

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
COUNTY OF AVERY**

The Avery County Board of Commissioners met in Regular Session on Monday, October 21, 2019 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; Dennis Aldridge; Tim Phillips; Wood Hall Young, Jr.

Members Absent: None

**Call To Order**

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

Tim Phillips led prayer.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**Public Comment**

There were no public comments.

**Board Appointments**

**Rural Transportation Advisory Committee Appointment**

The High Country RPO's Rural Transportation Advisory Committee is the RPO's governing board and is comprised of one county commissioner from each county, one municipal elected official from each county, one elected official from each municipality with a population of 10,000 or more and one member representing the NC Board of Transportation.

Wood Hall Young, Jr.'s term on the Rural Transportation Advisory Committee is expiring on December 31, 2019 and Mr. Young has expressed his desire for reappointment.

**Motion by Tim Phillips and second by Dennis Aldridge to reappoint Wood Hall Young, Jr. to the Rural Transportation Advisory Committee. Motion unanimously approved (4-0).**

**Review of Applicants**

The Board will review the applicants for the Avery Airport Authority and for Juvenile Crime Prevention Council. These will be voted on at the next regular meeting.

**Programs of Study – Dr. John Boyd**

Dr. John Boyd, President of Mayland Community College, explained that he was still waiting on the state budget. The House did pass a community college budget but the Senate has not taken it up yet. We are down about ½ million dollars this year in our state funds and we have been able to make that work without reducing employees. We anticipated that. We have multiple projects in the three counties. In Avery, we are working on taxidermy. We have just finished the entryway on the front of the building in

Avery. We have just finished a complete redoing of the main building including flooring, painting and new furniture. The project in Yancey County is the planetarium. The college is the general contractor for that project. The observatory is doing well. 80% of the people coming to the observatory are staying in the three counties. The big project in Mitchell is Pinebridge. Mitchell County gave us \$150,000 and Spruce Pine gave us \$100,000 for that project.

Dr. Boyd spoke about the scholarship program for engineering. There are eleven students this year in the engineering program. Dr. Boyd said that Continuing Education is the largest part of the college. The nursing program is also a huge part of the college. Welding is a big program for the college. The last group of law enforcement graduated and tested in Spring 2019.

Tim Phillips questioned if there was going to be a Basic Law Enforcement program on campus this year. Dr. Boyd stated that Mayland would not be having it this year but would be next year. One of the problems with the BLET program is finding a full time person. BLET is typically a two semester program. The very people we need to hire are retired law enforcement and this messes up their retirement. We have to replace a couple of cars. We increased the space and added another area for physical fitness training. It may or may not end up at Pinebridge. We are beginning an EMS program on the curriculum side this fall. We will offer EMS and that will begin at Avery High School.

Wood Hall Young, Jr. stated that the BLET program is extremely important to the three counties but especially to us. I would like to see it continue and possibly expand. It is really needed. Dr. Boyd stated that the challenge with some programs right now is the interest in the programs. We have to keep marketing and keep pushing it.

Blake Vance stated that he would certainly hope to see it continue. I think our Board is committed to help make sure it continues. Dr. Boyd stated if you heard that it was not going to continue then you heard wrong. That is not true. It is going to be continuing.

Tim Phillips questioned if welding and electrician programs are still being offered. Dr. Boyd stated that yes they were.

Tim Phillips said he thought one of the things in this area is the problem of affordable daycare. Dr. Boyd stated that was one of the problems that people were encountering.

Wood Hall Young, Jr. said he wanted to reiterate that the BLET program is very important. In the event that something goes awry and you are not going to be able to offer it let us know in the early stages and not the after fact. Dr. Boyd said yes he would. We did have a problem with the certification of the program director but we are working on that at this time.

### **High Country Workforce Development Presentation – Keith Deveraux**

Keith Deveraux, Director of High Country Workforce Development Board, explained that this Board covers the seven counties in the Northwest Region; Avery, Mitchell, Yancey, Alleghany, Wilkes, Watauga and Ashe. Each one of these counties have our full undivided attention. Here in Avery County due to budget constraints, I had to make a change. Our Workforce Board over the years has had their allocations decrease because of the population decrease. The change that went on was that we had to close the NC Work Center in Avery. This was relocated to Avery Campus of Mayland Community College. I know the change did not set too well. I want to assure you that this was my decision to meet the budget constraints. We were approved for a Federal grant of \$200,000 for an enhancement. That is going to allow the Workforce Board to provide Mayland with more money so we can do Workforce Development mainly to help businesses train the workforce. This enhancement grant will provide internships for the youth and people in the community. It will provide Federal funds for on-the-job training. We will pay 50% of an employee's salary up to six months. I have learned my lesson and I know that this Board cares about community involvement. We are readily able to assist you all. Avery will always matter to the High Country Workforce Development Board.

Dennis Aldridge stated that we have met and I have had many concerns about the change. This was done without any consideration on our part at all, there was no advanced notice. It was mandated that it happened and we had no recourse. All we saw was that our office went from five days to three days and only one of those days is someone from the Department of Commerce there. The other two days is staffed by Title I employees. The county offered space that someone said was totally insufficient but it is the same as the office space out there and it was totally free of charge. There have been a lot of things that have happened that really caught us off guard and was not appropriate. We as Avery County suffered because of it. There is no signage at this office out here and no one knows how to get there. I understand the budget cuts and what that means but there was an extreme lack of communication and cooperation from our county's standpoint. It comes down to we were told instead of asked and it comes down to the citizenry of Avery County were treated in a way that I think was inappropriate.

Dr. John Boyd stated that Mayland Community College was very involved in this decision and part of the decision was based on the effectiveness and the usage. What we tried to do as a college is to do more and more of it on the campuses. We look at the number of people coming in and at this site there were a decreased number of people.

