

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
COUNTY OF AVERY**

The Avery County Board of Commissioners met in a Special Meeting with the Avery County Board of Education on Wednesday, June 28, 2017 at 9:00 a.m. at the Avery County Board of Education Central Office, 775 Cranberry Street, Newland, NC. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the updates for the Avery County High School.

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

Members Absent: None

Others Present: John Greene, Chair Board of Education; Kathy Aldridge; Robert Clark; Steve Smith; Keith Tutterow

John Greene prayed.  
The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

John Greene, Chair of the Board of Education stated that we are here to discuss the update for the high school. Dr. Burleson stated he thought the goal was to work together to phase this in and be able to afford it and move forward as quickly as possible but do it in a way not to create debt for the county. We would like the opportunity to move forward with the architect and look at phase I being the classroom building with the size to accommodate the 100 and 200 pod and building it in a way that it can be connected to the high school. The conversation with the Board is that they would like the new building at the front of the school or where it can be tied in to the existing building and after that is accomplished be able to demolish the 100 and 200 pods which would be the first phase and then based on funding and ability look at other phases with renovation of the rest of the school. The biggest need is classroom space. I cannot give you an exact amount but anywhere between 9 and 15 million dollars which is a big range. The good thing about putting it in front there would not be a whole lot of site prep. Steve Smith said that it could be scooted back in there and not take up the parking lot. There are several options on how to go about it.

Discussion about the update of the school and the size of a new classroom building. Wood Hall Young, Jr. questioned about the size of the new classroom building and why with a decreased amount of students would it have 30 classrooms. Chair Hicks questioned about the DPI report and whether the items in the DPI report would be fixed if there is a renovation and adding on to the high school. Tim Phillips stated he was concerned that if there was growth in the future and the school is not big enough then we could be back in the same situation.

Chair Hicks voiced concerns that the public was asking questions on how come the school might be built as big as what we have when you don't have the students that you used to have. We have to answer to the public and some of the public says we don't need that big of a school.

Dr. Burleson explained that we are setting here discussing costs and we might not have as big an issue as we think. In the state budget there are going to be monies for Tier 1 and Tier 2 counties. We don't know how much will be provided for Avery County. In the General Assembly currently is a statewide bond referendum that will take money and bring back to the school. Also, there is still money in the lottery funds. We are in a position right now that we could take care of the deficiencies at the high school. I don't think we need to overbuild but we don't need to under build. Once the budget is done, we will get a good idea of what this money that is in the budget now would do for Avery County. If the bond passes, the bond will sufficiently take care of several things. There is also 1.8 million dollars in the lottery funds for Avery County.

John Greene, Chairman stated that we have been on this seven years. The majority of us agree that we need to do something with the high school. We waited around and missed a good opportunity where debt was coming off. We know that things change and people come on boards that might not care about the school system and then what are our children are going to do then. If we think that needs to be done, we need to find a way to do it. If we don't, let's not spin our wheels with it we will just agree to disagree and go on but I think the time has come that we can't kick this down the road any longer. We can detail this to death. We need to decide first if it needs to be done, if it does let's find a way to do it. The financial piece is the big piece. The school is never going to get less expensive than it is now.

Dr. Burleson stated that we have three options: 1. Do nothing. 2. Engage architect and let that architect come back with plans and use lottery money to pay for that. Engage the architect to work with us and you to develop plans for phase 1 only for the classroom building the size based on numbers of students and teacher's needs. DPI supplies most of those documents for class size, common space, etc. The architect can send that to an estimator and we would know close to how much. 3. Engage the architect

and the architect takes it all the way to bid which is more expensive. If you don't bid and just use the estimator you have a good idea of the money you are talking about. By the time that is completed, we will have a good idea of any state monies that is coming our way and we can also look at low interest or no interest Q-zab bonds. You are not paying interest on it but paying as you go. We are probably talking about a 1 ½ year time frame to put all of that together.

Blake Vance stated that the central issue of the campaign last year was the high school and the public elected three people committed to Avery High School. It was loud and clear that Avery County wants something done at that high school. This school has to be fixed. They know what they need that is the school board's job. Our job is to figure out how to pay for it.

Mr. Young questioned what in Dr. Burleson's opinion would be the better of the whole of the last two options. Dr. Burleson stated that if you get an estimator you get an estimate and don't know the actual cost. It does cost you more in architectural fees but you know exactly what it would cost you. I think we all would agree to get the best bid. We could go ahead and get started with the funds that we have in the lottery fund.

Chair Hicks stated that she thought that the county should take the payment from the old Banner Elk School that comes in once a year and put that in a fund for the update of the high school. It is not much but it would be a start.

Blake Vance asked if there needed to be a memorandum of understanding authorizing the school board to go ahead and pursue things with the architect.

Michaëlle Poore, County Attorney, stated "The school board can act on their own. It's the school board's authority to make that determination. If the commissioners want to agenda that issue we will have to amend the capital reserve policy to add the Banner Elk School funds." Blake Vance stated I think we are talking about two different things right here. I am talking about the school board engaging an architect. Ms. Poore stated that the commissioners would need a resolution from the school board to hire an architect and then request the release of the funds. The commissioners could approve that and release the funds. The school board would then act on how they wanted to. Ms. Poore said procedurally that is how it should work.

Dr. Burleson stated so what I am hearing is that the Board of Education needs to do a resolution asking permission to engage an architect and asking the county commissioners to use the lottery funds to pay the architects fee. I would recommend up to the point we decide to use those plans to decide on an estimator or go out to bid. Once he gets those, our Board of Education then will bring a resolution to the Commissioners on whether to send that out to bid or use an estimator. Ms. Poore stated that is the school board's decision on how they want to do that but just to release the funds the school board just needs to request the commissioners to release the funds.

### **Adjourn**

**Motion by Wood Hall Young, Jr. and second by Blake Vance to adjourn this meeting at 10:21 a.m.  
Motion unanimously approved.**

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

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
Cindy Turbyfill, Clerk