

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
COUNTY OF AVERY**

The Avery County Board of Commissioners met in a Board Workshop on Monday, July 20, 2015 at Office Building A, NC Forest Service Training Facility, 6065 Linville Falls Hwy, Newland, NC. The purpose of the Board Workshop was to discuss the Avery County Board of Commissioners Board Policy; discuss future needs of Avery County; and discuss strategic planning for Avery County.

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

Members Absent: None

**Call To Order**

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

Tim Greene led prayer.

All present said the Pledge Allegiance to the Flag.

**Board Policy**

Tim Greene, County Manager, stated there have already been some changes to the board policy. Policies are the Board's guidelines in governing. There are times that things need to change, i.e., time change. There are some things over the years that have changed but the policy did not get changed alongside. There are a couple of items that may not be what the Board wants to do. There is one thing that does not follow the general statutes. These are recommendations only. No changes will be made unless the Board makes the changes.

Chairman Griffith stated that after all board members have their say today we will make no concrete decisions on the board policy. There are some of these concerns that absolutely we cannot address without the county attorney. We will have the clerk get the minutes back to the board members and a copy to the county attorney.

Tim Greene, County Manager, reviewed the recommended changes to the board policy. There was discussion on each of the recommended changes. A copy will be sent to the county attorney for his review along with the comments of the board members.

**Recreation Property**

Chairman Griffith requested the Clerk to the Board to contact the County Attorney. The County Attorney suggested that the Board not discuss the Recreation Property until he was able to take a look at the grant agreement.

**Agricultural Extension Building and Heritage Park**

Mr. Greene stated that the Agricultural Extension Building has some issues and some of them may be structural. At some point we would need to get an engineer to look at this building to let us know the issues and how we would need to proceed. Having said that, years ago there was an idea about moving the Agricultural operations to Heritage Park. We are not using Heritage Park to its full potential. It was set for recreation and for a number of reasons it is not being used for recreation. Basically, the fair is what is going on out there. I suggested to Jerry Moody, Agricultural Extension Director, that he look at some preliminary plans on how we could best use Heritage Park. I am not sure what is going on out there. I am not sure that the gate is being locked and not sure who is using it. We don't have any guidelines to say here is who we are going to let use it. We have it leased four weeks out of the year. We can't do anything with it at that time and the rest of the year it is the county's. We are not going to figure out today what to do but if you will give me some direction on the guidelines on who can use it. Maxine Laws said if you don't have some direction and everyone has free run of the place and somebody gets hurt this is on the county; we are liable. It needs to be more controlled because that could be a large liability suit.

Mr. Greene said what I am hearing from you is to lock the gate and other than the fair and fair sponsored events no one can use until we figure out the guidelines. Maxine Laws said we need to get someone to be the contact person. Mr. Greene said I think we need to speak with the County Attorney about this also. Martha Hicks said she felt there should be a channel to go through for using the County Square. We are going to have to start protecting ourselves. Blake Vance suggested that we have an application for this. Chairman Griffith stated that the contact person should be the county manager.

Mr. Greene said that long term the Heritage Park is a nice piece of property and if a board ever wanted to move the Ag. operation to that site that is an option. Maxine Laws said that if something like that was done possibly a venue room could be used for lots of different events. Blake Vance said he thought that there should be an application and standard policy to use any county property whether it is Heritage Park or the Square, etc. Chairman Griffith stated that the first thing is to lock the gate and controlling access to Heritage Park.

Chairman Griffith asked for a consensus to give the county manager direction to contact an engineer or the appropriate persons to see what we need to do at the ag. building.

**Consensus of the Board to instruct the county manager to contact an engineer or the appropriate persons to see what we need to do at the Agricultural Building.**

Mr. Greene said I want to make sure I have everything listed that you have instructed me to do.

1. Get the Board policy to the county attorney for him to look over.
2. Talk with Jerry Moody to have him lock up Heritage Park and only permit the fair and two fair sponsored events to be held until a decision is made otherwise.
3. Get with the County Attorney about a policy for our county owned property.
4. Contact an engineer to look at the agricultural building.

