

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF AVERY**

The Avery County Board of Commissioners held a Special Meeting on Monday, September 25, 2017 at 5:00 p.m. in the Commissioners Board Room, Avery County Administrative Complex, 175 Linville Street, Newland, NC with the Avery County Economic Development Advisory Committee. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the role of the Avery County Economic Development Advisory Committee.

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

Members Absent: None

Economic Development Committee Members Present: Ken Walter, Chair; Roy Reynolds; Susan Siirila; Mark Parlier; Carmen Lacey; Larry Hazen

Call To Order

Chair Hicks called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.
Blake Vance led prayer.

Phillip Barrier, County Manager, advised that the Economic Development Committee had questions about their specific role and what the Commissioners expected from the committee.

The committee members introduced themselves to the Commissioners. Ken Walter, Chair of the Economic Development Committee, stated that the committee had subcommittees that each member was involved in. Carmen Lacey, Larry Hazen, and Ken Walter were the subcommittee for marketing. Mr. Walter had contacted Appalachian State University students about designing a new logo for Avery County. The students have laid out a timeline for the design. There will be three different designs presented to the committee near the end of October. The committee will refine the design to its satisfaction and then bring the recommendation to the Board of Commissioners. Mr. Walter questioned about the possibility of paying the students \$100.00 per student (there are five students working on this project) out of the Economic Development budget.

Carmen Lacey said since the discussion has come up about the budget, what is the idea of the Commissioners on how this money can be spent? Blake Vance answered that the budget was limited to travel, advertising and supplies.

Mark Parlier said that the committee is looking for guidance on how much liberty the commissioners think is appropriate. I am on the subcommittee for food and lodging, can we contact a food chain and reach out to these people, what can we and can't we do. That is where the gray area is.

Blake Vance stated that this was kind of my baby to bring the economic development committee back. We need a consultant brought in and I think a consultant would be someone that would make us understand the dynamics between the two boards. I think you need a specialist with this. I think we do need someone who has experience in that realm and who knows how to chart these waters. Since we started this I said we needed a board and consultants. I feel like we need an expert to shape the dynamic between the boards.

Ken Walter stated that in the few meetings that we have had if we are talking about any kind of industry the lack of internet service is a major detractor and we have a shortage of available labor pool. If this individual was familiar with the economic nature of Avery County that would be a big help.

Chair Hicks stated that I have enough confidence in all of you to do what is best for the county. Someone has to be able to reach out to businesses. That is what I am looking for. We would like for you to keep us informed.

Tim Phillips stated that he thought that we need to give them the leeway to reach out to industry and businesses; that is what you form these boards for.

Larry Hazen said that his first instinct was to get into the municipalities and gather information in order to establish a direction and to help us do what we were charged to do as a board. Everybody was reluctant to do that. It has been four months now and no one has gone out and talked to anyone. That has to happen.

Wood Hall Young, Jr. commented "I think the reason for that is it is uncharted water for us. I don't have a problem with you beating the bushes as long as there are no promises made."

Susan Siirilia stated that in the June Meeting the committee talked about that. I had suggested that a disclaimer be put into place that representatives would use as an intro in talking to folks. I would like to talk about that some more. If we are talking with potential fast food restaurants, we need to say in the beginning, "I am not in a position to negotiate or talk money, I am here to gather information." We cannot go out and present ourselves as final decision makers. We are fact finders.

Blake Vance agreed that this was extremely wise.

There was discussion regarding the disclaimer and how to handle the situations.

Larry Hazen stated that he tends to look down the road. The budget is helpful but there is going to have to be some kind of stream income to support long term advertising. All of the municipalities operate TDA's and do assess some sort of levy on the lodging; both county and municipalities do this in Watauga County.

Mr. Barrier stated that the committee will come to him with their recommendations or different things that they want approval for and he will present this to the commissioners at their next meeting.

Ken Walter stated that economic development committee will work on a disclaimer and a game plan.

Blake Vance had a comprehensive economic plan from Jackson County that he presented for everyone to look at. This particular plan was \$21,000 from a consultant.

Ken Walter questioned "Where does the Board stand relative to a consultant? Is that something you are contemplating?"

Blake Vance answered "that has been the idea for me. I can't answer for the board. We need a professional in this capacity. What we need is a board to cast the vision and a consultant to give them direction and to execute."

Discussion regarding an economic development consultant.

Adjourn

Motion by Wood Hall Young, Jr. and second by Tim Phillips to adjourn this meeting at 6:10 p.m. Motion unanimously approved.