Dennis Aldridge stated that this decision was made apart from the ones that were most affected by it.

Wood Hall Young, Jr. questioned if the low unemployment rate at this time had any effect on the closing and relocating of the office.

Keith Deveraux stated that they don't just look at the population they also look at the unemployment rate. I have heard your concerns and we will come to you when anything like this happens again. Anything that will drastically change or impact Avery County you will hear it first.

Pam Willis stated that Avery County was not singled out just as the only one to take a cut. About three years ago in Mitchell we had lower traffic and money was cut and we reduced the hours to two days a week at that time.

Chair Hicks asked how many days Avery County would have. Ms. Willis stated it would be open three days a week.

Ms. Willis said that the traffic is increasing at the Avery Campus of Mayland. Ms. Willis explained some of the services. The basic job seeker services help people job search; we help them fill out their applications; help them do resumes; do mock interviews with them. We have the more intensive services which come in under the WIOA and these people have a caseworker. We help with additional training. We offer special programs to Veterans and to former offenders. We know they need the additional help to access the jobs. We work a lot with WAMY and Vocational Rehabilitation. We work with the schools also.

Dennis Aldridge asked what the budget for the WIOA was this year. Ms. Willis said that they never did really let them know. Mr. Aldridge asked what the budget last year was and Ms. Willis said it was about \$600,000.

### **Materials Recovery Lease**

Phillip Barrier, County Manager, advised the Board that there is a proposed lease for consideration between Avery County and the Village of Sugar Mountain for a materials recovery site. The Village of Sugar Mountain Council approved the lease at their regular meeting on October 15<sup>th</sup>. This materials recovery site will replace the one at the Watauga County line. This will shorten the haul trip. Sugar Mountain has agreed to take care of the snow removal. We are currently paying \$13,000 a year for the Banner Elk site. There will be no monthly charge for this site. There will be costs for the up fit though.

Dennis Aldridge questioned if there would be the same number of trash receptacles. Eric Foster stated there would be the same amount of receptacles. Mr. Foster also explained that hopefully if the weather held out that the concrete pads could be poured but that the paving would not happen until the spring time. We are hoping that we can get this site up and running in about six weeks. Wood Hall Young, Jr. asked what the estimated cost for the up fitting of the site would be. Mr. Foster stated that it would be around \$55,000.

**Motion by Blake Vance and second by Wood Hall Young, Jr. to approve the lease for the Materials Recovery Site between Avery County and the Village of Sugar Mountain. Motion unanimously approved (5-0).**

Blake Vance stated that we need a mechanism in place to stop out of the county folks from dumping trash because it is not fair to Avery County taxpayers to pay for their trash.

### **County Manager Updates – Phillip Barrier, Jr.**

#### **Toe River Health District**

Toe River Health District is applying for a grant for \$275,000 that would be for 2 ½ years for mentors and medically assisted drug treatment in the jail. We have met with the Sheriff and Trina about this also. I will bring you more information later.

Included in the agenda packet is a quote for a card reader security system for the Toe River Health District. This is included in the Toe River Health District budget. The director just wanted the Board to be aware of this.

#### **Courthouse Roof Project**

Joe Pavelchak, architect, is working on our drawings for the courthouse roof project. His fee was up to \$3,000 for this project.

Some grants have been happening in our departments. The recreation department received an archery grant. This is for training and equipment. The AMY Wellness Foundation grant for \$202,000 was given to the Avery, Mitchell and Yancey counties transportation departments. Troy Cook received a tactical grant for \$24,500. Emergency Management received a grant for a mobile restroom unit.

### **Finance Officer Report – Tim Greene**

#### **Budget Amendment**

The Department of Social Services has received an additional insurance reimbursement for the 2017 Subaru Forester claim.

**Motion by Tim Phillips and second by Blake Vance to adopt a Budget Amendment in the amount of \$882.00 for an insurance reimbursement with a debit of \$882.00 to Auto Supplies (106100.3100) and a credit of \$882.00 to Insurance Reimbursements (103340.0000). Motion unanimously approved (5-0).**

#### **Budget Amendment**

The Sheriff's office has received a NC Department of Public Safety Governor's Crime Commission Grant. It will be used to purchase tactical team equipment. This grant requires no matching funds.

**Motion by Blake Vance and second by Dennis Aldridge to adopt a Budget Amendment for the NC Dept of Public Safety Governor's Crime Commission Grant in the amount of \$24,500 with a debit of \$24,500 to Crime Control Grant (105100.7420) and a credit of \$24,500 to Governor's Crime Commission Grant (103615.0000). Motion unanimously approved (5-0).**

**Budget Amendment**

Roof repairs at the courthouse will require hiring an architect to draw plans and complete a scope of work for the project.

**Motion by Dennis Aldridge and second by Tim Phillips to adopt a Budget Amendment for the hiring of an architect for the courthouse roof project in the amount of \$5,000 with a debit of \$5,000 to Repairs and Maintenance (105000.1510) and a credit of \$5,000 to Fund Balance Appropriation (103990.0000). Motion unanimously approved (5-0).**

**Agenda Consent Items**

**Adopted by Consensus of the Board.**

Wood Hall Young, Jr. stated that Ned Fowler, Director of the Northwest Regional Housing Authority had expressed appreciation to the Board for reappointing Troy Clark to the Northwest Regional Housing Authority.

**Upcoming Meetings**

The next Regular Meeting is Monday, November 4, 2019 at 3:30 p.m.

**Adjourn**

Chair Hicks declared the meeting to be adjourned at 5:22 p.m.

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**Martha Hicks, Chair  
Avery County Board of Commissioners**

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
Cindy Turbyfill, Clerk