

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF AVERY**

The Avery County Board of Commissioners met in Regular Session on Monday, July 2, 2018 at 3:30 p.m. in the Commissioners Board Room, Avery County Administrative Complex, 175 Linville Street, Newland, NC.

Members Present: Martha Hicks, Chair; Blake Vance, Vice-Chair; Faith Lacey; Wood Hall Young, Jr.

Members Absent: Tim Phillips

Call To Order

Chair Hicks called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.

Phillip Barrier led prayer.

Blake Vance led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Proclamations and Awards

Celebrate County Government

Melinda Williams was recognized for 17 years in the Emergency Services Department. Chanda McCoury was recognized for 17 years of service with the Department of Social Services.

John Hicks was recognized for 17 years of service with the Sheriff's Office.

Public Comment

Rachel Deal spoke to the Board about two nonprofits that had served the county; the Humane Society and the YMCA. Ms. Deal stated that without the Humane Society there would be more problems with cats and dogs. The Humane Society compiled with the requirement of a grant application but their request was denied. I am asking that you reconsider funding for the Humane Society and for the YMCA and amend the budget. I am asking for things that need to be done. I don't agree with the way that the Board has handled this.

Jerry Moody, Director of the Cooperative Extension, introduced a new agent, Bill Hoffman. Mr. Hoffman has been in the county for thirty years, has been a tree grower and worked with the agency over the years. This whole next year he will be working with programs and getting out and meeting growers.

Avery County Fire Association Request

Phillip Barrier, County Manager, stated that the Avery County Fire Association had requested that a change be made to the makeup of the fire commission. It is my recommendation that we schedule a meeting with the Board, fire commission and fire chiefs for September and then again in January.

Blake Vance stated that he had been asked several times about this and that he would like to keep the lines of communication open and felt that meeting with these groups would be beneficial.

Consensus by the Board to schedule a meeting with the Board of Commissioners, Avery Fire Commission and the fire chiefs in September.

Tax Administrator Report – Bruce Daniels

Tax Collections Report

The total Tax Collections for the month of June 2018 is \$37,854.41

Motion by Blake Vance and second by Wood Hall Young, Jr. to approve the Tax Collections for the month of June 2018 as presented. Motion unanimously approved with those in attendance (4-0).

Tax Releases

The Total Tax Releases for the month of June 2018 is \$121.90.

Motion by Blake Vance and second by Wood Hall Young, Jr. to approve the Tax Releases for the month of June 2018 as presented. Motion unanimously approved with those in attendance (4-0).

Sales Statistics

There were 58 sales this year; there were 48 sales last year.

Avery County Tax Collection Report

Bruce Daniels, Tax Administrator, reported that the original levy was \$19,383,550.09. Through discoveries, we added \$249,319.65 to the tax base with total releases of \$8,911.03 for a total levy of \$19,623,958.71. For the 2017 year we have collected \$19,212,844.89 for a collection rate of 97.91%. That is both real and personal property. Total levy over a 10 year period was \$187,062,558.00 with a collection of \$185,929,685.21 for a collection rate of 99.39%. The outstanding agreements for 2017 are \$1,328.45 and a 10 year total of \$10,681.37. Bankruptcy totals for 2017 is \$42,728.94 with a 10 year total of \$176,757.60. Attorney Pursuits for 2017 is \$19,322.88 with a 10 year total of \$218,604.97.

Resolution Directing an Advisory Referendum to Increase the Avery County Sales & Use Tax by One Quarter Cent

***WHEREAS**, Chapter 105, Article 46, of the North Carolina General Statutes (NCGS §105-535 et. seq.) provides counties with the authority to levy a local sales and use tax at the rate of one quarter percent (0.25%); and*

***WHEREAS**, the Avery County Board of Commissioners has considered revenue sources to fund the needs of Avery County; and*

***WHEREAS**, the Avery County property tax rate is currently \$0.48; and*

***WHEREAS**, the proceeds from the additional one-quarter percent (0.25%) local sales and*

use tax would provide additional revenue to provide for the needs of the County;
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that pursuant to North Carolina General Statutes §105-537 the Avery County Board of Commissioners requests the Avery County Board of Elections to conduct an advisory referendum on the question of whether to levy a local sales and use tax in Avery County in accordance with the procedures on NCGS §163A-1592, with the form of the question to be presented on the ballot:

[] FOR [] AGAINST

Local sales and use tax at the rate of one-quarter percent (0.25%) in addition to all other State and local sales and use taxes.

