

Avery County Economic Development Committee
March 29, 2022

Minutes

The Avery County Economic Development Committee (EDC) met at 5:00 p.m. March 29, 2022. The meeting was held at the Avery County Administrative Building, located at 175 Linville Street, Newland, NC 28657

Present for the meeting were: Ken Walter, Susan Siirila, Clayton Harpold, Edward Dean, Angie Berry, Phillip Barrier, County Manager, and guests Juan Robles of New Generation Services and Neil Falvey, Avery Journal Newspaper.

Members absent: Dave Smith, Terri Melton, Kate Gavenus, Anne Winkleman, Jerry Moody and Dennis Aldridge, Avery County Commissioner.

Ken Walter called the meeting to order at 5:04 p.m.

(1) Approve and/or amend the February 22, 2022 minutes: Edward Dean made a motion to accept the minutes as presented. Clayton Harpold seconded the motion. No discussion occurred. The motion was approved unanimously.

(2) Guest Speaker – Juan Robles

Juan Robles, owner/manager of New Generation Services, LLC., gave a presentation to the group. Mr. Robles explained that he needed a job after graduating from Avery County High School in 2016. He gained experience from working for a local tree grower while in high school. He and his brother came together and decided to start a small business. Specifically, they realized that there was a need for bilingual (English/Spanish) workers in the Avery County area who could offer a wide variety of services. Mr. Robles said he saw a need for someone who could translate what English speaking homeowners may want or need to Spanish speaking laborers. He and his brother can do so. Therefore, they began New Generation Services, which offers home and lawn repair and maintenance. Some of the services they offer include carpentry, stonework, painting and staining, snow removal and landscaping work. Their goal is to provide quality work for homeowners, and jobs for Spanish speaking laborers. They currently have six employees. The company provides both commercial and residential services, and they offer recurring services as well such as weekly lawn mowing. Mr. Robles stated that they do not have a website yet, but they do advertise in some publications and rely on word of mouth to spread the word about their business. They became a Limited Liability Company (LLC) in 2019. They work primarily in Avery and Watauga counties. In addition to the home and lawn care business that he and his brother operate, they also have interest in a restaurant located at Beech Mountain. Mr. Robles said that his goal is to have a place for “winter work” for his employees who do

lawn care work during the summer months. When asked what the Avery County EDC could help him accomplish as he continues to grow his business, Mr. Robles stated that it is his goal to get his contractor's license, and to get information on resources in order to ensure that he is meeting state and federal requirements as he operates his business. Ken Walter advised Mr. Robles and the EDC group that Allen Cook, the current manager of the Small Business Center at Mayland Community College is leaving his position on April 1, 2022 to accept another job. We do not know who will move into the position that Mr. Cook is vacating. He advised Mr. Robles that as soon as we have a new contact person at MCC's Small Business Center, that we can help facilitate them working together.

Mr. Robles concluded his presentation by sharing that one of his accomplishments that he is proud of is the fact that his business currently has no debt—all their equipment is paid for. The group agreed that it was commendable for a small business to be debt free, and thanked Mr. Robles for his presentation.

(3) Unfinished Business

a. Anne Winkleman: update on the Avery County Chamber of Commerce "Business & Tourist Guide." In Ms. Winkleman's absence, Ken Walter reported that the Business Guide is on the website, and that the hard copies will be delivered on Thursday (03/31/22). Ms. Winkleman will provide copies for us.

The first annual Summer Fest is scheduled for June 11 & 12. It will be held at the Agricultural/Community Center in Newland. The Fine Arts Festival will be held at Sugar Mountain in July and August this year. The Wooly Worm Festival will be held on October 15 & 16 this year.

b. Ken Walter to provide update reports on the "Finding, Keeping and Motivating Workers Workshop" and New Business Guide Tool Box Survey:

Mr. Walter noted that the workshop is currently scheduled for June 9, 2022. The number of participants has been set at 45. Speaker Toyna Snider will be in person for the workshop. The workshop will be broadcast via ZOOM and will remain available on ZOOM for a week for those who are not able to attend the workshop. Mr. Walter again thanked Allen Cook of Mayland Community College for setting up and covering the cost of the speaker for the workshop.

