

State of North Carolina
County of Avery

The Avery County Board of Commissioners held a Board Workshop on Monday, February 12, 2018 at 9:00 a.m. in the Commissioners Board Room, Avery County Administrative Complex, 175 Linville Street, Newland, NC. The purpose of the Board Workshop was to discuss and take any action necessary regarding the following items:

1. FY Budget 2018/2019
2. County Facilities and Grounds
3. Capital Projects and Funding
4. Employee Benefits
5. Nonprofits
6. Medical coverage (Jail)
7. Solid Waste

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 9:00 a.m.
Chair Hicks led prayer.

FY Budget 2018/2019

Phillip Barrier, County Manager, stated that the process for the upcoming budget has begun. The budget is an estimate. There was a revaluation done this year. It is very early but as of January 2, 2018 it looks like our growth will be approximately 8-10% with a revenue growth of about 5-7%. Once the Board of Equalization and Review has met, we will know more about the numbers. Blake Vance asked if we were seeing any trends. Mr. Barrier stated that certain gated communities increased the same rate as the county did; one gated community was stale; flat in some areas, hot in other areas in the same gated community. Eagles Nest is a hot spot right now. Mr. Vance stated that some people think we have a tax cap but that is not true. I looked into a "homestead tax" but in the North Carolina Constitution it states that everyone's tax rate is the same so we can't do a homestead tax.

Mr. Barrier reported that the five year capital plans had been sent out; the departments have the budget requests and they are due by February 23. The Department meetings will begin March 6th.

Mr. Barrier went over the capital improvements that had been completed.

County Facilities and Grounds
Veteran's Monument

Woodie Young stated about two years ago before the Veterans Monument was put in place he had made the request for the Revolutionary War, Spanish War, etc. be included on the monument. I hit some opposition at that time because of the fact that we didn't know who served when. There are a lot of Civil War veterans, etc. buried in Avery County. There is a list readily available through the internet and I think this should be included on the monument. Chair Hicks stated that she was a part of the project when it started. There is some space but that was for future wars. We would probably have to buy another two or so monuments to add those names. At the time there was a board that decided how the process would be for the names to be placed on the monument and the veteran's board and VFW was totally against putting these names on the monument because of the uncertainty. Faith Lacey stated that she didn't see a problem with adding another monument and including these names. Chair Hicks questioned that some of this was before Avery County was even born, how are we going to divide all of this up? Mr. Young stated he would like the board's thoughts on this.

Blake Vance stated that he thought Michael Hardy could answer some of these questions.

Consensus by the Board for the County Manager to get up with Michael Hardy and then for the County Manager to let the Board know what Mr. Hardy said.

EMS

Mr. Barrier stated that it has been the consensus of the Board to put a full time ambulance at the Frank Fire Department. We have set down with Jerry Turbyfill regarding the schedule and at the present time he thinks we can get by with a half time position. We will need to purchase some power stretchers and another defibrillator. I did ask for the mileage on our ambulances and we have one with 6,000 miles; 99,000; 104,000, 106,000; 109,000; 20,000; and 180 miles. He is going to work all of this into his budget. We have met with fire commission and Frank Volunteer Fire Department. Mr. Barrier asked if the Board would like him to move forward with a memorandum of understanding and putting this in the budget. Mr. Barrier stated that he thinks this would really help. The building was built for that.

Mr. Young stated that he felt that this would help the response time and help cover the district better. We might want to consider in the future adding an ambulance and another crew.

Old Agricultural Building

Mr. Barrier pointed out the property for the Old Agricultural Building on a map. Mr. Barrier stated that he had been approached by two different individuals interested in this property. Mr. Young questioned what the property was worth. Mr. Vance stated that the tax value was about \$378,000 and when the previous Board was talking about starting this new Ag. Building the intention was to sell that property to offsite the new property. Chair Hicks stated that she thought we should use what we have right now

and not get in a big hurry. The County Manager will speak to the people interested and let the commissioners know.

Daymark Roof

Mr. Barrier stated that Joe Trivette was getting an estimate on the Daymark Building roof and I just wanted you to be aware of that.

Renovation of Sidewalks at the Administration Building

Mr. Barrier stated that he was getting an estimate on the sidewalks. He was going to put that in the budget.

Recess

Chair Hicks called for a brief recess.

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

Courthouse Parking Lot

Mr. Barrier stated that he talked with an engineer back in October and I still do not have a quote on how we are going to handle water runoff, etc. There was discussion regarding the parking lot. Mr. Barrier stated that while we are looking at this parking lot we need to look at the other side near the museum. All of the water is coming off of the courthouse and going into the museum. This will be in the proposed budget to get the parking lot designed and look at the water runoff. Mr. Barrier stated that he would like to look at parking spaces for the museum.

Renovation Avery Cares

Mr. Barrier stated that there was a signed lease with Yellow Mountain until April 30, 2018. The Avery Cares building needs to be renovated for Probation and TASC. We will need to look at a heat system, windows, etc. This will be included in the upcoming budget.

