

**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
COUNTY OF AVERY**

The Avery County Board of Commissioners met in a Special Meeting on Wednesday, June 8, 2011 at 4:00 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 FY 2011-2012 Fire Commission budget with the Avery County Fire Commission and to discuss other budget related issues.

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

Members Absent: None

Fire Commission Members Present: Daryl Smith, Chairman; Jake Owens; Joe Perry; Shane Garland

**Call To Order**

Chairman Poteat called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m.  
Glenn Johnson led prayer.

**Avery County Fire Commission**

Chairman Poteat stated that the 4 cent fire tax rate generated 1.768 million dollars and that the Board agreed to "kick in" above and beyond the fire tax \$100,000. This would be at a 95% collection rate. Chairman Poteat advised that the Board chose not to honor \$320,000 in the salary line item. The Board recommended \$240,000 for the salary line item.

Tim Greene, Finance Officer, explained that the Fire Commission had requested \$2,367,525. He said that if the projected fire tax revenue of \$1,768,000 was subtracted from the request of \$2,367,525, \$350,000 for the new fire truck was subtracted, \$80,500 for additional salaries was subtracted, \$40,000 for volunteer pay was subtracted and \$29,025 for contingency was subtracted this would leave a shortfall of \$100,000 which would come out of the general fund. The Board agreed at a previous meeting to give the Fire Commission \$1,768,000 plus \$100,000 out of the general fund.

Jake Owens, Fire Commission member, stated that the fire departments were saving the citizens of Avery County approximately \$7,000,000. The fire departments have earned this and have worked in disasters such as a flood, ice storms, etc. The rescue squads and EMS should be added to the Fire Commission.

Daryl Smith, Chairman of the Fire Commission, said that the Fire Commission Board felt that the 5 ½ cents is what is needed. The men on the fire departments put their lives on the line every time they go in a house. The goal was to get salaries up to where they should be. Mr. Smith stated that the fire departments were not getting volunteers anymore and the pay per call would help with their expenses. If the volunteers don't respond, there will not be \$7,000,000 worth of savings. The state dictates how many people must respond and how many trucks from different departments must respond. Mr. Smith explained that \$10,000 had been spent on the fire truck at Newland. There is a set program to replace equipment and we have not replaced anything in the past three years. Chairman Poteat stated that at some point in time the \$500,000 to \$600,000 in the debt reduction will not be enough in one particular year and with this large an organization, it may have to go in debt again because of the expensive equipment, buildings, etc. Mr. Owens stated that there should not be any money taken out of general fund; the fire tax should take care of all the fire department expenses. Mr. Smith said that the legislature was set up that the fire tax could go up to 10 cents so why not raise the fire tax to support the fire departments. Glenn Johnson stated that he was not afraid of raising taxes but he would rather raise taxes one cent this year and one cent next year instead of 5 cents at one time.

Shane Garland explained the salary study that he had done regarding the paid firemen. Scott Heath stated that he would like to have the MAPS group do a salary classification plan for the paid firemen. He also asked that a schedule for fire department buildings be prepared so that the Board understands what is going to be involved.

Mr. Smith stated that the Fire Commission had been asking for the past three to four years for an increase in the fire tax. He said that the Fire Commission felt like the Commissioners were "killing them this time around". Joe Perry stated that the fire departments did need an extra 1 ½ cent this year.

Chairman Poteat thanked the members of the Fire Commission for their service and for the discussion at this meeting.

**Linville Depot**

Phyllis Forbes stated that the committee for the Linville Depot was asking for \$15,000 to enable the depot to be ready for a convention of the Narrow Gauge Railroads that will be visiting in September. Ms. Forbes said that they assured her that they had gotten three times the worth with the money that the County had given them last year. There have been countless hours of volunteer work. Chairman Poteat stated that the County donated land to place this on and beyond that \$20,000 was given last year. Robert Wiseman, County Manager, said that the County will be involved with the maintenance of this building.

**Comments**

Glenn Johnson stated that he had "heartburn" with taking the money out of the general fund. Mr. Johnson said that he would recommend the Fire Commission get ½ cent increase in fire tax. He stated he would rather increase the tax a little each year instead of a big increase later. Phyllis Forbes said she was not in favor of raising taxes at this time but she would rather give the Fire Commission what they wanted this year instead of increasing a little each year. Mr. Johnson stated that the Fire Commission will be out of debt next year and to keep the Fire Commission out of debt there needed to be an increase in the fire tax.

**Upcoming Meetings**

A budget workshop is scheduled for Wednesday, June 15, 2011 at 3:00 p.m.

**Adjourn**

**Motion by Scott Heath and second by Glenn Johnson to adjourn this meeting at 6:00 p.m. Motion unanimously approved.**

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

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