

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF AVERY**

The Avery County Board of Commissioners met in a Board Workshop on Monday, August 17, 2015 at 9:00 a.m. on the Commissioners Board Room, Avery County Administrative Complex, 175 Linville Street, Newland, NC. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss and take any action necessary regarding capital projects and the Avery County Board of Commissioners Board Policy.

Members Present: Robert Griffith, Chairman; Maxine Laws, Vice-Chair; Martha Hicks; Faith Lacey; Blake Vance

Members Absent: None

Call To Order

Chairman Griffith called the meeting to order at 9:07 a.m.
Tim Greene led prayer.

Capital Projects

Courthouse

Tim Greene, County Manager, reported that the painting at the courthouse was supposed to have been done by July 1, 2015. I have emailed Cecil Greene, contractor, and have not gotten a reply to that. The bathroom renovations I have no luck at all with that. I have contacted four commercial contractors and everybody is tied up and finally I went back to Mr. Ed Storey and he said this winter he might get to it but as of yet he has not called back. Everybody is tied up with bid projects and this is a small one. It is hard to get a commercial contractor to come out. That is where we stand with both of those. Martha Hicks said she had talked to Allen Jones about the bathrooms and he said he had done those bathrooms sometime in the 1970's. He said that all of the bathroom plumbing is the galvanized pump and you can leave the stalls and things like it is but if you get in there and you are going to change the commodes around that everything would have to be taken up in the bathrooms. That is a thought for everyone to consider. He said that he could do it on the side on Saturdays. Mr. Greene said if we go in there remodeling we will have to bring them up to current code.

Agriculture Extension Building

Mr. Greene stated that Glenn Walker, engineer from Hickory, had come up last Wednesday and walked through the Ag. Extension Building. Tommy Burleson had recommended Mr. Walker. Mr. Walker said he was going to come back and take measurements and pictures before he gives us a report. With this initial visit, he said yes the building was worth saving but it is like anything how much do you want to spend and what do you want to do with it? He will give us a report and tell us the trouble spots. If we engage him to draw plans or a plan of action and if we want him to bid that out that is probably going to be 4 or 5 thousand dollars at that stage. He would also help steer us toward contractors who would be up to that task. It is one of those things we can get the initial report, look at it and then we can say do we want to go a further step in getting him to work up plans. Until you get the plans drawn up and put it out to bid you don't know exactly what it is going to cost. He can probably give us a fair idea. I think it is certainly going to be something we are going to stay in if we want to stay in it. It is an old building and does have issues. Ms. Hicks said if we remodeled a 1912 courthouse I think we can remodel that building. Mr. Greene said that Mr. Walker will give us several options when he gives us the report. Chairman Griffith said we will need to see how detailed that report is and he may want to appear in an open meeting so the public will know and answer questions. It is going to be costly and some dollars spent there. Mr. Greene one of the things to consider is that if we ever wanted to have Ag. Extension at Heritage Park then maybe we don't want to spend dollars on the Ag. Building. Chairman Griffith said he felt Ag. Extension was in a good location and was very accessible. Maxine Laws said we talked about whether the employees would have to be relocated during renovation. Mr. Greene said that the structural part is more of the downstairs. If we renovate the upstairs that would be a whole new ballgame. Mr. Greene said that at the last board workshop we did talk about the Avery Cares Building maybe needing it for relocating them. After that workshop, we did ask the county attorney to work on a month to month lease agreement. I called Bob Wilson and informed him of the eight dollars a square foot and then also mentioned to him about asking if there was any interest in them purchasing either or both of those buildings. I don't have an answer on that. I did email Bob on Thursday or Friday and asked him if Jerry had shown any interest in purchasing and Jerry had gotten busy with Daymark taking over services in Winston Salem and that he had forwarded my email and they would let me know. I don't know where Gerald stands with getting us the month to month lease drawn up but he has the information.

Veterans Monument

Mr. Greene reported that the Veterans Committee had met a couple of times. We have discussed several different ways anything from pavers to monuments and anything from having names on the monument to just having monuments with no names. We are going to meeting in the morning at 9:00 a.m. Martha, Reo, Dawn and myself met Friday with Mindy and Rachelle from the monument company. We are going to be talking with the committee tomorrow about this. The McDowell Monument is the one