c. Kate Gavenus to report on New Business Guide Tool Box project: In Ms. Gavenus' absence, Ken Walter reported that the Tool Box project will be included in the county's next fiscal year's budget. The new fiscal year will not begin until July. Therefore, the kickoff date of the survey cannot begin until after that time. Also, funding will be requested for videos of Avery County High School and Cannon Memorial Hospital.

d. Phillip Barrier to report on the status of the Dogwood Trust Survey: Mr. Barrier reported that Phil Trew, High Country Council of Governments, is handling

matters related to the Dogwood Trust. Avery County requested proposals to do the survey for the municipalities in the county on housing needs, water/sewer infrastructure (the asset inventory). One company responded and has been approved by Dogwood Trust. Mr. Trew will proceed with that through the High County Council of Governments. The second part is the housing need assessment. We received approval to use Bowen, who did the research for the High-Country Association of Realtor's inventory. This assessment will enhance information on what Avery County's housing needs are.

e. Phillip Barrier to report on the Occupancy Tax status: Mr. Barrier reported that the matter must be presented by our legislators, and we are not sure that it will happen in the short session of the NC General Assembly, which begins in May. The request has been written, it is simply a matter of when it will get to the floor and get voted on.

f. Phillip Barrier to report on the American Recovery Plan funds applicable to Avery County & the EDC: Mr. Barrier reported that High-Country Council of Governments has hired a new employee who will start April 7th. The new employee will help counties and municipalities that are in the COG area to work through their American Recovery Plans. The Avery County Commissioners have met on the matter; some contracts have been done. Broadband (internet) will be the number one issue to address with the funding. Mr. Barrier stated that state and federal guidelines for approved uses of the funding are not aligned at this point. Regarding other NC broadband funding Mr. Barrier reported that there are 64 counties, out of 100, in front of Avery County in terms of need. This is based on census data. We will not fare well in terms of funding from the Great Grant on the first round of funding. On the second round of funding Avery County may fare better. According to the survey 3.28% of households in Avery County are underserved per census data. Mr. Barrier reported that a new business coming to Newland is Moe's Boots. They have locations in Boone and Jefferson. The Newland store will be located on Hwy. 194 South between Newland and Crossnore. Phillip Barrier and Ken Walter will meet with Kelly Hardy their Purchasing Manager & Site Selection Team Member soon.

g. Avery County High School and Cannon Memorial Hospital videos - these will be in our proposed 2022-2023 budget at \$1,000.00 each.

h. Other - No report.

4. Phillip Barrier updates and other news re: strip mall property, Structall, etc. Other new business news?

Phillip Barrier reported that the Lowes Foods building in Newland was sold on Friday, March 25, 2022. The buyer is Northwest Housing Enterprises, Inc. They propose building a 64-unit apartment complex consisting of 10 1-bedroom units, 38 2-bedroom units and 16 3-bedroom units. The apartments will be housed in 10 buildings

on the site. Mr. Barrier reported that the existing Family Dollar store will remain in its current location and will expand. There will be 49 parking spots designated for Family Dollar parking. The portion of the building which housed Lowes Foods will be demolished. Mr. Barrier reported that the proposed apartment buildings will provide affordable housing, though it may not be considered workforce housing. The anticipated monthly costs for the apartments will range from \$800.00 per month to 1,200.00 per month. The rate will be determined by income. For example, a family of one must have income of \$22,000.00 to \$35,000.00 per year. A family of four would be required to have income of \$31,000.00 to \$50,000.00 per year. The company that purchased the property will work with the Town of Newland and will continue to allow residents to use Riverwalk, greenspace, and the band stand. Discussion occurred regarding usage and maintenance of the road leading to the church near Family Dollar. Mr. Barrier reported that sewer concerns are delaying the start-up of the Structall facility in Newland. He stated that he did not know if the delays were coming from the Town of Newland, from the NCDOT or some other reason. Ken Walter has sent information to Newland Mayor Derek Roberts for water/sewer infrastructure and will follow up accordingly.