**Other Issues**

Faye Lacey commented that the senior center needed an icemaker. She said there were 75 or more people that eat every day and the ice maker is not working properly. This would be a nice thing to do for the senior center. Mr. Greene said that the finance officer could get with Phillip Adams and we will do a budget amendment.

Martha Hicks said that she had heard that the Town of Newland wants to request back the Square. I think if our county goes out and fixes this Veteran's Memorial and has a nice park and we put all of this in to doing a nice place, I think the county should still hold the property. The other board members agreed.

Blake Vance said he didn't want the "Charters of Freedom" to drop off the radar because that would be a wonderful gift to incorporate with the Veteran's Memorial.

Faye Lacey advised the Board that the lease for Avery Cares is up and Tim has asked for the fair market value on the rent. Mr. Greene stated that Faye had gotten some square footage prices and in addition to that I got a couple of lease prices from Mike Lacey and we got the lease per square foot for the other four counties what they are charging. On average they are charging a little over \$7.00 a square foot for their leased spaces for Daymark. We are charging for the Avery Cares \$2.89 per square foot. The Avery Cares is on a one year lease. Faye and I are recommending a \$7.00 square foot and the County Attorney is suggesting \$6.50 to \$7.00. Ms. Lacey said that when New River Mental Health dissolved most of the care centers went out. It is no longer Avery Cares or the Robert Lacey Center because that building has been rented by Daymark. They are not there much. If they have 15 people and they are there three hours then they put down 45 hours of training. Ms. Lacey asked that the Avery Care sign be taken down because it is not a cares building anymore. Chairman Griffith said the sign issue could be discussed between Ms. Lacey and the county manager.

Chairman Griffith stated that it could be that before we sign a new lease with Daymark on the Avery Cares property we would need that property to use if we needed to vacate the Ag. building while it is possibly being renovated.

Maxine Laws asked who was responsible for the upkeep on the Avery Cares Building. Mr. Greene said that the Daymark was responsible for the everyday maintenance and Avery County was responsible for things like the roof, etc.

Chairman Griffith suggested that we may need Avery Cares for office space in the near future because the contract was dead on June 30<sup>th</sup>. We either need to tell them to leave the property or be in contract with them. In a new lease, the Board has said for a year-long lease it will not be the \$2.89 a square foot. For the temporary fix, do we want to go month to month as is right now and when the engineer says we don't need the office space then go with \$8.00 a square foot? Martha Hicks said it is our responsibility to have mental health. Chairman Griffith said he thinks the county attorney needs to draw up a contract on a month to month basis. At the time we decide we don't need Avery Cares for office space then we will negotiate a new year long lease. The Board was in agreement with this.

Mr. Greene asked if the Board would like to contact Daymark to see if they would like to buy Avery Cares. Commissioner Hicks said she was against selling that piece of property because it was built by the WPA and she thought it should stay in Avery County's hands. Faye Lacey said she would be good with selling it, Maxine Laws said yes she would be for selling it. Blake Vance said he was ok with selling it.

Mr. Greene said it is my understanding that I am to contact Daymark and let them know that the lease will be on a month to month basis at the current rate with us renegotiating the lease after we find out whether we need the office space for Agricultural Extension. The Board agreed.

Nancy Johnson, Finance Officer, asked the Board to think about what they would like to do with some money that had come that was undesignated. Chairman Griffith stated the money should be put in the general fund and then can be used as needed.

Mr. Greene reported that there would be eight places that needed to be repaired on the sewer system at Avery High School. Four places will be repaired this summer and four places next summer. Chairman Griffith said there was a capital reserve fund with money for the sewer system, buildings for solid waste and a front end loader that will expire August 30<sup>th</sup>. Martha Hicks said she thought that the money that we receive from the old Banner Elk School should be earmarked for school repairs.

**Adjourn**

Chairman Griffith declared the meeting to be adjourned at 11:27 a.m.

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

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