

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF AVERY**

The Avery County Board of Commissioners held a Special Meeting on Monday, July 30, 2018 at 5:00 p.m. in the Commissioners Board Room, Avery County Administrative Complex, 175 Linville Street, Newland, NC. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the role of the Avery County Economic Development Advisory Committee.

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

Members Absent: None

Economic Development Members Present: Ken Walter, Chair; David Pollard; Susan Siirila; Roy Reynolds; Larry Hazen; Carmen Lacey; Melynda Pepple

Call To Order

Phillip Barrier led prayer.

Chair Hicks explained that each one had an agenda that would be followed and the first two things are short term and long term goals of the Economic Development Committee.

Ken Walter, Chair of the Committee, stated that the Committee has spent the past year trying to complement from the standpoint of tourism and recreation what the Avery County Chamber has done. The finance do not allow us to continue. Today we need to reassess what we need to do which in my opinion would be directing this committee more towards small business, etc.

Phillip Barrier, County Manager thanked both boards and especially the committee for their work. We have a new logo. I think where Ken is hitting is we have concentrated on tourism and I think we need to now concentrate on small business. We need to talk about promoting ourselves and who we promote to.

Larry Hazen, Committee member, said at least from a marketing standpoint we created a logo which is the initial steps in building a brand which is Avery County. Now that we have a logo and we have a brand what we need to do is build that brand. The biggest problem as Ken has mentioned is funding. Any branding effort is important. You need the element of repetition to make that brand stick.

Mr. Walter stated that Mr. Vance and Mr. Young at the last meeting expressed concerns of how the dollars should best be spent.

Blake Vance stated that he would like to thank the committee for the logo. My concern was in spending the dollars which are limited locally. I think the dollars would be better sent for print media or social media in the Charlotte, Raleigh/Durham, Chapel Hill area;

the markets where people would come to the mountains. My idea of what we need to do here is to drive tourism, attract new business and support the job creators in this area. I feel like the money could be spent better and more targeted.

Mr. Young stated that he thought the logo was good but one thing that concerned him was the small businesses in Avery County that are struggling to make it. You take a small business just starting out they can't afford \$300 a year to join the Chamber. I mentioned at the very onset was small businesses that we already have. The focal point for the last year has been in the Banner Elk area but you take from Crossnore down, tree growers, small businesses and farmers what are their hopes of economic development helping them? I have said in the beginning that you develop what economy that you already have.

Melynda Pepple, Avery Chamber, stated that Leadership Avery is huge in letting our group know about other parts of the county. We do offer automatic draft and it costs \$20.83 a month. It is a huge concern with the small businesses making it. We are working with Score to help train small businesses.

Tim Phillips agreed that we should support local businesses but we are not going to keep them here just on what is in the local business. We have to have something to draw them, offer them and something to keep them here.

There was discussion about agriculture in Avery County. David Pollard, Committee member, said there were hurdles for agriculture and the only hope for agriculture is direct marketing.

Mr. Walter stated that we are trying to get a relationship going with Mayland Community College and Alan Cook. We have people on the committee that can assist with helping the small businesses also.

Carmen Lacey, Committee member, said that she did better with concrete plans and that she would like to hear what the commissioner's goal for the committee is. Is promoting small businesses one of the goals?

Chair Hicks said that is probably the way we are going to have go is promoting small businesses.

Mr. Young said that we needed to define small business. Mr. Walter stated that a small business is 15 people or less. The business can start out 1 or 2 people.

Mr. Vance stated that he was the one pushing the idea of putting an economic development committee in place and my thought was always to build a brand, support businesses that are here and attract businesses. What I would suggest of the economic development committee is to help us identify what it is to attract and what we can be competitive in. One of the ways I suggested many times is an economic development consultant where the board could cast the vision and let the consultant do the legwork.

Larry Hazen questioned if there were any incentives for businesses? Is there any work to be done by the Commissioners? Mr. Vance said we could give grants. Maybe the Board of Commissioners could take that up.

Mr. Walter said that there needed to be a list of available commercial and industrial properties. Mr. Barrier said that he had called some people to put their properties on the website and they are reluctant to do that.

Mr. Vance stated that he thought it would behoove all of us to make these meetings happen every six months. I think this Board wants to be proactive.

There was discussion about partnering with the Chamber for advertising. There was discussion about identifying small businesses.

Chair Hicks stated that this has been a great meeting. We will meet again in three months. Mr. Hazen asked what the proper way to handle recommendations from the economic development committee is. The Board stated that Phillip would be the liaison between the Board of Commissioners and the committee.

Adjourn

Motion by Blake Vance and second by Wood Hall Young, Jr. to adjourn this meeting at 6:12 p.m. Motion unanimously approved (5-0).

Martha Hicks, Chair
Avery County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST: _____
Cindy Turbyfill, Clerk