# STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA COUNTY OF AVERY

The Avery County Board of Commissioners met in a Budget Workshop on Monday, May 12, 2014 at 5:00 p.m. in the Commissioners Board Room, Avery County Administrative Complex, 175 Linville Street, Newland, NC with the Avery Fire Commission; Avery County Sheriff's Office and Avery County Board of Education.

Members Present: Kenny Poteat, Chairman; Glenn Johnson, Vice-Chair; Phyllis Forbes; Martha Hicks

Members Absent: Reo Griffith

### **Call To Order**

Chairman Poteat called the meeting to order at 5:08 p.m.

### **Avery County Fire Commission**

Fire Commission members present were Bill Beuttell, Johnny Mathes, Matt McClellan, Joe Perry

Bill Beuttell, Chairman of the Avery County Fire Commission, explained that this was his first meeting with the Commissioners since he had come on the Avery County Fire Commission. He said he would explain the budget and answer any questions.

Chairman Poteat stated that it was the intent of the Board of Commissioners to stay at revenue neutral. To remain revenue neutral the fire tax would be 6.4 cents and that is projected to bring in \$2,219,000 which is \$1000 over this year's budget.

Mr. Beuttell stated that he would go over the expenditures that was added in this budget that has put us slightly over. One of the expenditures is the construction of the Frank Fire Department. We have allocated \$100,000 for that expenditure. We also have additional capital expenses for a roof for the Elk Park Fire Department and this was budgeted at \$10,000. We have spoken about the Fire Commission purchasing a small office building on the outside of Newland. The building is close to the county garage. The two other items is we have asked for \$20,000 to assist Linville Central for a paid person on their staff. They have been funding a position through their donations at Grandfather Mountain Highland Games and due to the call volume they have requested that we share the expenses the first year and then the fire commission pay another \$5000 the following year another \$10,000 and thereafter the fire commission pick up the salary position so it would be a \$30,000 salary position. The last thing is that we put in approximately \$20,000 to \$25,000 to get the paid personnel on some type of retirement program. It would be paid for out of the fire tax revenues but by including them on the county retirement program we would not have to back date so many employees; that would cost an estimated \$350,000. With including them on the county retirement, we would start with day one and not have to pay personnel for the years past. The reason that we are trying to look toward the future is that in my short tenure on the fire commission it appears that the average age of the volunteer is getting older and older. The recruitment of new persons to be volunteers is becoming less and less. With the restrictions and requirements to be certified, it is hard for new recruits to take off time to go to the classes especially with the economy the way it is. We have a wonderful volunteer program in this county. It is the only program that gives you a return on your investment. With the amount of money they pay on the fire tax and with the reduced rates they pay on the fire insurance, it is almost a wash. In looking to the future we have well- staffed, well trained volunteer service willing to serve at a moment's notice and the alternative to that is that if we can't create an environment to recruit new persons to be volunteers at some point in time there is not going to be enough people. We want to continue what we are doing and provide the citizens of this county with a well- equipped, well-staffed personnel to do the job they are supposed to do.

Mr. Beuttell said that some of the things that we are trying to do to help save the county money is beginning a refurbishment program on the fire engines instead of having to pay \$350,000 for a new fire engine any of the engines that qualify for refurbishment we can possibly send them to a company where they can be retrofitted at approximately \$125,000 to \$150,000. Right now in the upcoming budget year we are planning on purchasing two new fire engines which is about \$350,000 each. We spent approximately 30 hours on the budget this year. Some of the fire departments are on propane, some on natural gas and we are working with the fire departments to find out which department is on which type of fuel, get bids from different suppliers and buy bulk fuel and hopefully save quite a bit of money. We are doing everything in our power to trim where we can.

Discussion regarding state grants. Mr. Beuttell stated that the fire commission is working with the fire departments to max out the state grants because this is a 50/50 matching grant. We have tried to come up with a realistic budget. Chairman Poteat stated that serious consideration would be given to the fire department's budgets.

# **Recess**

Chairman Poteat called for a brief recess.

Chairman Poteat declared the meeting to be back in session after a brief recess.

# Avery County Sheriff's Office – Kevin Frye

Sheriff Kevin Frye stated that this is the first time since he was elected Sheriff in 2007 that I have not given a budget book out. I have tried to keep my budget as true to last year's budget as much as possible. There is one line item that I got fussed at because I left it where it was last year and that is the auto supply line item. Joe Trivette says we can't buy the tires and parts that we need with what we are budgeting. It is fiscally impossible. I don't do the maintenance budget. We will go through 2 sets of tires and 2 sets of brakes a year on the deputies' cars. I have a copy of what Joe says we need in order to have an accurate budget. We had appropriated \$32,000 and he said we needed \$52,000. Tim Greene stated that the \$30,000 range has been sufficient in the last 5 years. Last year the actual was \$35,252.97. I am just telling you what Joe Trivette said that we needed, stated Sheriff Frye.

Sheriff Frye stated that he had kept his budget about the same as last year except for a few thousand dollars more in the auto supply line item. Discussion regarding the increase in the costs of supplies, fuel, tires, etc.

Sheriff Frye discussed the jail budget. He said that the statewide confinement act money is what we get when we house prisoners. The month of April we earned \$9,000. We are looking at enhancing the confinement program to house more inmates that are sentenced to longer sentences. We are housing about 8-10 SMPC's.

#### **Recess**

Chairman Poteat called for a brief recess.

Chairman Poteat declared the meeting to be back in session after a brief recess.

### **Board of Education**

Board of Education Members & Staff Present: John Greene, Chairman; Robert Clark, Keith Tutterow, Steve Smith, Jeff Jaynes, Danny Clark, David Burleson, Superintendent.

David Burleson, Avery County School Superintendent, stated that we realize as a school system that the coming year will be difficult. We understand we are a part of Avery County. We want to be part of the solution. We are not bringing a budget to you saying we have got to have so much money to operate. We feel like if it is lean times for the county it is lean times for us. We are bringing you a budget that has no increase in operating expenses for next year. We feel like that is what we need to do to support Avery County. We do ask the commissioners that if the county is better off than you anticipate that anything you might give us extra would go for a supplement for all of our employees. Right now we provide 3% supplement for everyone in our school system except for some administrators; that is the custodians, clerical, teacher assistants, bus drivers. We are the few systems in the state that provides a supplement across the board. We do that because all of our employees are important to us. We are asking if there is any extra that it would be given to us to provide a supplement to our employees. It has been 2008 since we have had any raise. We had a 1.2% raise between 2008 and today. The 1% supplement would equate to \$158,000. We are asking for no increase in capital.

Chairman Poteat thanked the Board of Education and staff members for being at this meeting and the Board of Commissioners would take the supplement into consideration.

The next budget meeting will be held Thursday, May 15, 2014 at 2:00 p.m.

## <u>Adjourn</u>

Motion by Martha Hicks and Phyllis Forbes to adjourn this meeting at 7:47 p.m. Motion unanimously approved.

		Kenny Poteat, Chairman	
		Avery County Board of Commissioners	
ATTEST:			
	Cindy Turbyfill, Clerk	<del></del>	