

## **AVERY COUNTY FIRE COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING - MINUTES**

The Avery County Fire Commission met in a special meeting on Thursday, January 23, 2014 at 7:30 pm in the Commissioners' Boardroom, Newland to discuss grants and budget items.

Bob Garland led with prayer.

Call to Order

Chairman Bill Beutell called the meeting to order at 7:30pm. All board members were present.

Additions / deletions to agenda -none

Public Comments: There were no public comments.

Agenda Items (7:02 pm)

### A. Fire Department Grants

Chairman Bill Beutell asked Joe Perry and Johnny Mathes for their guidance since they had been involved in these meetings in the past. Bill Beutell stated that it was his desire to get as much input as possible from everybody to run the Fire commission as efficiently and productively as possible.

Bill Beutell asked if anybody had any suggestions on how to go through the grant process to maximize the benefits of the state and federal grants. This would only serve the county to save money and provide the fire departments with equipment that is needed to serve the citizens of Avery County.

Joe Perry stated that the committee which consisted of himself, Johnny Mathes, Paul Buchanan, and Bobby Powell were told by the commissioners on the committee that the Fire Commission was at this point due to the reevaluation of property in Avery County looking at approximately \$220,000 less revenues overall in the budget for the 2014-2015 fiscal year.

Joe Perry informed the board how the budget process was supposed to go. Joe Perry also informed the board that about the only place the board had to cut in the fire departments budgets were the grant funds. Johnny Mathes stated it is hard for the board to set grant figures when the board does not know what funds would be available for the upcoming budget year. Johnny Mathes stated he would like to see the fire departments to be able to maximize the grants out but he felt like the funds would not be there to do that.

There was discussion held on the reevaluation and the fire tax revenues. Bill Beutell asked how the grants had been done in the past. He asked if it was done by individual fire departments or other

people. Jim Brooks stated that each fire department had written their grants but some individuals in the county had taken special classes for grant writing and were good at writing the grants.

Bill Beutell asked if the Fireman's Association and Fire Commission thought it would be a good idea to have an individual or a group of individuals to write grants for all fire departments so everybody would benefit from it. Paul Buchanan stated that the state grant was not a guarantee but very few departments in the county had ever been turned down for this grant. However, the federal grant was much more difficult to be awarded.

Bill Beutell asked if the departments had missed out on grants due to personnel missing grant deadlines or failing to write grants effectively. Paul Buchanan stated that indeed the fire departments had. Paul Buchanan stated that he would like to see someone in charge of reminding the departments on available grants and grant deadlines.

Bill Beutell asked if there was some way to implement some kind of communication where all departments would be aware of grants and timelines. Paul Buchanan stated that he thought there could be. Bob Garland stated that he felt like the information could be emailed and he reiterated that he felt the departments were fine with applying for the state grants on their own but for the federal grants, the departments needed a skilled grant writer to help them with writing the federal grants. Bob Garland informed the board on the last federal grant the Ladder company had applied for which they had reached almost the final round and were denied/turned down for the grant.

Bobby Powell stated that departments in the past had compared their federal grants and had tried to work together to increase their chances of being awarded a federal grant. Kenny McFee spoke of the problem of the chiefs having to sign their name saying they would have the matching funds for the state grant by March and they really did not know if they would have the funds until July. Bill Beutell asked if a list of grant writers was available.

Jim Brooks stated he could get a list of people that were grant writers to the Fire Commission by the next Fire Commission meeting. It was the consensus of the board that they would like to have the list of grant writers. Charlie Franklin informed the board on the new turn-out gear standards.

Johnny Mathes informed the board on how and why some things had been done on the year 2013 grants. The board discussed the problems with making the decision on funds for the state grant in January and not knowing the budget until July. Charlie Franklin informed the board that this had always been a problem and gave some ideas about correcting this.

There was discussion on the information from the county on lesser funds in the 2014-2015 year due to reevaluation, and the price increase for everything the fire departments need to operate. There was also discussion on how funds could affect the ISO ratings.

Joe Perry stated that he trusted the fire departments that the grant list the departments had presented to the fire commission was what they needed and he felt the board should approve the list.

Charlie Franklin informed the board that the Firemen's Association air compressor would need to be replaced in the very near future. This would cost approximately \$25,000 to \$26,000. He also informed the board that Newland Fire department had requested to apply on their grant to replace the lights in their department with more efficient light fixtures and Banner Elk Fire and Rescue was requesting to apply on their grant to have a bay door opening enlarged to accept larger trucks for the future. These things, if awarded, would cost half of what it would have otherwise if the Fire Commission had to budget for the entire amount.

A discussion was held on what to do on the Firemen's Association compressor. Discussion was held on using debt reduction funds. Charlie Franklin reminded the board that every time they went to the Fire Commission accounts, the funds would get less and less for the Commission to pull from. It was determined that Newland Fire department would apply for the maximum amount on the state grant to pay for the air compressor and the Fire Commission would pay the balance.

There was discussion on upcoming truck replacement in the 2014-2015 budget year. Bill Beutell stated on the grant list that the departments had turned in. He agreed with Joe Perry's earlier statement that he trusted that the list that was presented to the Fire Commission by the departments were what the departments needed.

8:35 pm

**Motion made by Joe Perry, second by Corey Hughes to commit to the funds for the fire departments half on the state grant list presented by the fire departments to the Avery County Fire Commission. Motion unanimous.**

Charlie Franklin advised the board that Linville Fire department had requested to use funds that they had not used on the 2013 grant and combine the funds with the funds they were approved for in the 2014 grant to apply toward a grant which would total \$23,113 due to the 2013 funds being in the Fire Commission fund balance.

9:00 pm

**Motion made by Joe Perry, second by Johnny Mathes to approve use of \$10,000 from fund balance to Linville Fire department for 2014 grant. Motion unanimous.**

There was discussion on budget workshops. It was the consensus of the board that Bill Beutell and Corey Hughes would meet with the tax assessor Philip Barrier on February 3, 2014 to receive information on the projected funds produced by the fire and rescue tax for the 2014-2015 fiscal year.

**Adjourn (9:08 pm)**

With no further business, **motion made by Corey Hughes, seconded by Johnny Mathes to adjourn the meeting. Motion unanimous.**

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

**Attest:** \_\_\_\_\_