

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF AVERY**

The Avery County Board of Commissioners met in a Budget Workshop on Thursday, April 30, 2020 at 10:00 a.m. in the Commissioners Board Room, Avery County Administrative Complex, 175 Linville Street, Newland, NC. The purpose of the workshop was to discuss and take any action necessary regarding the Fiscal Year Budget 2020/2021.

Members Present: Martha Hicks, Chair; Tim Phillips, Vice-Chair; Dennis Aldridge; Blake Vance; Wood Hall Young, Jr.

Members Absent: None

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and Governor Cooper's Executive Order No. 121 issued on March 27, 2020 limiting mass gatherings to no more than 10 people at a time, the public was not allowed to attend the meeting in person. The meeting was broadcast live and recorded on the Avery County Youtube Channel.

Call To Order

Chair Hicks called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

Blake Vance led prayer.

Chair Hicks called the roll. All board members were present.

Chair Hicks stated that the Board was here to discuss the Fiscal Year Budget for 2020/2021. Chair Hicks turned the meeting over to Phillip Barrier, Jr., County Manager.

Mr. Barrier stated that there were seven items that he wanted to bring to the Board's attention. With Mayland Community College we are fully funding the operational in this budget but with capital outlay they did ask for \$25,000 instead of the \$20,000 that we have in the budget. The next item is the Avery Airport Authority is asking for \$63,771 and insurance has caused that to go up. There is \$16,667 dollars in a matching grant that we failed to take out and we are moving that to Available for Appropriations. The grant monies have been received in their budget and we have already given them the match in the current budget. The Juvenile Crime Prevention Council monies have not changed but I need to change some line items that the money is in. The Health Department has requested \$442,647. I talked with Betty at Toe River Health District. We have budgeted \$330,000 for the regular budget and \$15,000 extra for environmental services. If they go over budget we have \$751,000 in fund balance that we can use. Last year they had a surplus at the end of the year. Another item is that the elections board has been receiving a 1099. They have contacted us about this and the School of Government said we needed to start giving them a W2. We need to pay them through the payroll system and withhold the taxes. This would not start until July 1. This would increase \$1610.00 for FICA for the Board of Elections. The Emergency Management department's training that is required for this year has been canceled. He normally has to have six hours and now the state has moved that to twelve hours for the next fiscal

year. Travel would increase \$360.00 and increase the training \$600.00. There will be no change in this line item.

We will be meeting with the school board in the near future regarding their budget. They are requesting an additional \$70,000 in operating for Avery County Schools for universal Pre-K. They are asking for \$4,770,000. We will ask questions about this when we meet with the Board of Education.

We have cut the Conservation Development budget \$2200.00. This was a drone and emergency management has a drone and they can assist with what they need.

Consensus by the Board for the seven items to be included in the budget as discussed above.

Dennis Aldridge stated that he was very concerned with the budget. This is a good budget but I am concerned that our projected sales tax went down 1.2 million dollars and our budget went up. We talked about trying to be very conservative on this year's budget. I think that all of the things that have happened have reiterated that. If we are going to lead and say everyone needs to tighten up and be conservative we can't justify some of these capital items.

Mr. Barrier stated that he had even discussed freezing the capital items and purchase items on an as needed basis. We can go over the capital items and decide if we would like to remove it.

Blake Vance stated if we do this we will have to play catch up and there is a fine line to balance there. Martha Hicks stated she felt like the capital items needed to be left in the budget. Wood Hall Young, Jr. agreed. Tim Phillips said we can go through and make a first round to see what we think is needed.

The Board went over each capital item. There was discussion regarding the capital items.

Dennis Aldridge stated we need to rein things in and build up the fund balance. Wood Hall Young, Jr. said it is our job to give the citizens of Avery County the services that they need with the lowest tax rate possible. This is a good budget. Tim Phillips said that the department heads have done a good job in keeping it tight. Mr. Young stated that capital is really what we can cut and most of the capital is really needed.

It was the consensus of a majority of the Board to leave the capital items in the budget. Mr. Young brought up that the EMS department needed a lift for each ambulance to help lift the stretchers into the EMS department. These lifts are approximately \$24,000. There was discussion regarding the lifts. It was decided to get one lift on the new ambulance in the upcoming budget and see how it works. It was the consensus of the Board to add \$24,000 to the capital items for a lift for the EMS department.

Consensus by the Board to appropriate \$6840.00 for NW Housing Authority project and \$8,000.00 for Mountain Alliance from the \$20,000 for nonprofits. The rest of the money will be put into Available for Appropriation.

A meeting will be scheduled with the Avery County Fire Commission; Avery Sheriff's Office; and Avery County Board of Education.

There was discussion regarding a loan to a housing project.

Adjourn

Motion by Blake Vance and second by Wood Hall Young, Jr. to adjourn at 2:55 p.m. Motion unanimously approved (5-0) Hicks—Aye; Phillips—Aye; Aldridge—Aye; Vance—Aye; Young—Aye.

Martha Hicks, Chair
Avery County Board of Commissioners

Cindy Turbyfill, Clerk