

Workshop Session – June 17, 2013

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Monday, June 17, 2013 at 4:00 p.m. for their regular workshop session in the Graham County Community Building located at 196 Knight Street Robbinsville, NC. Commissioners present were: Robert M. Edwards, Billy Holder, Keith Eller and Raymond Williams. Commissioner Connie Orr was absent due to family illness.

1. Commissioner Edwards called the workshop session to order.
2. Commissioner Edwards asks Kristy Cable and Rhonda Davis to speak on the Special Olympics. Ms. Cable thanked the board for their time and showed them a video of the local and state games that our county kids attended. Ms. Cable stated that our kids won several first place medals and she was very proud of their accomplishments. Ms. Cable stated that this program is funded with grant money that the school receives and with local donations. The board was very impressed with the video and thanked both ladies for their dedication and hard work toward this program. Commissioner Edwards asks when the games will come back to Robbinsville. Ms. Cable stated that it would be three years before the games come back to our town. The board all agreed to give all the support that they can.
3. Commissioner Edwards gave a brief explanation of the reduction of the PILT funds and further stated that the board only became aware of this cut today. Commissioner Edwards stated that the board was anticipating \$235,000.00 but only received \$67,000.00. Commissioner Edwards stated that he as well as the county manager had been on the phone trying to get an explanation of the reduction. Commissioner Edwards stated that the board could not adopt the budget until the board made a decision on how to fund the shortfall. Commissioner Edwards stated that the PILT monies had been reauthorized in 2009 and we are just now feeling the effects of that reauthorization. Manager Cable stated that he had contacted the surrounding counties and they too were not aware of this reduction. Manager Cable explained that the reduction was in connection with the Secure Rural Schools money being withheld from the PILT payments that are made by the US Forest Service and further stated that the county receives \$2.48 per acre for all land in the US Forest Service. Commissioner Holder stated that the landowners in the county will once again have to foot the bill and this is not right. Commissioner Holder stated that the county did not have a guarantee that they would not continue to cut the PILT payments in the future. Commissioner Edwards stated that this is a Congress decision and encourages people to lobby for our small counties on this issue. Commissioner Edwards stated that the NCACC lobbies against the elimination of the PILT funds on a regular basis and hopes that Congress will revamp the whole system to the betterment of our counties. Doug Cable, a member of the public stated that the commissioners would have no other choice but to go up on our taxes. The board did not want to consider this option due to raising the mil rate by two cents already. Commissioner Edwards stated that the board would look at all options. Commissioner Edwards stated that this was just another unfunded mandate that small counties have to deal with and he would not vote on the budget tonight. Commissioner Edwards also stated that the revamp of the Unemployment fees was also a deterring factor for the board due to the new surtax that is now required for the county to pay. Lisa Russo, a member of the public asks the board if there was any way to toughen up the unemployment so that it is not so easy for people to continue to draw unemployment. Commissioner Edwards stated that this is a state and federal issue and the county did not have a say in the unemployment laws. Beth Fields, a member of the public stated that the State had just realized that unemployment benefits were being paid to prisoners in jail and this needed to stop as well. Commissioner Edwards stated that there was a lot of work ahead of us that has to be addressed.
4. Commissioner Edwards asks for public comment. No further comment was given.
5. Commissioner Edwards adjourned the workshop session.

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