

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF AVERY**

The Avery County Board of Commissioners met in a Budget Workshop on Thursday, April 23, 2015 at 5:00 p.m. in the Commissioners Board Room, Avery County Administrative Complex, 175 Linville Street, Newland, NC. The purpose of the budget workshop was to meet with the Avery County Sheriff's Office, Avery County Fire Commission, and Avery County Board of Education regarding the Fiscal Year Budget 2015/2016.

Members Present: Robert Griffith, Chairman; Martha Hicks; Faith Lacey; Blake Vance

Members Absent: Maxine Laws (family illness)

Call To Order

Chairman Griffith called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Tim Greene led prayer.

Avery County Sheriff's Office

Avery County Sheriff Kevin Frye explained with the jail budget that they tried to budget enough for certain things like medical, food, repairs, etc. so they would not have to come back during the middle of the year to ask for a budget amendment. These items we try to give the best possible estimate of what it would cost to run the jail. We have also asked for two defibrillators at the jail; these are \$750.00 per defibrillator. Mr. Greene stated that historically we look at what we have been spending on things such as the medical. We try not to budget for what could happen but from year to year things can happen and it may necessitate more money. Commissioner Martha Hicks questioned how much money that was received from the state per inmate to house the inmates. Sheriff Frye stated it was \$40.00 a day. Commissioner Hicks questioned if there was an inmate presently in the jail that was sentenced to Avery County Jail for three years. Sheriff Frye stated that was true. Sheriff Frye stated that inmates were housed through the statewide misdemeanor program which the state reimburses for these inmates. Sheriff Frye said if there was a work program at the jail that the inmates could get time taken off of their sentence. Commissioner Hicks questioned what it would cost to do a work program. Trina Cook, Chief Jailer, stated that it would require two more personnel plus the clothing, etc. Sheriff Frye stated that a work program could be done when there was sufficient help at the jail at very minimal cost but I would like to add a little more money in the salary line item and pay it that way. Chairman Griffith questioned if there were any cooking facilities at the jail. Ms. Cook stated there was not anything large enough to cook for the inmates.

Sheriff Kevin Frye stated that one of his requests was an administrative assistant. I have a full time and part time person to do the administrative duties of the Sheriff's Office and jail. I cannot continue to try to do the things that we do to make money to help the county if I don't get some additional administrative personnel. Concealed weapons permits have skyrocketed. I can put one person to maintaining personnel files, concealed weapons and sex offenders. I really need for you to consider this. Sheriff Frye requested that a program called NetMotion be considered in the budget because it would help with the connectivity of the computers. Another request by the Sheriff was that the cars be rotated out after they get 120,000 miles on them. If we don't get the cars, the auto supplies line item would need to increase.

Avery County Fire Commission

Bill Beuttell, Chairman of the Avery County Fire Commission, stated that Tim Greene had given them information that the fire tax of 6.7 cents would generate approximately 2.357 million dollars. The budget request to the county commissioners is the same amount that we received last year which is \$2,431,000. When I bring that to you, the reason why we are asking for that is we have a new capital project at the Frank Fire Department. We have enough money to make two payments and if we could get the amount of money we are requesting it would allow us to accelerate the debt payoff on Frank Fire Department and we could make three years payments at one time so we would actually save the taxpayers by retiring the debt earlier. Some of the things that we save the county on this year is we consolidated some of the heating costs with the fire departments with their propane usage. We asked to have one company supply all of the fire departments and in doing so we are going to save the county approximately \$12,000 in propane costs. We have paid off early the Linville Central's ambulance. We paid off the building for Linville Central Rescue Squad. We have asked all of the fire departments to apply the maximum on all of the state grants. In speaking with you and requesting that extra money, it is approximately \$74,000 over what is anticipated that the fire tax will bring in. We are asking that we use \$106,000 to pay additional on the Frank Fire Department debt.

Chairman Griffith stated that he did not think that this board was up for any tax increase and that he certainly was not for a tax increase.

Joe Perry stated that since the Fire Commission was formed nearly 4 million dollars of debt has been paid off.

Chairman Griffith stated that the County Manager has projected 2.357 million dollars in fire tax revenue at 6.7 cents. The Fire Commission has presented an unbalanced budget of 2.431 million dollars. Do we as a board want to hash this \$74,000 out or have the Fire Commission hash this \$74,000 out? Blake Vance stated that he thought that the Board needed to look into the budget a little more. Faye Lacey stated that we probably need more discussion. Martha Hicks said that the Fire Commission should do the cutting instead of the Board. Chairman Griffith instructed the Fire Commission to send information back to the County Manager by next Tuesday as far as the savings from paying extra on the Frank Fire Department loan.

Avery County Board of Education

John Greene, Chairman of the Avery County Board of Education, thanked the commissioners for the relationship that the Board of Education and the Commissioners had. What we are asking for is to be able to continue business as is. We think that serving our children throughout the school system is paramount to their wellbeing and the wellbeing of the county.

Mr. Greene introduced Chris Campbell who is the attorney for the school board.

David Burluson, Avery County School Superintendent, gave a presentation regarding the school system. Mr. Burluson reported that there were 6 Pre-K classes, 5 elementary schools, 2 middle schools, and 1 high school with two academies. There were approximately 2200 students enrolled, 300 of these students have some type of exceptional need, 130 speak English as a second language and 61.1% as of today is on free or reduced lunch and that is very underrepresented. Only 8 students dropped out last year and we are working to improve that. We have the #1 ranking graduation rate in the state. Attendance rate is about 95%. We have 350 full time employees and 539 total employees with part time and temporary. We have a \$25 million dollar budget. The increase in the county appropriation from 2010/2011 until last year was about 1.34% increase. We have stayed level for a long time now. Jeff Jaynes spoke to the boards regarding the school board's budget. The total operating budget projected for the 2015/2016 year is \$5,709,782.00. Out of that we anticipate to receive \$913,000 from the state or federal government. Last year our prior commitment from the county commission was \$3,973,725. What we are asking for this year is \$4,371,098. That represents a 10% increase over last year. It still requires that we find approximately \$300,000 or apply from the fund balance in order to obtain this budget.

Mr. Burluson explained that the school board was very appreciative of the commissioner's help with the sewer at the high school and that the school board was going with the recommendation of MB Haynes. We are getting the lines jetted and run the cameras again and then we will meet as a high school group and decide where we are going.

Tim Greene, County Manager, stated that in the preliminary budget all special allocations were set at what was in the prior year budget. In the budget process, everything will be discussed thoroughly and the board will decide what can be done. We appreciate the school board and school administration and we have always worked well together.

Martha Hicks questioned how much money was in the fund balance for the school. Jeff Jaynes stated that according to the audit we ended the school year with all funds 2 million dollars. We budgeted \$700,000 which means we will end this year with 1.3 million.

Reo Griffith stated that \$397,000 was certainly not an unreasonable request. This will certainly be discussed in the upcoming budget meetings.

Faye Lacey stated that she did not see a thing wrong with the budget. The children are the most important thing in the county.

Blake Vance thanked the school board for coming and he said he felt the schools and children needed the best.

Upcoming Meetings

Reo Griffith stated that due to some scheduling conflicts, it is the consensus of the board that we cancel the first meeting in May and have the second Monday in May meeting. The next budget meeting will be Wednesday, April 29, 2015 at 9:00 a.m.

Chairman Griffith adjourned the meeting at 7:01 p.m.

Robert Griffith, Chairman
Avery County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST: _____
Cindy Turbyfill, Clerk