5. New Business and/or other issues to address:

a. Phillip Barrier & Ken Walter to report on the EDC's budget for fiscal year 2022-2023: Phillip Barrier confirmed that there has been money appropriated by the county for the EDC group. There will be funding for workshops, the chamber guide and other advertising, videos, and promotional materials as well as programming and incentive funding.

6. Avery County Chamber of Commerce - Anne Winkleman

a. Newland festival this June: In Ms. Winkleman's absence, Ken Walter reported the following: In the last month, the chamber had 5,200 website hits. The top three views were the Woolly Worm Festival, the Fine Arts Festival, and the Summer Festival. The top referral sites, according to the Chamber of Commerce information, are VisitNC.com. WoollyWorm.com and AveryCountyNC.gov. For the Summer Fest, it is anticipated that there will be 20 to 40 booths available for vendors (12x12 feet or 12x20 feet sizes). Also, at least two food trucks are planning to be at the festival. On a historical note the first Woolly Worm Festival had about 500 attendees and 12 vendors and has grown tremendously since that 1st. festival. The Grandfather Highland Games are expected to be big again this year.

7. Agricultural sub-Committee Report - Jerry Moody

Mr. Moody was unavailable, as he was attending a meeting in Asheville.

8. Marketing sub-Committee Report - Ken Walter

a. Ken Walter has provided the High-Country Housing Needs Assessment to Dave Smith, Terri Melton and Jesse Pope, but because of its size (402 pages) it has not been

loaded onto our website. Phillip Barrier noted that the Housing Assessment is on the Avery County website. He suggested a review of section 4.

9. Education sub-Committee Report - Ken Walter

a. Phillip & Ken to report on the Avery County School System "Business Advisory Council" meeting they attended on March 3, 2022: Ken Walter reported that he and Phillip Barrier attended the above-noted meeting. One of the primary topics discussed was apprenticeship programs.

10. Future discussion and/or action topics:

a. Further discussion on Ken Walter's previous suggestion that when the Avery County Occupancy Tax dollars start to flow and the Board of Commissioners hires an administrator, would it then be time to consider an Avery County Facebook page? No additional discussion occurred on this issue.

Angie Berry asked that she be given the floor and announced that she had chosen to resign from the Avery County Economic Development Committee. She will participate in April and stop attending meetings thereafter. She cited personal reasons for her decision to leave the team. Mr. Walter reminded the group that we have two terms that expire in June 2022.

There being no other business, Ken Walter adjourned the meeting at 5:58 p.m.

The next meeting will be held on April 26, 2022.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan P. Siirila

EDC promotes Avery small business, excited for upcoming events

BY NEAL FALVEY

NEAL.FALVEY@AVERYJOURNAL.COM

NEWLAND – The Avery County Economic Development Committee held its monthly meeting on Tuesday, March 29, at the County administrative offices, where it hosted an Avery small business owner as a guest speaker, Juan Robles of New Generation Services. Juan and his brother, Francisco Robles, started the home improvement and maintenance company approximately three years ago and obtained an LLC qualification in July of 2019.

New Generation Services specialize in a bevy of constructive and labor practices, such as painting, staining, carpentry, landscaping, grading, clearing, snow removal and other commercial and residential services. The company currently has six employees that perform any work that requires labor, along with specialized work and machinery.

Robles said in his presentation, "A lot of people are looking for workers right now; we are looking for work."

New Generation has goals toward expansion, increased license acquisition and potentially adding a storefront. A youthful business owner looking forward to continually growing the operation, Robles graduated from

Avery High School in 2016 and has built the company from the ground up.

"We need more people like you to start businesses in Avery County," EDC Chair Ken Walter said.

Mostly working in Boone and Avery County, New Generation charges \$35 an hour per worker for general labor, with other prices dependent on the job requirements.

"We are well prepared for any job, large and small," said Robles.

New Generation can be reached at (828) 387-7848 and at newgenerationservicesllc@gmail.com.

In other economic development news, the Avery Chamber of Commerce Business and Tourist Guide can be found on the website, and the new Business ToolBox Survey has a preliminary date set for a potential July kickoff.

