CALL TO ORDER
Chair Hicks called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.
Chair Hicks led prayer.
The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Public Comment
There were no public comments.

Annual Audit Report
Sharon Gillespie, Certified Public Accountant, presented the Annual Audit for the year ending June 30, 2020. Ms. Gillespie directed the Board to the audit book and went over several pages. She went over the following financial highlights:

- The assets of Avery County exceeded its liabilities at the close of the fiscal year by $48,033,095.
- The government’s total net position increased for the current year by a net of $5,292,291 primarily due to capital improvements to County properties.
- As of the close of the current fiscal year, Avery County’s governmental funds reported combined ending fund balances of $32,847,253 a net increase of $8,983,061 in comparison with the prior year. Approximately 43 percent of this total amount, or $14,447,832 is available for spending at the government’s discretion.
- At the end of the current fiscal year, unassigned fund balance for the General Fund was $14,447,832 or 48 percent of total general fund expenditures and transfers to other funds for the fiscal year.
- Avery County’s total long-term debt increased by $10,272,539 during the current fiscal year due to receipt of note proceeds for the Avery High Renovation project.

Ms. Gillespie stated that there were no findings in this audit.

Motion by Wood Hall Young, Jr. and second by Tim Phillips to approve the Annual Audit for the period ending June 30, 2020. Motion unanimously approved with those in attendance (4-0) Hicks—Aye; Phillips—Aye; Aldridge—Aye; Young—Aye.
Avery County Economic Development Website Option – Ken Walter

Ken Walter, Chair of the Avery County Economic Development Committee, stated that before the economic development committee there was no website. The website that we have now is ok but it is dull and not competitive. The development of a website is very expensive. The Chamber of Commerce has offered to put the EDC website on their website. We will be using Big Boom out of Asheville which would keep the cost at a minimum. We are trying to present a site that will attract full time resident business people. The estimate for the website will be between $900 and $1100.

Tim Phillips questioned if it would not be on the Avery County website at all. Mr. Walter stated that the new site will only be on the chamber site but there will be a link on the Avery County website that will take you to the new website.

Phillip Barrier, Jr. County Manager stated that a public hearing had already been done for the expenditure of these funds. There is $4000 in the budget to create this site so the estimate is way below what money is in the budget.

Dennis Aldridge stated that there were several companies that the committee looked at to create this website but some of them was completely out of the realm as far as the cost was involved. This was the best and most cost effective way to do this.

Motion by Tim Phillips and second by Wood Hall Young, Jr. to approve the funds for the creation of an Avery County Economic Development website. Motion unanimously approved with those in attendance (4-0) Hicks—Aye; Phillips—Aye; Aldridge—Aye; Young—Aye.

Resolution—High Country Council of Government Amended Charter

WHEREAS, the High Country Council of Governments was originally chartered in 1974, when created by the Counties of Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Mitchell, Watauga, Wilkes, and Yancey, then as “Region D Council of Governments”; and

WHEREAS, since formed, the High Country Council of Governments has adopted bylaws, and from time-to-time amended both its Charter and bylaws; and

WHEREAS, the High Country Council of Governments has grown by adding municipalities, and its governance has evolved to include regular monthly meetings of the full board where all member counties and municipalities have voting representatives; and

WHEREAS, the Executive Board and management of the High Country Council of Governments have undertaken to update and modernize its Charter, with the proposed amended Charter attached hereto; and

WHEREAS, by Charter, two-thirds of the participating governmental units must approve of any Charter amendment; and
WHEREAS this County’s Board of Commissioners has had opportunity to review the changes contained within the proposed amendments to the Charter attached hereto, and finds that those changes accurately reflect, modernize, and improve the High Country Council of Governments’ ongoing organization and operations and should be approved and adopted;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Avery County Board of Commissioners that the attached amended Charter for the High Country Council of Governments should be adopted and approved.

Motion by Wood Hall Young, Jr. and second by Dennis Aldridge to adopt the Resolution regarding the Amended Charter for the High Country Council of Government. Motion unanimously approved with those in attendance (4-0) Hicks—Aye; Phillips—Aye; Aldridge—Aye; Young—Aye.