that they have given us a quote on. Martha said that is not granite where the names are it is brick. We thought it was granite but it was not. Chairman Griffith said I know she didn't like the one at McDowell because of weather and water being able to get in it. Ms. Hicks said she was just going to make it solid and then they would sandblast the names in. Chairman Griffith questioned if it would be brick in Avery County? Mr. Greene said it would be one solid piece in Avery County and she would score it to look like individual bricks. Ms. Hicks said she is going to be back tomorrow. Mr. Greene said if ultimately you decide that is what you want to do we will have to keep in mind that anyway we go there is going to be some pluses and minuses but once we get those original names on there when it comes time to add names we will have to have a block of 40 names before they will come up and add to it. Chairman Griffith said this plan was solely just to give us a figure, we none had a figure. Ms. Martha had spoken of the McDowell monument and referenced it a time or two so I just took the McDowell monument and asked the company to give us a quote and then they called Ms. Martha and I to meet with them. I don't even know what the committee is going to come up with we may have several more meetings before the committee even comes up with a firm idea. It is a really nice memorial and just gives a ballpark figure of what something similar is going to cost if that is what the subcommittee wants. Ms. Hicks said she gave us a quote on 1,049 names but that has increased tremendously. It is 2,245 names. We talked about when you look down toward the Presbyterian Church that you would have to do one on one side and one on the other side because it would be so big and cluttered. Mr. Greene said a couple of the columns would be 8 feet high and some 6 feet high. She gave us a figure on 1,049 names and that figure was \$152,780. Blake Vance said that is a lot less than we set aside. We set aside \$400,000. Ms. Hicks said she would have the figures together on another 1,000 names and then she was talking about fixing one up where they could come back and sandblast the name in and it would be left without any names in it. She said it would be \$35.00 for each name with a minimum of 40 at a time. She said the trees would probably have to be cut. She talked about the base which they don't pour the foundation. She would give us specs but we would have to put it out to bids. Chairman Griffith said as far as getting the monument erected does Newland have any type of tree ordinance that you have to have permission to cut a tree? Let's say they don't one tree is dead and then on the end there are three trees, four trees at a minimum needs to be removed. Ms. Hicks said she talked about doing something and making it longer and putting a place to put the flags. Chairman Griffith said the foundation that they will give us the specs on that we will have to do our self it will have specs concerning all of that. Chairman Griffith said he just got a text from Mindy and it says "Good Morning, Reo, we are going to get a couple of quotes for flagpoles for the monuments and need to know what sizes you all are looking for. I know you have meetings today but if you could give me a call at the office or text me back the sizes we can hopefully have quotes by tomorrow mornings meeting for you." I am wondering if she is talking about the size of flags because that certainly tells you what size flagpoles you need. Ms. Hicks said I think 5 shorter flags would be nice in that. This is just one idea. We had another idea with bricks and fixing the center. It is a lot of ideas that have been mentioned but before we can present to the board we will need to come up with an idea. You are going to take up over half of the money in this project. We wanted to do lights around the square and they are about \$1,000 a piece. Chairman Griffith said we had mentioned having a permanent podium behind your constitution and Bill of Rights. Tim and I had talked about at some time employing an architect to have it designed so it looks neat and nice. We are pretty much settled that the war memorials are going to go there so we don't need an architect for that. Ms. Hicks said another thing Reo had talked to Rachelle before I got there and we were asking her if this could be up and done by Veteran's Day and she said it could be. Ms. Martha said she contacted the local source first and he was going to go through a company in Georgia and said he did not have the equipment to handle it.

Discussion about contacting Vance Patterson regarding the Bill of Rights and US Constitution. The board instructed the clerk to get in contact with Vance Patterson regarding this.

Consensus of the Board to instruct the county manager to start the process of the tree removal after the veterans committee meeting tomorrow.

Blake Vance commented that he had talked with Josh Dobson about the HB117 at length and he said he was completely against it and then I saw he voted for it. That was a straight economic development bill when it left the House and had nothing to do with the sales tax redistribution. When it got to the Senate, they gutted the bill and stuck Harry Brown's redistribution plan in it. He voted for the original bill. Dan Soucek our senator was a cosponsor on this bill and I sent him an email that said it was going to hurt Avery County. We need to be talking to Josh Dobson and Dan Soucek.

