

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF AVERY**

The Avery County Board of Commissioners met in a Special Meeting on Thursday, September 22, 2011 at 9:00 a.m. in the Commissioners Board Room, Avery County Administrative Complex, 175 Linville Street, Newland, NC. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the One-To-One Initiative proposal.

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

Members Absent: None

Call To Order

Chairman Poteat called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m.

Chairman Poteat led prayer.

One-to-One Initiative

Chairman Poteat read some issues that the Board would be facing in the 2012/2013 budget and the possible tax increase that could occur. Scott Heath said that it was fine to understand what Avery County may be facing in the upcoming year but that there are many variables and these are incredibly speculative. He stated that his concern was if the One-to-One initiative was feasible.

Chairman Poteat stated that he had done some research on his own regarding this project. If only 6-12 grade students received the Macbooks, the projected cost for the project would be 1.6 million dollars or slightly under \$500,000 savings. If 3-12 grade students received the Macbooks and Ipads, the savings would be slightly less than \$250,000. It is very difficult in this economic climate to be on the leading edge and the only county in the state to be doing this. Chairman Poteat stated that he had done some research on the costs of the Macbooks and Ipads and there was a considerable discount with the One-To-One proposal.

There was discussion regarding the number of students, select staff and teachers served. There was also discussion regarding the covers, professional development sessions, protection plan, etc.

Glenn Johnson said that while this is technically not a budget amendment, it is somewhat one to him. He said we are being asked to foresee some several months out as to what can or cannot be done. This is a very worthy project and we do not want our children left behind. Every department wants more but we all know who has to pay for it; the taxpayers of Avery County. Mr. Johnson said he would never say he would not raise taxes next year or he would raise taxes next year. As elected officials, when x amount of money is given to the school board it is the school's charge to decide how that money is spent. Mr. Johnson stated that if the school board could operate within the current budget and do this project that would be wonderful.

Chairman Poteat questioned Tim Greene, Finance Officer, how much that capital funding had been in the past several years for the Board of Education. Mr. Greene answered that year in and year out it had been approximately \$500,000 for capital. Apparently, the \$500,000 would basically cover this project.

David Burleson, Avery County School Superintendent, stated that he believed from the school's board perspective that every year of the lease they could "tighten their belts" and come up with an average of about \$200,000 a year and the initial payment of \$200,000. Chairman Poteat said he was hearing Mr. Burleson say that the responsibility of the county would be more like \$330,000 instead of \$530,000 plus there is some sales tax that will come back.

Phyllis Forbes commented that having taught and been involved in the technology initiative in the classroom and seeing the smart boards and more computers, this really increases the learning of the children. Our children need to have this advantage to be able to compete in the 21st Century. This would help economically because we would be looked at by businesses and open up the potential for jobs. There are a lot of positives for this program.

Scott Heath stated that this whole project got him excited with all the advantages for our children. In talking with Superintendent Burleson, the goal is to work this within the budget and they have gone back to Apple working their part on the expense end. The worst case scenario would be if we do not give them any additional money but the \$500,000 for three years that would go toward this project. The school board has already committed \$200,000 to this project. It is not practical that this project goes ahead without additional money but it is possible. Mr. Heath said he believed that the Board of Education could kick in \$200,000 every year. Mr. Heath said during the budgetary time he would suggest that \$200,000 be taken from their \$500,000 and commit toward this and then we are still coming up with \$330,000. If they can come in and commit \$200,000 from operational and transfer to capital and now you are down to \$130,000 a year for three years. The fourth year is about taken care of because it is only about \$330,000. From what I have heard this morning, we are down to \$130,000 for three years to absolutely transform the educational process in Avery County.

Glenn Johnson said that "no added money" could possibly do this. He said that he did not believe this decision is in the hands of the county commissioners. It is the Board of Education's decision. Mr. Johnson said he could not make a decision on "what if's" or "unknowns".

Chairman Poteat said that Mr. Johnson is basically advocating it comes from existing budget and at least guarantee what the school board has gotten in the past but could not commit to any further help. Chairman Poteat said that these men need direction today. He said that Scott had alluded to a \$200,000 commitment and \$530,000 decreases to \$330,000.