Mr. Barrier stated that this tax would result in every time \$20.00 is spent it would cost an extra nickel. The good thing about this tax is nonresidents will pay the sales tax also. It is estimated from last fiscal year that we could bring in up to \$690,000 in additional sales tax. This tax would not apply to certain groceries. These funds would not be earmarked but would go into the general fund for capital needs such as the high school. Today we are simply requesting that the resolution be adopted to allow this to be placed on the ballot in November.

Wood Hall Young, Jr. stated that the education on this is up to the commissioners. This is the only way that people who don't live here can help us.

Blake Vance stated that he personally believed that a sales tax is the fairest of taxes. This would be worth approximately 2 cents on the tax rate. I fully support this tax.

Faith Lacey stated that the people have the right to vote on this and it will be up to them.

Martha Hicks read a statement for Tim Phillips who was absent from the meeting. Mr. Phillips stated "Due to a prior commitment I am unable to attend the commissioners meeting today but I wanted to go on record to say that I support the Resolution to place the quarter cent sales tax on the ballot for the November election."

Motion by Blake Vance and second by Wood Hall Young, Jr. to adopt the Resolution Directing an Advisory Referendum to Increase the Avery County Sales & Use Tax by One Quarter Cent. Motion unanimously approved with those in attendance (4-0).

Public Hearing—CDBG Neighborhood Rehabilitation Program

Motion by Wood Hall Young, Jr. and second by Blake Vance to go into a time of Public Hearing regarding the CDBG Neighborhood Rehabilitation Program at 4:00 p.m. Motion unanimously approved with those in attendance (4-0).

Michelle Ball, High Country Council of Government member, explained that at one time there was a scattered site housing program. The state decided to move that money to the Department of Environmental and Natural Resources for water and sewer. The state is now getting a lot of requests for another housing program which is now the

Neighborhood Revitalization Program. Avery County plans to apply to the NC Department of Commerce for CDBG Neighborhood Revitalization Program funding. There is \$10 million dollars budgeted for the program with a maximum award of \$750,000. The funds would be used to assist low-income residents with home rehabilitation and possible home replacement. The County hopes to assist approximately 6 or 7 homeowners with the funding if it is awarded. Eligible applicants must own and occupy the home full time and have a household income less than 80% of the County median. Eligible properties must be located in Avery County, however, homes located in the floodplain are ineligible. A committee has been assembled to help with the planning process and selection of the recipients. Applications for the program will be accepted until July 31, 2018.

Mr. Barrier stated that we are not assured of any funds. We have to take the applications, select the people and then try to get them some help.

There were no comments from the public.

Motion by Blake Vance and second by Faith Lacey to go out of the Public Hearing regarding the CDBG Neighborhood Revitalization Program at 4:06 p.m. Motion unanimously approved with those in attendance (4-0).

Finance Officer Report – Nancy Johnson

The Avery County Transportation Department requests a budget amendment for concrete work and door replacement. Six thousand was budgeted in the 2017-2018 budget, but a contractor was not available to complete the work. The quote for the concrete work is \$1,200 more than last year. The state will reimburse up to 90%.

Motion by Wood Hall Young, Jr. and second by Blake Vance to approve the Budget Amendment of \$10,000 with a debit of \$10,000 to Capital Outlay (10.6300.7400) and a credit of \$9,000 to Transportation Revenue (10.3610.0000) and a credit of \$1,000 to Fund Balance Appropriation (10.3990.0000). Motion unanimously approved with those in attendance (4-0).

County Manager Updates-Phillip Barrier

Agricultural Building Update

Paving is complete, septic work is being done. We are on track.

Swimming Pool Update

Bids will be opened July 5, 2018 at 3:00 p.m. Bids were scheduled to be opened last week but there were only two bids submitted so it was re-advertised.

