

Special Meeting – March 11, 2013

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Monday, March 11, 2013 at 10:00 a.m. in the Graham County Community Building located at 196 Knight Street Robbinsville NC for a special meeting on the Graham County Pay Plan. Commissioners present were: Robert M. Edwards; Keith Eller; Billy Holder and Connie Orr. Commissioner Williams was absent due to illness and was excused from the meeting.

1. Commissioner Edwards called the meeting to order and stated that the board would be reviewing the county pay plan. Commissioner Edwards stated that one-third of the budget went to salaries and benefits and the county needed an updated pay plan in place which is required by the state. Commissioner Edwards stated that the county did not have an evaluation process in place until last year which is also a very important part for the pay plan. Commissioner Edwards asks Manager Cable to present the pay plan.
2. Manager Cable stated that he has been working on the advancements and pay grades for the pay plan. Manager Cable requested that the board fix the inequities first before implementing the pay plan fully. Manager Cable stated that a change would need to be made to the personnel policy regarding the pay plan guidelines and further presented the step increase to be as follows:
 - a. 1% Excellent / Good Evaluation
 - b. 1% Achievement or Special Recognition
 - c. 1% Per 5 years of employment with Graham County (not retro-active)
 - d. Unsatisfactory Evaluations will result in a zero net increase of employee pay.
3. Manager Cable stated that the proposed pay plan would revolve on a yearly basis and employees hired on or after January 1st of any given year will not be considered for meritorious salary adjustments at the beginning of the next fiscal year (July 1st). Manager Cable stated that most employees could see a 3% increase every five years. Manager Cable stated that all employees shall be considered for any approved cost-of-living adjustment approved by the Board of Commissioners, regardless of their employment status. Commissioner Edwards stated that this would give the county a measure to go by when preparing the upcoming budget and also stated that the employee would be recognized for longevity which has never been done in the past. Commissioner Orr asks how the board justifies having more employees per capita than any county in the state and the salaries and benefits totaled 50% of the county budget. Commissioner Orr stated that the board needed to find a way to keep the pay plan in line and show the taxpayers what they are getting for their money. Commissioner Edwards stated that the county did a reduction in force and asks where they could cut anymore than they already did. Finance Officer Rebecca Garland stated that the county may show more employees as per population but we needed to take into account the services that other counties contract out. Ms. Garland stated that we needed to compare the counties based on what services are offered in our county versus the other like sized counties. Commissioner Edwards gave an example of Alexander County where they contract their entire sanitation department out and further stated that our county did not have the revenues that other counties have because of our tax base. Commissioner Holder stated that no matter how you look at the number of employees that the county has the taxpayers still foot the bill. Commissioner Edwards asks how many departments are grant funded. Ms. Garland stated that Transit, Senior Center, Health Department, DSS and half the salary of the EM Director. Commissioner Orr stated that regardless of the grant funded offices the county taxpayers still pay the employees' salaries. Commissioner Holder stated that our county has been a training school for the EMS employees and the Sheriff's Department. The board discussed the only way that the county has of bringing more revenue is to go up on the mil rate. Commissioner Holder stated that when this happens it makes it that much harder for our fixed income residents to pay their taxes. Commissioner Edwards stated that the board had to deal with maintaining services in the county and was very thankful that our point of sales was continuing to climb which will help advocate not raising taxes. Commissioner Edwards stated that we do not spend lavishly but we do have to maintain services. Commissioner Orr stated that we needed more information on our employees who do more than one job in the county and further suggested that the county follow through with the cross training. Commissioner Holder stated that the county employees that we have need to be working when the public enters their offices and not be standing around talking. Manager Cable stated that the department heads will have evaluations just the same as all employees. Commissioner Orr stated that the board needed to look at efficiency and account for all dollars and pennies that are spent. Commissioner Edwards stated that the comprehensive plan will help us look to future projections and recommends that a committee be formed by county government to make sure that all services are offered to our taxpayers. Commissioner Edwards stated that the county has a new personnel policy in place for the first time in years and wanted to make sure that the employees are all treated fairly when it comes down to the evaluations. Commissioner Orr stated that our employees need to be recognized if they find ways to be more efficient. The board discussed approving the pay plan at the next regular meeting on March 18, 2013 and wanted the changes made to the personnel policy and proposed pay plan by this date. Manager Cable reiterated that the

county needed to fix the inequities first and then proceed with implementing the pay plan according to the steps established but keep in mind that some salaries would be frozen until the entire county was brought up to the established rate of pay. Commissioner Edwards stated that job descriptions needed to specify the grade at which the position begins and also stated that the county needed to post jobs in-house first before advertising in the public to give employees an equitable chance to move up in their careers. Ms. Garland suggested that the board review and revise if necessary the fees that are charged for services because the county can no longer rely on the PILT payments and we needed to get more creative on filling the gap from losing this money. Ms. Garland further stated that the schools will be impacted by this loss which will cause them to ask the county for more funding not by their choice but by the budget cuts from the state and federal government. Ms. Garland stated that the county needed to ask other counties about the outsourcing of services to get an idea of what the county may be losing by providing the services in-house. Commissioner Edwards stated that this is a starting place and we should expect glitches but the main goal was to provide future boards with a guideline to use.

4. The board all agreed to get the department heads feedback on the pay plan and Manager Cable stated that he would reach out to the department heads for their suggestions. Commissioner Holder stated that he was all for making more money but the bill has to be paid and the board needed to bring revenues to the county in any way that they could.
5. Commissioner Edwards thanked the administrative staff for their time and work spent on the pay plan and stated that this pay plan is for the betterment of the county.
6. Commissioner Holder made the motion to adjourn. Commissioner Eller seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

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

Keith Eller, Member, Graham County Commissioner

Billy Holder, Member, Graham County Commissioner

Connie Orr, Member, Graham County Commissioner

Raymond Williams. Member, Graham County Commissioner

ATTEST:

Kim Crisp, Clerk to the Board