Scott Heath stated that we would commit to the \$530,000 but in projecting ahead they will come to us with a budget next year and I am going to tell them of the \$500,000 of existing capital to put \$200,000 of that to the computers. \$200,000 of the existing capital will go to the computers and we also understand the school board is going to look at their operational expenses that are offset by this so they are going to kick in another \$200,000 so now you are down to \$130,000.

Glenn Johnson said he would not make a commitment in November for a budget in June. Chairman Poteat stated that apparently Mr. Johnson is not prepared to make a commitment today but rather he thinks the program has great merit and hopes it will go forward and that it would come out of the existing monies of the Board of Education. Mr. Johnson said he is not saying that it would have to come out of the existing budget but "I am not willing to commit to the school's proposal". He said he cannot make a commitment to the Board of Education, Fire Commission, etc at this point because of the unknowns. He stated that he felt a motion was not in order. Chairman Poteat stated it sounded like Mr. Heath is seeking for a commitment to allow this to happen and take advantage of this perceived deal and of the \$530,000 the Board of Education can expect \$200,000 of the approximately \$500,000 will be withheld to defray this cost.

Chairman Poteat said that earlier there was a \$200,000 projection offered from the school board and that was not tapping the capital monies but that was combined with gains from consumables, textbooks, etc. What I am proposing is a new "wrinkle" with the understanding \$200,000 would come from capital, then "halving the baby"; that is a \$265,000 commitment on both parties. Beyond the \$200,000 commitment from capital, \$65,000 would come from the consumables, textbooks, etc. Chairman Poteat stated that this is a good compromise; the Board of Commissioners is doing their part.

Recess

Chairman Poteat called for a brief recess.

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

Dennis Brown, Avery County Schools Technology Director, stated that this lease could be broken after one year.

Scott Heath stated "due to the fact that this is an opportunity that presents itself right now and due to the fact that I feel all the kids in Avery County should have the same opportunities as the kids at Banner Elk, and due to the fact that there is no reason particularly with the financial situation that has been arranged that Avery County shouldn't be at the leading edge, I would like to make a motion".

Motion by Scott Heath and second by Phyllis Forbes to approve that the school board enter into a lease as presented in the payment plan and as a part of that the school board come up with the initial \$200,000 to get started and the school board commit to half of the \$530,000 for the next three years whether from capital or operational and also on the fourth year as applied.

Chairman Poteat commented that this is not a budget amendment but more of a commitment.

Michaëlle Poore, County Attorney, advised that Mr. Heath's motion as she understands it is that the county consider approval of the lease by the Board of Education with Apple with the understanding that the BOE will come up with the initial \$200,000 and then half of the \$530,000 thereafter.

Glenn Johnson stated "I would love to vote for this motion but that the word I have a problem with is "commitment". I will say to you again are we willing to do the same thing for the Fire Commission in November; to utter the words commit some seven months out bothers me. I truly believe this is not a decision for the county commissioners today but a decision come budget time. If this passes that's great but as it is worded I cannot vote for it. If we go down this road on this one, it sets a precedent for the Fire commission to come and ask for a budget amendment before the fact. We cannot guarantee the Board of Education anything more than you got last year. As the motion is worded, I would have to vote no on that motion. I would simply leave it open ended up to the Board of Education to do this in whole or in part as you wish and hope for the best and see what happens comes the new budget year. I am for this project and would like to see it go but as the motion is worded at this time I cannot vote for the motion because it includes the word "commit". The clerk read back the motion. Mr. Johnson said that even though the motion did not include the word "commit" this was implied.

Chairman Poteat asked Mr. Burleson if the Board of Education could take action on this plan if the Board of Commissioners did not approve it today. Mr. Burleson stated that general statute required that the Board of Commissioners approve any lease that the school board enters into.

Martha Hicks said that the Board cannot compare the school board with the fire commission; these are totally separate.

Chairman Poteat commented that every decision rests on its own merit.

Phyllis Forbes called for the question.

VOTE: Motion passes 4 to 1. Kenny Poteat, Phyllis Forbes, Martha Hicks, Scott Heath—For. Glenn Johnson—Against.

Adjourn

Motion by Scott Heath and second by Phyllis Forbes to adjourn this meeting at 11:21 a.m. Motion unanimously approved.

**Kenny Poteat, Chairman
Avery County Board of Commissioners**

ATTEST _____
Cindy Turbyfill, Clerk