Capital Projects and Funding

Swimming Pool

Mr. Barrier stated that there is a meeting this week with Robbie and Rob Johnson. The Board will have a special meeting to discuss the pool. Blake Vance stated that he still maintained that it doesn't make sense to do a pool that we can only use a few months out of the year. Faith Lacey stated that she would like to put the money from the swimming pool and put it in a fund for the Avery County High School. Ms. Lacey stated that we have a school situation coming along.

Discussion regarding the swimming pool.

Future Recreation Building Fund

Tim Phillips stated that he was not totally against an indoor pool but if you are going to staff it you will have to have more people and utilities and it will take a lot of money to operate. Along the other lines we have pushed the recreation building back for ten years. We need to look at putting a million doors back a year and establish and maintain

a recreation capital reserve fund. Mr. Phillips stated he was not going to back down from building an outdoor pool. We have pushed the recreation building back for years and years. There are a lot of people who use the Rock Gym. A recreation building would be something for the children and adults during bad weather. I think in the budget process we need to look at putting some money back in a recreation reserve fund.

Chair Hicks stated that she thought it would be a good time to set aside money for the school and consider it in this year's budget.

Blake Vance stated that there is a local option sales tax that would generate around \$600,000 a year. I am not advocating this but throwing it out as a possibility. I think it is wise to explore every avenue to increase revenue outside of the taxes that the citizens pay.

Chair Hicks called for a brief recess.

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

Health Insurance

Mr. Barrier stated that he and the finance director had gotten together and decided to look into a partially funded insurance plan. He stated that during his class at Chapel Hill he had mentioned Avery County going to partially funded and the other counties had told him that Avery County was too small to do that. Blake Vance stated that he had spoken to some people about this type of insurance and that they had also told him that Avery County was too small to go to a partially funded insurance.

Payroll Deduction

Blake Vance questioned if there was any way to do a payroll deduction for property taxes. It doesn't look good for us or them if we have county employees that owe property taxes. Nancy Johnson stated that it would take a lot of time for the finance employees to do that.

Nonprofits

Blake Vance said that he had been talking about this for a couple of years. I think there are some things that we would like to continue to fund because they provide services that no one else in the county does. I suggested that we put a grants process in place and have an application process in place. Tim Phillips stated that we should have them show some financials. Mr. Vance said if you look back over the past several years' nonprofits consists of less than 1% of the budget and consists of 80% of the problems. We as a government have to do what is best for our citizens. I think it would make more sense. Harnett County has a grant process. We put \$141,000 in nonprofits last year. I think we need a more formal process and a cap on the amount that we spend on nonprofits. Tim Phillips said that we need the most recent audit that the nonprofits have. Mr. Vance stated that he just wants to be a good steward of the money and have accountability with this.

Consensus by the Board to move forward with the grant process for nonprofits.

Inmate Medical Policy

Mr. Barrier stated that when someone is incarcerated the county is responsible for the inmate's medical expenses. There is a company that Alleghany County uses which is approximately \$1.08 per day per inmate for a minimum of 25 inmates. We average 43. The deductible is \$10,000 per occurrence.

The assistant county manager will investigate this further and look for other companies that provide this service.

Solid Waste

Eric Foster, Director of Solid Waste, stated that we are shopping for some request for proposals on hauling the municipal solid waste. The RFP's were sent out in January and is to be returned by March 22, 2018. Based off the volume study this past November, I believe with us taking out the wood debris that we have added some time to the landfill. The contract would be for the MSW to be hauled for the next 3-4 years and then the construction and demolition would be phased into that. Last year we hauled 13,149 tons of MSW last year.

Mr. Barrier stated that currently we spend \$550,000 with salaries and our three trucks. A new tractor would cost approximately \$120,000, trailers would be around \$68,000 and tires per truck a year costs \$12,000. If we go with a contractor, all of this would be furnished. We would not recommend to the Board unless we see a savings.

Wood Hall Young, Jr. questioned if we contract services out can the employees be retained? Mr. Foster stated that the possibility exists that one of the employees could move to another department. No one was hired back in my position and I have a heavy equipment operator that I never hired back for. This would help not only in the landfill but would be a backup driver for the roll off driver. We will still take care of all the recycling and the sites. This is a safety issue with us just having one operator and them being by themselves up on the mountain. Mr. Young stated that he felt that we should retain the employees that we have if we go with a contract.

Mr. Foster stated that with the contract hauling he believed the miles by the roll offs will be cut by about three quarters. One way from our landfill to Bristol is 64 miles. There will be savings from the tires, fuel, etc. We will still have to maintain two road tractors. We will not have to replace the equipment at the landfill for a while. All the counties I have talked to has fuel escalation models.

Wood Hall Young, Jr. questioned about grinding the C&D as far as what other counties do. Mr. Foster stated that Watauga County grinds twice a year and it costs approximately \$500 an hour.

Mr. Barrier stated that it only made sense that if we go through with this contract there will be a savings.

Adjourn

Motion by Blake Vance and second by Tim Phillips to adjourn at 1:05 p.m. Motion unanimously approved.

Martha Hicks, Chair
Avery County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST: _____
Cindy Turbyfill, Clerk