

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
COUNTY OF AVERY**

The Avery County Board of Commissioners held a Special Meeting with the Avery County Fire Commission, Avery County Fire Association, and Fire Chiefs on Thursday, August 1, 2013 at 5:00 p.m. in the Commissioners Board Room, Avery County Administrative Complex, 175 Linville Street, Newland, NC. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the fire service contracts and any other issues pertaining to fire service in Avery County and take any necessary action thereon.

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

Members Absent: Reo Griffith

Fire Commission Members Present: Johnny Mathes; Joe Perry; Danny Clark

**Call To Order**

Chairman Poteat called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.  
Chairman Poteat led prayer.

**Avery Fire Association**

Paul Buchanan, President of Avery County Fire Association, stated "The Fire Association and chiefs met Tuesday night in order to discuss this meeting so we could have "our ducks in a row". I was not present at that meeting. We do have an attorney that is representing us for the contracts and it was her advice that she needed to be present in this meeting as well and unfortunately she was not able to be at this meeting tonight. We do want to stress that we want this meeting to take place but also since we are paying her good money we feel like she needs to be here as well. She stressed that we should not attend this meeting but try to set up where she could be present."

Jake Owens said "I have been a county commissioner, on the fire commission and a fireman for years and have had two brain tumors so that qualifies me to be a county manager also. I think that we are all wrong here. We do not need attorneys. We need to sit down man to man and woman to woman and work this out. I think the fire departments have done the right thing in coming together and saying we need to have a meeting. We got the fire tax in here years ago and the reason we got the fire tax in here so there would not be any "hoochie coochie show" in Newland. The commissioners set the rate. You have the fire commission and it is their job to say how much the fire departments need and they should get it because that is what you appointed them for and if you don't listen to them you need to get rid of them. You should give them the money that they ask for. The fire departments should not get everything they want, they should get everything they need. They give you a good service, they save you money and pay for themselves. It is going to take two or three meetings sitting down, talking it out. There are all kinds of rumors floating around that you need to get rid of Daryl. You don't need to get rid of Daryl. Daryl and I disagree a lot but he does a good job. He works for the fire departments but Daryl and Junior Sluder if they get up to talk to you everybody is mad as soon as they get up. You need fire commission members, commissioners and fire association members to sit down and work this out. You do not need lawyers arguing, what are they going to argue about? Leave the fire trucks in the fire departments names and make them feel good, rewrite their charters so everything comes back to the fire commission if they shut down. "

Chairman Poteat said Jake Owens had worn all of these hats and that those were real words of wisdom.

Chairman Poteat said "Paul and I have talked. A couple of weeks ago I was away on vacation and we set a date around July 30<sup>th</sup> and Paul was out of town. In the Chairman's opinion and I will lean on the county attorney but I think it would be fruitless to labor tonight until we have all of the key players here. Paul, you would prefer to wait until another evening when the attorney for the fire association can be present. I think we need all of the key players at the table. Timing is an issue. One thing is the NC Fire Commission could come in and there could be the possibility of higher fire insurance to be paid. That timing would be next week. Michaelle and I have talked about this and also Paul and I have talked about this. We have a Commissioners meeting on Monday, August 5, 2013. The attorney for the fire association is available for Tuesday, August 6, 2013 at 6:00 p.m."

Phyllis Forbes said "There has been a lot of stuff going around and I personally would like the fire association to get together and make a list of everything you want to discuss. I want everything plainly laid on the table. I want all of the issues resolved. This is not productive for anybody. There are things we might not know or you might not know. Everyone needs to be straightforward and honest about everything. "

Chairman Poteat asked Mr. Paul Buchanan to make a list of concerns and the aspirations of the fire association and get them to the Clerk by Friday, August 2, 2013 at 12:00. Paul Buchanan stated "I will have something in the Clerk's hands by lunch."

Daryl Smith said "My concern is we need to end this thing. It doesn't matter what the decisions are it just needs to be put to an end."

Phyllis Forbes said "We are in this for the people of Avery County and we need to keep that in mind."

Glenn Johnson stated "I like what Jake said. We have a lack of communication here. If you listen to people on the street they have listened to everything on the street and don't know what is really going on. We just need to sit down and talk about all of this."

Phyllis Forbes questioned if attorneys needed to be present. Paul Buchanan said that the fire association voted Tuesday night to have an attorney present. Phyllis Forbes asked why they needed attorneys present. Mr. Buchanan said that there were a lot of legal issues that he did not want to go into.

Glenn Johnson questioned how the fire association would be paying for the attorney. Paul Buchanan said it would be by private funds and would not be tax money.

**Adjourn**

**Motion by Phyllis Forbes and second by Martha Hicks to adjourn this meeting at 5:30 p.m. Motion unanimously approved.**

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

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