

Special Meeting – December 3, 2015

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Thursday, December 3, 2015 at 5:30 p.m. in the Graham County Community Building located at 196 Knight Street for a special meeting on the proposed wilderness for the county. All board was present.

1. Chairman Eller called the meeting to order.
2. Chairman Eller asks for approval of the agenda. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve the agenda. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
3. Chairman Eller stated that we are here tonight to discuss the proposed plans by the Forest Service to request more wilderness throughout the county.
4. Commissioner Orr stated that she had spoken with Beverly Elliott with Congressman Mark Meadows office and they are giving us good representation in Raleigh. Ms. Orr stated that Congressman Meadows has given us his support.
5. Commissioner Nelms stated that Congressman Tom Tillis office is also aware of the situation and some of his officials have met with us as well.
6. Chairman Eller asks Andy Cable, EDC Director to speak. Mr. Cable stated that the purpose of the meeting was to prepare the forms that is requested by the forest service concerning the proposed wilderness throughout the county. Mr. Cable stated that once the forms are completed he can make copies for the public to use. Mr. Cable stated that the EDC Board would use the same forms as well. Mr. Cable stated that he has a map for everyone to review and asks that all gather around the table and further asks that the county needed to decide what direction that they wanted to go concerning putting together a package to the Forest Service. Mr. Cable stated that the forms that the forest service put out are very cumbersome and requires a lot of work. Mr. Cable discussed the areas of the map that are affected and made a chart to allow the public to make comments for each particular area. The board discussed the hardships that extra wilderness puts on the rescue squads. Mr. Cable stated that Angela Gee has offered to review our comments to make sure that we were on the right path. Mr. Cable stated that there are criteria that wilderness must meet prior to the designation and it is our job to find the reasons why the areas shouldn't be turned into wilderness. Several members of the public attended the meeting and participated in the discussion.
7. The discussion centered on subjects such as solitude and the public stated that this area is the go between for Atlanta and Knoxville Airports. The discussion included the land that could produce artifacts or medicinal plants for the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. Members in the audience included Jimmy Millsaps, Bo Collins, Dale Wiggins, Ricky Gibson, David & Lois Satterfield and Jerry Phillips. Bo Collins stated that in the west you are allowed to ride on forest service roads and here they are all gated with no entry. Dale Wiggins stated that we need to state as much as we can about each particular area. Jimmy Millsaps stated that a lot of this land had presence of people on it and this was one of the criteria that would go against wilderness. Commissioner Orr stated that our tourism needed to be considered here as well and further stated that if we could ride on the roads this would increase our visitors coming to the area. Dale Wiggins stated that he realizes this is just a study but our individuals covered by the ADA needed to be considered as well.
8. Andy Cable charted the comments per area and stated that he would prepare the paperwork and have it ready to disperse to the general public. Mr. Cable stated that we could hand them out at the county manager's office. Commissioner Nelms stated that we needed to do a public records request on all the specific plants in our county to the Forest Service.
9. The group also discussed the wild and scenic rivers and discussed the impacts to our area this will have if this is accepted and passed by Congress. Andy Cable stated that the water releases on the Cheoah are only done due to a biological schedule and the forest service has to manually put in sand into the river to manage the elk toe.
10. The group was pleased with the charts and will meet again once the forest service reviews our findings. The group learned that there are six rivers that will be affected in our county and the main purpose in the overall opinion was to prevent us from damming up the rivers or creeks. Commissioner Williams stated that it is a shame of the amount of money that is spent on trying to take our land when they can't keep up the land that they already have.
11. The board asks that the resolution be sent to the three Town's in our county.

12. The board wanted another meeting called to finish the paperwork and to fill in the comments on the scenic rivers.
13. Commissioner Williams made the motion to go into closed session under G.S. 143-318.11(a) (6) for personnel. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
14. Commissioner Nelms made the motion to go back into open session. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
15. Commissioner Orr made the motion upon the recommendation of the department head, Larry Hembree to hire Drew Silvers and Allison Grindstaff as part time ems workers with a review in two months. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
16. The board tabled the request concerning the Animal Ordinance Officer until legal counsel could be contacted.
17. Commissioner Orr made the motion to set the salary for Robert Michael Edwards at \$65,000.00 with a review in six months. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
18. Commissioner Nelms made the motion to allow each department to have a Christmas Dinner on December 22, 2015 from 12:00 noon to 2:00 p.m. and then go home. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
19. Commissioner Cody made the motion to review the EMS Personnel scheduling in two months to see if the two part time employees will solve the problem of overtime. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
20. Commissioner Nelms made the motion to adjourn. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

Keith Eller, Chairman, Graham County Commissioner

Jacob Nelms, 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 to the Board