Subdivision Approval—Vineyard Reserve Phase IV
The Avery County Planning Board has approved a final plat for Eagles Nest Holdings, LLC and Chairman Lacey has signed off on the addendums requested per the Avery County Planning Board Review as of December 28, 2020. This plat includes Lots VR30 through VR40. The lots are in the Fall Creek Fire Department District and the section is contiguous to the Old Beech Mountain Road.

Wood Hall Young, Jr. questioned that the smallest lot is 1.14 acres how much of that lot is actually usable. Eagles Nest representative stated that most of the lots through the entire end of that property that include phase I, II, III, IV are very buildable lots.

Dennis Aldridge stated that one of the things that concerned him was at the top where these are located is the Old Beech Mountain road and one of things that has been brought before us is how can the developer and the county keep the Old Beech Mountain road from being the construction road. That is a point of concern for the homeowners on that road. Eagles Nest representative said that there had been meetings with construction companies and it was brought to their attention about the traffic, speed and being across the centerline. Wood Hall Young, Jr. stated that the condition of the road had been discussed with the Department of Transportation.

Chair Hicks stated that her biggest concern was the buildings that have been built beside the river and how close they were together and to the river. Tommy Burleson stated that these were PUD’s and that they had shared septic systems and were in compliance with all state regulations.

Motion by Dennis Aldridge and second by Tim Phillips to approve the Vineyard Reserve Phase IV Lots VR30 through VR40. Motion unanimously approved with those in attendance (4-0) Hicks—Aye; Phillips—Aye; Aldridge—Aye; Young—Aye.

Tax Administrator Report—Bruce Daniels
Tax Collections Report
The Tax Collections for the month of January 2021 is $3,089,521.45.
There were no releases.

There were 86 sales for the month of January.

The outstanding taxes for 2020 is $1,330,825.25 with a current collection rate of 93.89%. Mr. Daniels stated that this was a very good number before second notices go out.

Motion by Wood Hall Young, Jr. and second by Dennis Aldridge to approve the total outstanding taxes for 2020 for advertisement. Motion unanimously approved with those in attendance (4-0) Hicks—Aye; Phillips—Aye; Aldridge—Aye; Young—Aye.

**County Manager Updates – Phillip Barrier, Jr.**

**Covid Update**

There are 109 community cases as of last Wednesday.

We have given 2418 first dose vaccines. Last week we did not get any vaccines and we will be very limited on how many vaccines we will be getting for the next three weeks. Our community paramedic has given 70 in home vaccines.

**Finance Officer Report – Caleb Hogan**

**Budget Amendment**

The Department of Social Services has received an allocation of $68,571.04 from the state for pandemic LIEAP (Low Income Energy Assistance Program).

Motion by Wood Hall Young, Jr. and second by Tim Phillips to approve the Budget Amendment for the Department of Social Services in the amount of $68,571.04 with a debit of $68,571.04 to LIEAP (106800.6095) and a credit of $68,571.04 to County Welfare (103634.0000). Motion unanimously approved with those in attendance (4-0) Hicks—Aye; Phillips—Aye; Aldridge—Aye; Young—Aye.

**County Attorney Report - Michaele Poore**

Nothing for the Board’s attention at this time.

**Approval of Minutes**

Motion by Tim Phillips and second by Dennis Aldridge to approve the December 10, 2020 Special Meeting and January 4, 2021 Regular Meeting. Motion unanimously approved with those in attendance (4-0) Hicks—Aye; Phillips—Aye; Aldridge—Aye; Young—Aye.
**Upcoming Meetings**
A board workshop is scheduled for February 8, 2021 at 9:00 a.m.

**Adjourn**
Motion by Wood Hall Young, Jr. and second by Tim Phillips to adjourn this meeting at 5:07 p.m. Motion unanimously approved with those in attendance (4-0) Hicks—Aye; Phillips—Aye; Aldridge—Aye; Young—Aye.

_____________________________________
Martha Hicks, Chair
Avery County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:______________________________
Cindy Turbyfill