

AVERY FIRE ASSOCIATION

January 6, 2025 - Avery County Agricultural Building

President Mike Richardson called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm. Matt Millsaps opened the meeting with a prayer. The Minutes of the December 2024 meeting were approved by a unanimous vote after a motion by Bob Pudney and a second by Mike Ellenberg. Beech Mtn, Elk Park, Fall Creek, Ladder Company, Linville, Linville Central Rescue, Green Valley, Seven Devils, N.C. Forest Service, Mayland Tech, Fire Commission Coordinator were represented.

Mike Richardson introduced Kennie McFee's family and presented Kennie a certificate in honor of Kennie's many years of service to Avery County as : retiring Chief of the Green Valley fire department and as past President of the Avery Fire Association. Several members spoke on Kennie's behalf. It was noted that the Lifetime Achievement plaque for Kennie was delayed and would be presented at a later date. Mark Taylor suggested that the presentation be pictured by the Avery Journal.

Mike Richardson announced that he had received a \$ 4,000 donation check from the Wicomico County Maryland Fire Association. He asked members to submit ideas on how these donated monies should be best spent.

Stephen McClellan, association treasurer, reported that the bank accounts had been switched and would now need 2 signatures on each check - the president & the treasurer. A debit card was also set up. The current bank balance was \$ 2,276.60. Mark Taylor's wife was paid for last year's annual meeting dinner. David Charles was thanked for his many years of service to the association as treasurer.

Mike Richardson reported that he would get Will Treen to the next meeting to discuss a County Federal grant application.

Levin Sudderth announced that Ladder Company training at county departments would start again in the spring. The instructor for a county aerial operations class broke his shoulder. All the hose in the Gwaltney Station basement has been tested and is available if someone needs it. He wants to see an aerial truck at each end of the county.

Mike Ellenberg reported that the weather has delayed his new station.

Forest Service Ranger Rich Carpenter reported that the state had agreed to an 11 month employee position which would only cost the county \$ 10,000. He was working on classes at Green Valley & Fall Creek and was almost finished with his Ranger training.

Bobby Powell, Mayland Tech announced that he was trying to set up a Chief's 101 class. He also noted that the state is rewriting firefighter classes.

Cody Laws addressed the group and explained that he sent a letter to the county manager and County commissioners detailing the radio problems in the south end of the county that have been going on since August of 2024. He reminded members that they would need to use Viper in his district. Members were asked to sign onto the letter. A discussion of the countie's radio & fire marshal problems ensued. Mark Taylor said that he talked with the manager of the UNC TV tower and was told that no one had ever contacted him about the fire department antenna location on that tower. He said he was fine with it's previous location - contrary to the Fire Marshal's report. He said pager replay proves that the Linville

Repeater that was installed to repair the problem does not work. The problems with the Beech tower transmissions were brought up noting that the recommended an engineered new tower would fix that problem. Members were reminded that the fire departments were not treated fairly when the county paid for the Sheriff & EMS radios but the fire commission was charged \$ 180,000 for the fire radios. It was noted that members told the County manager at the December meeting - that the Fire Marshal was no help during the storm. Members also wanted a Critical Incident Debriefing on the storm. It was thought that a quarterly meeting with the county commissioners would resolve these problems. It was noted that Scott Heath was on the next commission meeting agenda. Mike Richardson agreed to try to set up a quarterly meeting. He reminded members that good attendance would be required.

Mike Richardson discussed the Annual Awards Meeting February 6th. He wanted to change the awards categories. He thought that there were so many deserving people in each department during the storm that it would be wrong to pick just two. Members decided to put on a good meal, invite everyone and give each department a certificate of recognition and recognize Kennie McFee's Lifetime Achievement Award. Mike asked that each department send him an email with the number attending by January 23rd.

The fire Commission was not able to get a quorum and did not meet.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.