

Emergency Meeting - Monday, April 7, 2014

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Monday, April 7, 2014 at 10:00 a.m. in the Graham County Community Building located at 196 Knight Street Robbinsville NC for an emergency meeting to discuss the announcement from Stanley Furniture and the development of potential solutions with our Local, State and Federal Government Contacts. All board was present.

1. Chairman Edwards called the meeting to order and stated that the minutes would be taken by Rebecca Garland due to Clerk Kim Crisp absence for sickness.
2. Chairman Edwards stated that the board needed to make some decisions as to staffing after a conversation with one of the county's grantors. Chairman Edwards stated that he had spoken with Manager Greg Cable and EDC Director Andy Cable about the situation. Chairman Edwards stated that the county manager is the manager of the county but in this situation he is feeling that the board chair will need to step forward a little more and take a higher profile. Chairman Edwards stated that he is being asked where the Board is in the situation of Stanley Furniture and as Chair, he needed to pursue this situation. Chairman Edwards stated that some of the information is proprietary with prospective buyers and we cannot discuss some of these issues.
3. Chairman Edwards stated that the board did have issues from the financial side in regards to the EDC funds and the grants that have been made for Stanley Furniture. Chairman Edwards stated that this board has been in constant contact with Golden Leaf and the Rural Center and there will not be a default. Chairman Edwards stated that we as the board needed to stay active.
4. Chairman Edwards asks that the Board consider appointing him to be the point person from the Board of Commissioners perspective on the Stanley Furniture Developments. Commissioner Williams made the motion to appoint Chairman Edwards as the point person for the Board of Commissioners. Commissioner Holder seconded this motion. Vote unanimous. Chairman Edwards stated that he would not keep any information from his fellow board members and would be working closely with the staff that is already diligently hard at work on the Stanley issues.
5. Manager Cable gave a recap of where we are at this point. Manager Cable presented a list of names who are co-managing this issue with the county. Those individuals are: NC Department of Commerce Secretary Sharon Decker, NC Governor Pat McCrory, Congressman Mark Meadows, U.S. Senator Kay Hagan, Southwest Commission – Region A, Golden Leaf Foundation, EBCL, Advantage West, Tri-County Community College and ARC. We also have private corporations offering assistance such as Duke Energy, Balsam West Fiber Net, Drake Enterprises and Ted Theodore-SCCA (Site Marketing Assistance). There is a lot of optimism with regards to finding a buyer for Stanley but we will not offer false hope. Manager Cable stated several interested parties have come forward and want to tour the plant but we are unable to give out the prospective buyers at this time. The county commends the workers of Stanley who received bad news on Tuesday and returned to work on Wednesday and further stated that they are a dedicated highly skilled workforce. Manager Cable stated that Stanley had done all that they could do but the bottom line was they did not sell enough furniture to stay in business. Manager Cable stated that our main focus is to take the necessary steps to assist with any displaced workers in the event of a closing.
6. Chairman Edwards stated that Beth Cook with the Southwest Commission Workforce Development is actively working and on April 21, 2014 they will be coming to the plant to provide workforce development. Chairman Edwards stated that the Employment Security Commission will be coming to the plant to educate them about the next steps in the event of displacement.
7. Chairman Edwards stated that we have 235 employees out of 392 that will be impacted in Graham County and the others are from surrounding counties. Chairman Edwards stated that in the past the plant had closed from 1974-1986 and the county had survived so there is optimism.
8. Chairman Edwards stated that the budget process is underway and this news will impact our revenue stream. Chairman Edwards stated that the board would not have a blind eye to the needs of our citizens and we will continue to help and deal with the changes as they come. Chairman Edwards stated that we are in the final phases of the OPT IN process and the comprehensive transportation plan and this will drive home the critical need of transportation issues in Graham County. Chairman Edwards stated that he had met with Micah Goldstein from Stanley and he stated that transportation was a factor with getting raw materials in and finished product out and this would impact anyone's buying decision. Chairman Edwards stated that this is a definite challenge and the livelihood of the people is affected. Chairman Edwards stated that he was very concerned that people would leave our county but the county would stay dedicated in trying to bring business to employ our workers.

9. Chairman Edwards asks for comments from the board. Chairman Edwards stated that communication will be among the board and the press will receive their information from press releases to allow them and the public to have knowledge of the progress.
10. Rebecca Garland, Finance Officer provided a report on budgetary impacts which include streams on tax collection rates, losses in sanitation fees, loss of sales tax revenues and loss of taxes if the plant closes. Ms. Garland also stated that the board could possibly have to increase DSS Staffing for public assistance when and if the plant closes. Commissioner Holder stated that less money will create a trickledown effect that will hurt all citizens.
11. Chairman Edwards stated that he talked with the NCACC and the Southwest Commission and the state is planning a 2% cut across the board on a state budgetary level in the General Assembly which causes the counties concern as well. Chairman Edwards stated that if the plant is not sold within 60 days it will close.
12. Chairman Edwards asks for further comment. Commissioner Williams made the motion to adjourn. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

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:

Rebecca Garland, Finance Officer/Assistant Clerk

Kim Crisp, Clerk to the Board