

AVERY COUNTY FIRE ASSOCIATION

April 10th, 2025 - Avery County Agricultural Extension Center

President Mike Richardson called the meeting to order. Mike introduced Wendel Sauer and Stephen McClellan. Matt Millsaps made a motion to make them co-treasurers. Jim Brooks seconded the motion with Stephen keeping the Association books and Wendel keeping the Ladder Company books. The motion passed unanimously. Robbie Calloway moved that the minutes be approved as presented. Matt Millsaps seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. Avery Ladder, Beech Mtn, Crossnore, Fall Creek, Green Valley, Linville, and Linville Central Rescue were represented.

Mike asked Cody laws to report on the county radio situation. Cody said that the radio system was better at times - but not all the time. He reported that he was sending another letter to the County Commissioners. Members thought that the self adjusting microwave towers were the problem. Linville reported that they were still having reception problems and believed that their problem would resolve if the antenna was moved back to the original location. Members discussed and agreed to a quarterly meeting with the County Commissioners instead of meeting at their regular time & date to go over the radio problems and other issues

Theresa Winebarger with VFIS Insurance addressed the group and thanked members for the efforts put forth. She noted that VFIS paid out over 30 million to departments in Western North Carolina.

Mike Richardson presented Chief Matt Millsaps with the plaque for efforts during the Hurricane since he missed the annual meeting.

Rich Carpenter introduced a new smoke chaser - Dillion Reese. He was hoping the budget request would bring him a third member and a new dozer operator in Ashe County to go along with the one in Lenoir. He announced that he would be setting up a 22 man strike team broken up into 4 teams.

Cory Hoyes offered to update the Association Website and work with the Website administrator to do so. Mike asked for volunteers for the Scholarship committee. Robbie, Levin & Brooks volunteered. Mike noted that last year's recipient received \$ 350. After a discussion, Robbie Calloway moved that we raise the amount to \$ 1,000 and Stephen McClellan seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Mike Richardson announced that he is starting a Drone team for the county. He has possible donations for one or two more drones. The Association drone is currently at his house. All agreed that the ladder company is the best location if the batteries could be charged regularly. Mark Taylor agreed to add that to the weekly truck checks. Mike requested a drop cord and extra charger. Members agreed to let Stephen order them. Cody asked who was on the team. Mike said : Garrett, Stephen, Himself and Soon Cory would be licensed. He explained that each call will require a pilot and a spotter. He encouraged others to attend and become spotters. Mike explained that a generator had been donated in case a call requires two or more operation periods. Members decided that it would be OK for the team to use the Ladder Company page and the Ladder I Am Responding for the drone team.

Richard Shafer with Linville Central addressed the group. Linville Central has started using Cal Topo and they have about 20 users. Brian Ledford negotiated a county wide account. Richard wants to meet with each department to get them on the account. He wants to identify members in each department who want to learn the system. It takes a 2 to 3 hour class. He asked for each department's contact information.

Mike noted that is a disaster grant for Starlink phones that opens on the 21st. He did not know the local contact. Matt said that he has a company that will help with FEMA Grants.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.