The EDC announced the SummerFest event taking place on June 11 and 12 at Heritage Park in Newland, with up to 40 booth takers, along with the Avery Fine Arts and Master Crafts Festival with two weekends set in July and August, respectively. More information can be found on the Avery County website at averycounty.com.

Another date for interested individuals and business to keep

an eye on is the EDC's "Finding, Keeping, and Motivating Workers Workshop," set for June 9. The EDC noted that the workshop will be available on Zoom for those unable to attend. The Zoom video of the workshop will also be available for a week after the event.

The committee noted that more depth into information and a deeper dive into the numbers are expected for the Avery County Housing Need Assessment. In other housing news, the potential occupancy tax language is currently being written, with county leaders potentially coming to a vote on the measure.

With the American Rescue Plan, the High Country Council of Governments has hired someone to help the county work through the plan and its plethora of information regarding federal guidelines and state policy. County Manager Phillip Barrier added, "Broadband and affordability will continue to be our number-one issue pushed."

The building in Newland that was the former Lowes Foods has recently been sold, with plans to be developed and revitalized. The current plans indicate that a housing complex will be developed in the currently vacated property. An in-depth article on the property is reported in this issue of *The AJT*.

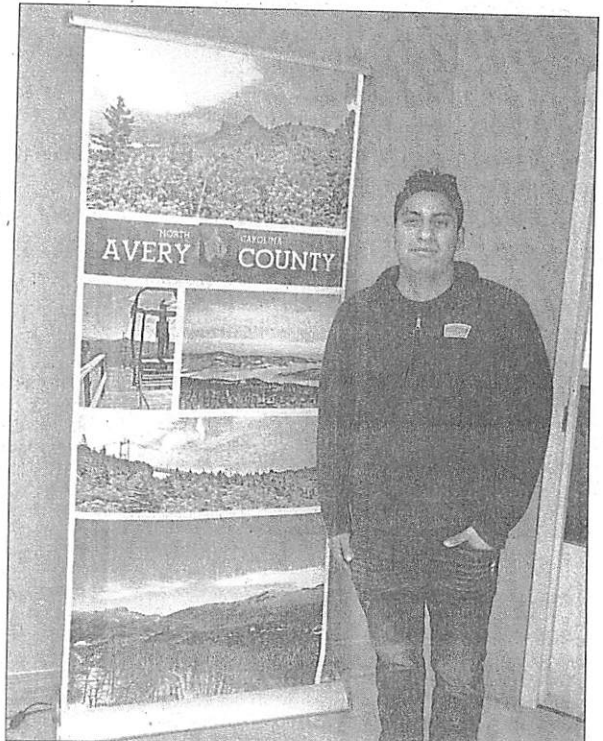


PHOTO BY NEAL FALVEY

Juan Robles, owner of New Generation Services, gave a business presentation for the Economic Development Committee. New Generation Services performs many home improvement projects in Avery County.

Individual income tax return filing deadline Monday, April 18

STAFF REPORT

EDITOR@AVERYJOURNAL.COM

RALEIGH – The deadline for filing calendar year North Carolina individual income tax returns is Monday, April 18, unless you request an extension. Electronically filed returns must be submitted electronically by midnight on April 18. For taxpayers filing via paper, returns must be

NCDOR

NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE

postmarked by April 18.

The deadline to file and pay state income tax was extended to April 18 because state government is closed on Friday, April 15, to observe the Good

Friday holiday.

A taxpayer who receives an automatic extension to file their federal individual income tax return will be granted an automatic extension to file their

North Carolina individual income tax return if the individual certifies on their North Carolina return that they received an automatic federal extension.

If a taxpayer is not granted an automatic federal extension, the taxpayer may still request a State extension to file their North Carolina individual income tax return by filing Form D-410 by midnight on April 18. The extension, however, is only for filing a return and is not an extension of time to pay any tax that may be owed.

A taxpayer who does

not pay the amount of tax due by April 18 may incur late-payment penalties and will be charged interest at the statutory rate. The late-payment penalty will not be due for taxpayers who pay at least 90 percent of their tax liability through withholding, estimated tax payments, or with Form D-410 by April 18.

For more information, click to ncdor.com