Recreation Property

Gerald McKinney, County Attorney, advised that he had did some research a couple of weeks ago. There are two or three big things on this grant. One is that either side can terminate on 30 days' notice. The reimbursement would happen on a percentage of the amount of the grant to the total amount spent. Here of course it is 50% because we matched the funds. The state is not required to waive this restriction. So the big thing they could say we will take it back but we will have this land that has recreation restriction on it which makes it not nearly as sellable. The big thing is we need to work out a plan where we reimburse and they waive that restriction. There is nothing that says we have to do anything but wait and see what the state does. It says the state has the right to terminate for cause but it doesn't mean they have to. I think from what I heard part of the reason nothing happened was because

the economy was bad so they did not want to push anybody. It could be that the economy is improving so they want to see something happening. In looking at the grant application, this is where I guess Robbie was writing up the application and he says this locally rare flat terrain can quickly and easily be turned into multi-sport fields and I think that is what they were thinking would be one of the first things we might do to it and there is talk about having just fields out there for playing different sports. It also says that the acquisition of land will begin the recreation department's desire for long range planning with proposed future facilities to include expanded fitness areas, indoor aquatic center, racquet sports facilities and/or baseball and tennis and multiple basketball courts enclosed in one facility. That is their long range plan. There is no timetable. Maxine Laws questioned if the grant was given for that? Mr. McKinney answered the grant references the application and we have references talking about different things in it but there is nothing that says we must build something. There is part of a long range plan that would have encompassed building something. It is not clear what they would claim is required. Blake Vance questioned if there was anyone with the state we could contact regarding this. Tim Greene, County Manager, stated that he had contacted LouAnn Bryant with the NC Parks and Recreation Department. I had asked LouAnn what we could put there, can we put something as little as a field and anything up to including the grand vision. Her comment was, looking at it from the state's position, you all was intending on putting a building there and that is what you need to do. It does not have to be a million dollar building, it can be just a metal building. She said as the state recreation person that is why I am going to encourage you to do that. She said if you do something less than that we are going to have to get approval from them. Maxine Laws questioned in the grant itself does it specify any of that? Mr. McKinney said the grant says you are supposed to do what you said you were going to in the application. In the application, one of the things that we said in this application the project will provide three or more types of recreation facilities. Future facilities will include indoor tennis, baseball, racquetball and wrestling facilities. What I am reading now is we said we would build this. They can say you are not in compliance because you haven't done any of this so we would need to get a waiver from the state. Even if we did a place to do concerts, you would probably need to get a waiver to be able to do that. Mr. Greene said maybe if we say we want to keep this land and we show the state the needs assessment that was done by Appalachian State University, then maybe we can do something else. It depends on what we want to do. We have three choices; we can pay back the grant and they could or could not waive the restriction; we could do some kind of multipurpose facility on there or we can see if we can get a waiver and do something less. Anything less than a building, we will have to get a waiver. There was further discussion regarding this issue.

Consensus to instruct county manager and county attorney to talk with someone in the state Parks and Recreation department about these stipulations and see what the options are.

Avery County High School

Tim Greene, County Manager, stated "The DPI report had long term and short term needs about the high school. If I am not mistaken, Chairman Griffith had asked in open session for them to give estimates. You and I talked in the last week or so and you had said to ask Mr. Burlison to get us some quotes. This is what he provided me. This is from 2014 that Danny Clark had done for the school board in response to the DPI report." Chairman Griffith questioned "this document Avery County High School December 2014 prepared by Danny Clark, is there a dollar figure in this document?" Mr. Greene said "there is but some of the dollar figures would just be estimated things until you actually get a contractor. This is some estimates on addressing the DPI report. Some of this obviously is short term and long term." Chairman Griffith said "this is Danny's figures, it is not a contractor." Mr. Greene said "these are estimates." Chairman Griffith said "For instance, plumbing, sewer and storm water he has down 1.3 million dollars and we have already fixed the sewer for less than \$100,000; there is a little bit of discrepancy there." Mr. Greene said "reading both of those reports there is some good information in there and obviously the cost estimates are estimates." Chairman Griffith said "what I had talked to the manager about, and this board at numerous times said we want to fix these problems and have the money to fix the problems with but you have short term needs and long term needs. When you talk about ventilation system in a classroom versus storm drain runoff as far as the needs of the child I believe the ventilation in the classroom would well outweigh storm water drainage for the safety and wellbeing of the child and what I was hinting at in this DPI of not just what 'John Doe' said it might cost but an electrical contractor or whoever you could get to say we can fix this ventilation system for x amount of dollars and then present this to the Board and say yes we are going to need x amount of dollars to fix the immediate needs. I wish the immediate needs would be addressed with an exact dollar amount and I believe the Board has echoed that in the past and if there is a step that is unsafe that is probably an immediate need." Maxine Laws said "in the science room it says \$520,000. Do you think that is pretty much what it would cost to get that fixed?" Chairman Griffith said "who knows, he was bad off on the sewer. I wish we did know." Blake Vance said "we didn't replace the entire system." Chairman Griffith said "we didn't need to after the engineer looked at it." Martha Hicks questioned "wasn't the science classroom the worst part? That was the worst part that we looked at when we went through the school system." Chairman Griffith said "when I looked at it when you have cabinet doors hanging halfway off, maintenance needs to be jacked up over that when a screw would fix it and that is some of the stuff that I saw, it was just in disarray, that is uncalled for." Maxine Laws said "I thought it was a total wreck, I thought it needed something bad but I also thought if you took a dumpster and cleaned out the mess but a lot of what I saw was things hanging out of doors and

