

AVERY COUNTY FIRE COMMISSION MINUTES – February 13, 2014

The Avery County Fire Commission met in a regular meeting on Thursday, February 13, at 7:00 pm in the Commissioners' Boardroom, Newland, N.C.

Bob Garland led with prayer.

Call to Order

Chairman Bill Beuttell called the meeting to order at 7:00pm. All board members were present except Matt McClellan.

Additions /deletions to agenda

Frank Fire Department asked for the agenda to be amended to discuss their request to use funds out of their fund balance toward the state grant. There was also a deletion from the agenda which was the closed session on personnel due to no personnel matters to discuss. It was the consensus of the board members present to allow the changes to the agenda.

Public Comments: There were no public comments.

III. Agenda Items (7:02 pm)

A. Avery County Fireman Association request for representatives to serve on a contract committee.

Paul Buchanan addressed the board requesting two representatives from the Fire Commission to sit on a committee that he had set up through the Avery County Fireman's Association to review contracts and changes to the contracts for the 2014-2015 budget year. Paul stated that there are a lot of nonsense items in the current contracts that do not fit the bill for today's aspect of the contracts. Paul Buchanan stated they need to be deleted or it could get both parties in trouble. Bill Beuttell stated he felt it probably needed to be two members from the Fire Commission that were active with both the departments and the Association that would know the departments' needs and inner workings. Paul Buchanan stated that he would like two non-fire personnel to sit on this committee. Corey Hughes asked how often the committee meets. Paul Buchanan stated that it would be at the committee's discretion. Paul Buchanan stated that he would like to have the contracts finished by May 2014. Paul Buchanan stated that the Association's committee had a contract that the Association wanted the Fire Commission to look at. He stated that he did not think the parties involved needed to reinvent the wheel. He would leave it at that for the two representatives from the Fire Commission to contact the Association representatives. Bill Beuttell appointed Joe Perry and Corey Hughes to sit on the

committee. Corey Hughes stated that he would be following Paul Buchanan's lead. Bill Beuttell stated that he would like to just listen in on the meetings. Paul Buchanan stated that would be okay.

B. Associations' request to include all automatic and mutual aid on all structure related fire calls for the fuel reimbursement program. (7:09pm)

Paul Buchanan gave the history of the fuel reimbursement program. Paul Buchanan stated that Charlie Franklin might have to help him with the details. Paul Buchanan stated that only three departments participated in the fuel reimbursement program for the past year. Charlie Franklin advised that only two fire departments had participated in the fuel reimbursement program. Paul Buchanan stated that some of the departments felt it was not worth doing the required paperwork on so few calls to participate in the program. Paul Buchanan stated what the departments were requesting was for the Fire Commission to loosen up on the calls and include all departments that respond on structure related calls since ISO recognizes automatic and mutual aid personnel and equipment. Charlie Franklin advised the Fire Commission that this was something that would need to be addressed in the upcoming budget meetings. Joe Perry agreed. Paul Buchanan stated that he knew it would have to be discussed in budget meetings. Paul Buchanan stated that he hoped that due to the lack of participation, that this program would not be discontinued.

C. Ladder Company request for funds for truck repair. (7:17pm)

Bob Garland addressed the Fire Commission on the needed repairs on the valves in the bucket of the ladder truck. Bob Garland stated it was a safety issue and needed fixed. Corey Hughes stated that he hated to think repairs that were needed would be turned down and cause a fireman to be injured. **Motion made by Corey Hughes second by Joe Perry to provide the Avery County Ladder Company \$3,000 toward repairs on the ladder truck. Motion unanimous.**

D. Linville Fire Department issues on their brush truck. (7:20pm)

Mark Taylor addressed the board on the issues that Linville Fire Department was having with their brush truck. (over gross vehicle weight and coolant getting in the oil of the engine) There was discussion held on the truck being overweight. Mark Taylor advised the Fire Commission that he just wanted to bring the weight issue to the Fire Commission's attention so that if someone was injured or killed, he could pass the responsibility on to the Fire Commission. Corey Hughes asked how long the department had been aware of the overweight problem. Mark Taylor advised that they learned of this issue when weighing the brush truck for the state 9S inspections. Mark Taylor advised the truck was a 2008 model and he guessed the fire department had assumed the ordering person for the truck knew what they was doing when specing the vehicle. Corey Hughes advised he would research the laws on the weight issue. Corey Hughes stated that he had more concern with antifreeze getting in the oil. Mark Taylor advised that the Dodge place in Boone had offered

Linville Fire Department \$18,200 on trade in on a \$32,000 truck. This would be a \$14,000 difference. Charlie Franklin asked if this could be applied for on the state grant and if so it would cost the Fire Commission an additional \$7,000 in funds toward Linville Fire Department's state grant. Corey Hughes asked Mark Taylor if he would be okay with applying for the truck on the state grant. Mark Taylor stated yes. Johnny Mathes stated that it was the chief's responsibility but for safety, if not already, he would like for the brush truck in question to be taken out of service. Mark Taylor advised he had already taken the truck out of service. **It was the consensus of the board for Linville Fire Department to apply for the \$14,000 on the state grant.**

