

Workshop Session – March 17, 2014

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Monday, March 17, 2014 in the Graham County Community Building located at 196 Knight Street Robbinsville, NC for their regular workshop session. Commissioners present were: Robert M. Edwards; Billy Holder; Keith Eller and Connie Orr. Commissioner Williams was absent due to jury duty and was excused by the board. Chairman Edwards called the workshop session to order.

1. Chairman Edwards asks Juanita Colvard and David Hyatt to speak on the Safety and Grounds Committee recommendations. Ms. Colvard gave the board an update on the meetings held by the Safety and Grounds Committees and discussed the recommendations of both committees. Ms. Colvard stated that quotes were given to Clerk Kim Crisp of any projects that the committees would like to see done with the understanding that these are recommended projects for the Board of Commissioners review. Clerk Crisp gave the board a copy of the quotes obtained for some of the projects. Chairman Edwards asks about the striping in the county parking lot. David Hyatt, Building Inspector stated that he had spoken with the NCDOT and asks for help on the cost of the striping and was told there are no funds at this time but they would see if they could help in the future. Chairman Edwards requested that Mr. Hyatt send him the plans for the striping to him tomorrow. Chairman Edwards stated that the Health Department and EMS Base had also requested that their parking lots be striped. The board discussed some of the repairs to identify the ones that are most needed. Ms. Colvard stated that the upper plant needed to be torn down due to the leaks and the deterioration of the building. The board was agreeable to reviewing the recommendations with Manager Cable.
2. Chairman Edwards asks Ross Crisp Jr to speak on the Septage Receiving Station. Clerk Crisp stated that Mr. Crisp was not present.
3. Chairman Edwards asks the Town of Santeetlah to speak on their tax collections. Erma Phillips, Tax Assessor stated that the Town was not present. Chairman Edwards asks that Erma Phillips and Tajuana Ledwell, Tax Collector explain to the board what the Town of Santeetlah is proposing. Ms. Phillips stated that they have asked that Graham County take over their tax collections both current and back taxes. The board discussed the amount of bills that they have and Ms. Ledwell stated that it was very important that they have good records from 2008 to current. Ms. Ledwell stated that we can do the collections but the Town has not told us how much they want to pay. The board asks how much of a tax base do they have. Ms. Phillips stated that they have \$80,000.00 in ad valorem and around \$4900.00 in back collections. The board asks if this is feasible for the county to take on. Ms. Becky Garland, Finance Officer stated that the labor is in the back taxes and she would suggest that the county get 50% of all collections for these and then some percentage for the current taxes. Ms. Garland stated that the Town gives a discount to their taxpayers for paying early and this would have to be discontinued. Ms. Garland stated that she worried that our staff would have to listen to some grumblings once this happens and was unsure if the Town could pay enough to the county for problems. Ms. Phillips stated that she has a timeline to get the mil rate set and requested that they have their mil rate to her by the third week in June. Ms. Phillips stated that the county receives a lot of revenue by mailing the tax bills out early even though they are not due until September. Commissioner Orr stated that this is our source of revenue. Chairman Edwards stated that the county would have to have a contractual agreement with the municipality and asks for recommendations. Manager Cable stated that they would be money ahead to train their own people for this collection so that they can retain their revenue. Commissioner Orr asks if they are open to an offer and if so give them one and they could accept or reject. The board all agreed that the county will be taking on a lot of liability with this and wanted to make sure that everything is spelled out by the letter of the law. Chairman Edwards thanked the tax office for their work and thanked our taxpayers for paying their taxes.
4. Chairman Edwards stated that he had one more item for discussion and that is the Septage Receiving Station. Chairman Edwards was of the understanding that once the Town had their new facility built that the county would no longer need to use the station located at the Sanitation Department. Chairman Edwards stated that their facility is State of the Art and should be able to take on the dumping of the septic tanks, campgrounds and RV's. Commissioner Eller stated that Alderman Bobby Smith had approached him and took him to tour the facility where the waste goes and wanted the county to provide a dumpster for the dried waste that is expelled from the system. Chairman Edwards stated that now we are being asked to open our station up again when the county operates at a loss. Commissioner Eller stated that he was not in favor of opening the station back up at the sanitation department. Commissioner Orr stated that this station has cost the taxpayers more than \$8500.00 already. Chairman Edwards stated that we received \$10,000.00 in grant funds for the RV site due to someone observing a camper emptying their waste on the road and over a bridge. Chairman Edwards stated that this is a hot

issue that affects all of us but could not understand why a State of the Art facility could not accept this waste. Commissioner Eller stated that the county held up their end of the deal and now the Town is backing off. Commissioner Holder asks why you would build a \$7 million dollar facility that could not take this waste. Chairman Edwards stated that our local users was hauling their waste to Fontana and dumping straight into a manhole without any problems. Chairman Edwards stated that this would need further discussion.

5. Chairman Edwards asks Hubert Merchant to speak on Agenda 21. Mr. Merchant stated that what he had to say was very important to all citizens of Robbinsville and that he is not a politician or a speaker but would try to get his message across. Mr. Merchant gave the commissioners paperwork to review while he was speaking on Agenda 21. Mr. Merchant stated that he was running for commissioner but was not here as a candidate, he was here because he is concerned about non-profits coming into our county with strings. Mr. Merchant gave reference to a bill entitled "An act to provide that North Carolina shall not comply with ICLEI/Agenda 21, relative to the Rio declaration on environment and development and the statement of principles for the sustainable management of forests. Mr. Merchant stated that even our state legislatures recognize this as a problem. Mr. Merchant presented documents that ask for action to help fight Agenda 21 and gave names of various counties throughout North Carolina that are opposing Agenda 21. Mr. Merchant stated that counties in Washington State threw out ICLEI as well as Oklahoma and Texas. Mr. Merchant stated that Spartanburg, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida and even California have terminated ICLEI membership. Mr. Merchant stated that non-profits want to give the cities and counties free money but it comes with strings and they hire consultants to type up these so called Regional Visionary Projects and they lump us into one region which gives us no voice. Mr. Merchant stated that we have to watch out for these projects due to other states findings exposing the dangers of their plans to take over their counties. Mr. Merchant stated that republicans and democrats oppose this agenda. Mr. Merchant advises the board to be aware of the words "Wildland's Project" and Regional Visioning due to the fact that these are ways that they take over our rights and our lands. Mr. Merchant stated that the government does not believe that we can watch over our own lands so they begin to impose water setbacks or buffer zones to our land and tell us what we can or cannot do. Mr. Merchant showed the commissioners maps of the areas that the Agenda 21 is trying to take over and Graham County is completely in the area of unallowable human habitat. Mr. Merchant stated that we live in one of the most diverse biological areas and this is the reason that they want to take over our lands and force us out and this does include the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians as well. Chairman Edwards stated that Mr. Merchant was out of time and suggests that he see Manager Cable for any additional sessions. Mr. Merchant stated that this is very important for the commissioners to hear. Chairman Edwards stated that he is very aware of Agenda 21 and thanked Mr. Merchant for his information.
6. Chairman Edwards adjourned the workshop session.

Robert M. (Mike) Edwards, Chairman, Graham County Commissioner

Billy Holder, Vice-Chairman, Graham County Commissioner

Keith Eller, Member, Graham County Commissioner

Connie Orr, Member, Graham County Commissioner

Raymond Williams, Member, Graham County Commissioner

ATTEST:

Kim Crisp, Clerk to the Board