municipal Engineer and Keith Hoilman, Town of Newland is supposed to meet this week about what the cost for water and sewer would be. We have approximately 5 million dollars to put toward the swimming pool project and the agricultural building project and possibly doing something at the high school.

Economic Development

Blake Vance stated that two years ago when I campaigned never have I one time said that we do not need to be participating in economic development in Avery County but we need to do it the right way. We have to be attracting businesses. I think we need to establish a volunteer economic development board with a small budget and I would like

to be a part of that. I don't think we need a full time economic developer but we do need a consultant. I think we need \$25,000 to \$30,000 in the budget for that. We have got to put some focus on economic development. We are doing nothing for economic development in Avery County. I ask that we create an economic development board. I think we need to think about a budget in the budget process.

Adjourn

Motion by Blake Vance and second by Wood Hall Young, Jr to adjourn this workshop at 4:22 p.m. Motion unanimously approved.

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

ATTEST: _____
Cindy Turbyfill, Clerk