E. Retirement information for employees. (7:37pm)

Charlie Franklin informed the board on the procedures and paperwork that needed to be submitted for the study on the amount it would cost for the Fire Commission to enter the state retirement system and possible payment plan. Bill Beuttell asked how much the study was going to cost to perform. Charlie Franklin advised approximately \$1,400. Bill Beuttell stated that this is the study that would let the Fire Commission know how much it would cost to put all the Fire Commission employees on the state retirement system so the Fire Commission could go to the County Commissioners and ask them to put the employees on the County retirement and the Fire Commission would pay the County out of the fire tax funds. If the Fire Commission pays for the retirement plan, it will cost hundreds of thousands of dollars versus the County which would cost in the thousands. This is due to the Fire Commission having to back pay for all its employees. Charlie Franklin advised this would allow the Fire Commission and the County Commissioners to know exactly what it will cost with both options and would give the information needed for the upcoming budget year. Bill Beuttell asked why the County would automatically say they are not going to put Fire Commission employees on the County retirement system. Johnny Mathes stated if the County would place the Fire Commission employees on the County retirement system, this would save the tax payers a lot of money. Charlie Franklin stated that the chairman of the Avery County Board of Commissioners Kenny Poteat had asked him to speak with Avery County Finance Officer Tim Greene on this topic. Charlie Franklin advised some of the concerns that Mr. Greene had were the chain of command. Mr. Greene stated that the way the County was set up, each department had a department head and that the employees reported to directly. The department head then reported directly to the County Manager. He felt at this time if the Fire Commission employees became County employees, they would answer directly to the Fire Department Coordinator who would answer to the County Manager. Charlie Franklin requested him to put in writing how the chain of command would have to be and then present it to the Fire Commission along with input from the individual fire department chiefs to make the decision if they were willing to agree to these terms. Up to this date, this has not happened. **Motion made by Joe Perry and seconded by Corey Hughes to approve all the necessary paper work (resolutions and certifications) and**

**funds that were needed to enter and perform the study for the state retirement system.
Motion unanimous.**

F. Budget Workshops. (7:46pm)

It was the consensus of the Fire Commission to hold the first budget work shop on March 10, 2014 at 6:00 pm in the County Commissioners board room. Bill Beuttell stated that this was a public meeting and the public was welcome to attend.

G. Frank Fire Department request to use fund balance on state grant. (7:50pm)

Johnny Mathes informed the board that Frank Fire Department wanted to maximize their state grant to be able to apply for an ATV using funds from Frank Fire Department fund balance. **Motion made by Joe Perry and seconded by Corey Hughes to allow Frank Fire Department to use Frank Fire Departments fund balance to maximize their state grant and the transfer sheet be completed. Motion unanimous.**

FDC report (7:52pm)

Charlie Franklin advised the board on the outcome of the 9S ratings which at that time there had been six fire departments inspected and four of the six had issues and were aware of what needed to be corrected. Green Valley and Frank Fire Departments were rescheduled due to the weather.

IV. Approval of minutes from the January 9, 2014 and January 23, 2014 meetings(7:54pm)

**IV. Motion made by Johnny Mathes and seconded by Joe Perry to approve the minutes.
Motion unanimous.**

V. Upcoming meetings and other issues of concerns.

Bill Beuttell advised of upcoming meetings. The Fire Commission will be having it regular monthly meeting on March 13, 2014 at 7:00 pm in the County Commissioners board room. The Avery County Fireman's Association will meet on March 6, 2014 at 7:00 pm at Elk Park Fire Department. Bill Beuttell advised the board that after meeting with the county tax assessor, the revenue was projected to drop approximately 22%. To reach the same amount of revenue for the fire tax, it would mean that the fire tax would have to go to 7 cents on a hundred dollar valuation instead of the current 5 cents. There was discussion on possible options and concerns. Joe Perry stated that everybody needed to keep in mind that all parties work for the citizens of Avery County and the County Commissioners are the only place the Fire Commission receives funds from. Joe Perry also stated there was a committee that had met with the representatives of the County Commissioners and Joe Perry stated he had the impression from those meetings that the County Commissioners would not incorporate the Fire Commission employees in with the County employees. The County Commissioners appointed Joe Perry and Paul Buchanan to bring any issues or

concerns to the county manager. Joe Perry stated since Bill Beuttell was now the chairman, that it would be best for him and Paul Buchannan to meet with Robert Wiseman to discuss concerns and issues before anybody spoke to the County Commissioners individually.

VII. Adjourn (8:06pm)

Motion made Joe Perry and seconded by Corey Hughes to adjourn the meeting. Motion unanimous.

**Bill Beuttell, Chairman
Avery County Fire Commission**

Attest:_____