Hazardous Waste Collection Day

August 25th is Hazardous Waste Collection Day.

Wooly Worm Festival

The Wooly Worm Festival in Banner Elk has been named the official Wooly Worm Festival of North Carolina.

Proposal for Environmental Consulting Services

Mr. Barrier reported that as part of securing the money for the new high school renovations and securing a loan with the USDA, we need to have the environmental consulting services completed. I am asking for consensus to spend the \$10,400 of our lottery money to go toward securing the loan with the USDA.

Michaëlle Poore, County Attorney, stated that the control of the school property is under the school board's authority and I think approval of this would be the county and the school board would have to be a party to the execution.

Wood Hall Young, Jr. questioned when construction begins does the deed not revert back to the county until the construction is complete. Ms. Poore stated that the county has a deed to the property but there is a lease and MOU giving the school board control over the property. The county took title to the property when the last financing was obtained.

Consensus by the Board to spend the \$10,400 in lottery money for the Environmental Consulting Services and send to the School Board for approval.

County Attorney Report – Michaëlle Poore

Nothing to report.

Approval of Minutes

Motion by Blake Vance and second by Faith Lacey to approve the April 23, 2018 Special Meeting, April 23, 2018 Joint Meeting with the BOE; and June 4, 2018 Regular Meeting. Motion unanimously approved with those in attendance (5-0).

Agenda Consent Items

Ms. Poore stated that the proposed bill regarding the fire commission needs to be moved to the informational items.

Motion by Blake Vance and second by Wood Hall Young, Jr. to move the proposed bill to the informational items. Motion unanimously approved with those in attendance (4-0).

Adopted by Consensus of the Board

Upcoming Meetings

Special Meeting on Monday, July 9th at 5:00 p.m. to award the bid for the swimming pool.

The second meeting in August will be cancelled.

Recess

Chair Hicks called for a brief recess.

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

Public Hearing –Economic Development Committee Expenditures

Motion by Blake Vance and second by Wood Hall Young, Jr. to go into public hearing at 4:30 p.m. regarding the Economic Development Committee Expenditures. Motion unanimously approved with those in attendance (4-0).

Mr. Barrier stated that the public hearing was to receive public comment regarding approval of expenditures of funds from the economic development committee for advertising in the Carolina Mountain Magazine and for general office supplies, cards, meetings, etc. The current plan for the marketing committee is to advertise for the fall, winter and spring issues.

Ken Walter stated that selection of this magazine was done primarily through the marketing committee. We looked out “Our State” magazine but it was very expensive. Carolina Mountain Magazine is free and hits the four county area.

Wood Hall Young, Jr. stated the only thing that concerns me is the distribution of the magazine. The magazine is here.

Mr. Walter stated that the fact that this was the most popular magazine that people were picking up was one of the reasons that they considered advertising in it. At some future date if the budget allowed we would have looked at “Our State” magazine which is distributed nationally.

There were no other public comments.

Motion by Blake Vance and second by Faith Lacey to go out of the public hearing regarding the Economic Development Committee Expenditures at 4:38 p.m. Motion unanimously approved with those in attendance (4-0).

Commissioner Vance stated that he was all for economic development but to me this is paying for “someone to stand in a Wal-Mart parking lot and handout Wal-Mart flyers”. I think \$2600 could be used more effectively for digital marketing. We are not advertising for a local business, we are advertising for a county. I don’t think that is the proper use for the \$2600 dollars.

Faith Lacey stated that she agreed with Commissioner Vance on this.

Wood Hall Young, Jr. questioned if not this, then what? Mr. Barrier stated that the committee would revisit this.

Mr. Walter stated that the marketing committee will be reorganized for 2018/2019 and that this will be revisited.

Blake Vance stated that he thought a joint meeting with the economic development committee would be beneficial.

The clerk will poll the commissioners for a date for this meeting.

Adjourn

Motion by Wood Hall Young, Jr. and second by Blake Vance to adjourn this meeting at 4:47 p.m. Motion unanimously approved with those in attendance (4-0).

Martha Hicks, Chair
Avery County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST: _____
Cindy Turbyfill, Clerk