

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Monday, September 15, 2014 at 4:00 p.m. in the Graham County Community Building located at 196 Knight Street Robbinsville NC for their regular workshop session. Commissioners present were: Keith Eller, Billy Holder, Lynn Cody and Connie Orr. Commissioner Raymond Williams was absent due to illness.

1. Chairman Eller called the workshop session to order.
2. Chairman Eller asks Robert Wehr to speak. Mr. Wehr stated that he was here to appeal his property taxes that had increased by 155%. Mr. Wehr stated that his home is three stories due to the lot being located on a cliff which required him to add more support than originally planned. Mr. Wehr asks the question how do you justify raising the assessed value based on the home being labeled as custom because there are a lot of corners and further stated that the value is not right and not fair and he doubted it would hold up in a court of law. Mr. Wehr asks why some properties that are commercial are valued lower than his home and examples are: Microtel \$1.4 million; A-4 \$1.2 million; Crown which hosts a Subway \$300 thousand; Shell \$1.1 million; Wendy's \$700 thousand; Stanley \$2.4 million and then his home is \$1.3 million. Mr. Wehr stated that the Town of Santeetlah makes up 11% of the counties taxes and this is overvalued in his opinion. Mr. Wehr asks Dana Jones, a certified appraiser to speak as well. Chairman Eller welcomed Mr. Jones. Mr. Jones stated that he has been a certified appraiser since 1981 and he had trained Bryan Farley who is the certified appraiser in Graham County. Mr. Jones stated that there have been five sells in the last two years that sold for \$500 thousand and above which was all lake front. Mr. Jones stated that Mr. Wehr's value would make his home the most valuable on Lake Santeetlah. Ms. Erma Phillips, Tax Assessor, stated that she could only use the sales from 2010 that were comparable to Mr. Wehr's home which was very irregular with a custom interior. Ms. Phillips stated that Mr. Wehr's home was above average and this was the only thing that had changed on his cost was the coding from average to above average. Chairman Eller thanked Mr. Wehr and Mr. Jones for their time and stated that the board would give an answer within 30 days. Manager Cable asks Mr. Wehr what he felt was a fair value and Mr. Wehr stated that he would like to have the value the same as before at \$950 thousand.
3. Chairman Eller asks Ryan Sherby to speak. Mr. Sherby stated that he was the Executive Director of Southwest Commission and has been for seven years and that this organization is owned and controlled by local governments and municipalities. Mr. Sherby stated that they are federally funded and funded by county or municipal matches which Graham County has contributed \$8000.00 per year. Mr. Sherby stated that he has 19 staff members who are scattered throughout the region. Mr. Sherby stated that the organization also acts as a lender of last resort where companies are denied mortgages by a bank. Mr. Sherby stated that Graham County had received over \$400 thousand dollars in loans and 77 jobs were created and that in the region there have been over \$6,000,000.00 loaned out and over 750 jobs created and 350 jobs have been retained. Mr. Sherby stated that they have a great program and they also assist in grant writing. Mr. Sherby stated that their office also assists older adults, caregivers, and people with disabilities in maintaining quality of life through the Area Agency on Aging. Mr. Sherby stated that these programs are taxpayer funded and their intent is to keep people in their homes and put people back to work. Mr. Sherby also stated that they secured funding for the Helipad that is to be built on Highway 28 with federal dollars which will benefit both Graham and Swain Counties. Mr. Sherby stated that his staff was here to help the county officials reach their goals and these were just examples of what they do. Chairman Eller thanked Mr. Sherby for all that he has done for our county. Commissioner Cody thanked him as well and stated to keep the money coming our way. Mr. Sherby stated that our residents pay federal tax dollars in from wages and they will fight for these funds to be returned to our area. Mr. Sherby stated that sometimes things are not always favorable but we need to keep moving forward.
4. Chairman Eller asks for public comment. No public comment was given.
5. Chairman Eller recessed the workshop.

Keith Eller, Chairman, Graham County Commissioner

Billy Holder, Vice-Chairman, Graham County Commissioner

Lynn Cody, Member, Graham County Commissioner

Connie Orr, Member, Graham County Commissioner

Raymond Williams, Member, Graham County Commissioner

ATTEST: _____
Kim Crisp, Clerk