drawers and I thought a lot of it needed a good old fashioned cleaning out and then see what it really needed to have done. The smell down there was horrible.” Martha Hicks said “I thought it looked like pack rats.” Maxine Laws said “before you could get a dollar figure somebody would have to go in there and do some throwing away and cleaning out to see what it did need and then address with some good fixing.” Chairman Griffith said “we don’t call the shots with the school system by no means and not trying to but we do have the money and we would like for the short terms needs and ventilation is important, I wish that was addressed. We can’t make them address it; we can tell them we are fully on board with paying and fixing and we told them that. We told them that the board was in 100% agreeance with it and this last meeting we allocated \$45,000 for the sewer system and we are talking about the high school. We are one of the few counties in North Carolina that has a driver’s education program fully funded by the Avery County Board of Commissioners. It is not in the state’s budget and the counties have not funded it and we funded nearly \$50,000 if they didn’t come through.” Martha Hicks said “on page 9 it says dust collection system has been removed in the carpenter’s shop. To improve air quality the system needs to be replaced. Just because something doesn’t work you don’t just take it out and not replace it. Here you are talking about lungs. I worked for 10 years in a factory and worked with dust systems and you don’t take it out and forget about it. It looks like someone would have known you had to put it back in.” Maxine Laws said “that is one thing when I went to the science lab that if you have allergies, by the time I made my rounds and got out the door I could hardly breathe and I can promise you for a kid that had to take a class there every day if it had allergies it could be bad. That was my biggest complaint was the smell, it was horrible.” Chairman Griffith said “Ms. Martha has opened up a good can of worms. This goes back to what we said initially. Dust collection system has been removed in the carpentry shop. To improve air quality the system should be replaced. Ok, why is it so difficult to get an estimate to replace this dust collection system and call us and say we need x number of dollars to replace this system in the carpentry shop and the Board vote right then and do it.” Martha Hicks said “how many of us knew about the sewer system and never had heard about it until we got in a meeting?” Chairman Griffith said “and going on since 2007. They know that we are willing to foot the bill, we have said we are willing to foot the bill. I know they wanted to build a big new high school. A majority of this Board said we are not going to be in the high school building business but we are in the business of making sure the kids have a nice, good, safe facility. My son started there this morning and I want him to be in a good, nice, safe facility. It is a good facility. I am not scared about it falling in on my child today. Just like this ventilation is not a big dollar thing.” Faye Lacey said “when I was up there I asked the school board why they were not jumping up and down screaming about some of these things if they were needed. If I understand it they should bring it to us.” Chairman Griffith said “Talk with Mr. Burleson and tell him again we are all fully on board and if that carpenter shop needs a ventilation system by all means lets rock and roll, we can’t make them do a thing but let them know that we want the immediate needs for the children’s safety to be addressed and fixed.” Tim Greene said “Would you like me to get back in contact with them?” Chairman Griffith said “Yes, chat with Mr. Burleson and use the carpentry class as an example. Let’s fix this, let’s get with it. They have to have the ventilation system there. Let’s say this board was fixing to build a \$50,000,000 high school they are still going to have to have the ventilation system until the high school is built, it is common sense.”

Martha Hicks commented that she thought the money that the county was receiving from the sale of the Banner Elk School should be put in a fund for the schools. Chairman Griffith stated that the board had already committed just this year to spend \$45,000 on the sewer system and \$48,000 on driver’s education training. He also stated that he had an email in to Kara Millonzi at the School of Government regarding this issue.

Board Policy

Mr. Greene stated we don’t have to discuss anything regarding the policy right now. We went through everything that Cindy and I had saw that needed addressing and now it is the Board’s decision to decide when to work on the policy to finish it up. The County Attorney has all the minutes from the board workshop and he knows all of the commissioner’s comments. I will let you know when he gets that and schedule a workshop.

Adjourn

Motion by Maxine Laws and second by Blake Vance to adjourn this meeting at 11:35 a.m. Motion unanimously approved.

**Robert Griffith, Chairman
Avery County Board of Commissioners**

ATTN: _____
Cindy Turbyfill, Clerk

