

Workshop Session – October 21, 2013

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Monday, October 21, 2013 at 4:00 p.m. for their regular workshop session in the Graham County Community building located at 196 Knight Street Robbinsville NC. All board was present.

1. Commissioner Edwards called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone.
2. Commissioner Edwards stated that only one item was listed on the agenda and he asks Lisa Beavers to speak on her Discovery Bill. Ms. Beavers stated that back in September she received a discovery bill on her house for \$1534.03. Ms. Beavers stated that she has always paid her taxes every year and was very stunned when she received the discovery bill. Ms. Beavers stated that in 2009 a survey was done and that she went through an attorney's office, paid the taxes, had the property stamped by the register of deeds and assumed everything was taken care of. Ms. Beavers stated that when she contacted Ms. Erma Phillips, Tax Assessor she was told that a clerical error was made and the house was never picked up only the land and that the taxpayer is still liable for the taxes. Commissioner Edwards ask Ms. Erma Phillips to explain how this happened. Ms. Phillips stated that Ms. Beavers purchased the property from a parent track in 2009 and the house was dropped from the tax card by clerical error in 2009. Ms. Phillips stated that during the re-evaluation this year she discovered that the house had not been on the tax scroll since 2010 and Ms. Beavers was only being charged \$115.00 per year for her land. Ms. Phillips stated that when the property was transferred the house was deleted when a code was entered wrong in the tax office. Ms. Phillips stated that when she made the discovery she did not charge penalties or interest and by statute she could have charge interest but felt since the tax office had made the error interest should not be charged. Ms. Phillips stated by statute she cannot forgive taxes that are due but she can compromise on the penalties and interest. Ms. Phillips stated that she did contact Michael Brown with the NC Department of Revenue and spoke to him with Manager Cable and Clerk Crisp present on this situation and he stated that error is not forgiveness on the taxpayer's part and a case similar to this just lost in the court of appeals. Commissioner Edwards stated that Ms. Beavers had a right to appeal the decision given by the board once it was given and the board has (30) days to make that decision. Commissioner Edwards stated that he would need to study this appeal and make his decision at a later date. Ms. Beavers asks why the taxes increased so drastically from 2009 to 2013. Ms. Phillips stated that the schedule of values had changed and the prices had went up with the 2010 revaluation and the value now included the home, garage and land where before it was land only. Commissioner Edwards thanked Ms. Beavers and told her the board would let her know their decision within (30) days. me
3. Commissioner Edwards asks Ms. Phillips about the PUV's. Ms. Phillips stated that she was seeing some of the PUV's pulling out due to their not having a plan in place and she has audited about 1/8 of the properties that are in the PUV's.
4. Commissioner Edwards asks Manager Cable to give the board an update on the government shutdown and the impacts on county government. Manager Cable stated that the county is looking at fronting \$127,000.00 to support the program that are normally paid with county money through the month of November which impacts Senior Citizens, Childcare (Health Department and DSS) and Transit Services but the thing that is most concerning is January and February because we do not know what to anticipate. Manager Cable stated that we have been left on our own pretty much to figure out what to do and the department heads involved have brainstormed within their departments to try to prepare on what to expect and hope for the best. Manager Cable stated that he and Finance Officer Rebecca Garland would be coming to the board with discussion to get an understanding of what the board wants put into place as things come along. Manager Cable asks the board's decision of making future plans or using fund balance as a means to hold the strings together until the shutdown has been resolved. Commissioner Holder stated that if this happens again all of us know that we can't support these programs and why waste \$127,000.00 at the beginning. Commissioner Holder stated that he knew that Childcare is a big issue but other people have had to make other plans when their childcare didn't come through for them. Commissioner Edwards stated that unfortunately in this county if you don't work your fired; most employers are hard and cruel when it comes to missing time because of childcare. Commissioner Edwards stated that the taxpayers needed to know that the county pays ahead not in arrears for these programs and this could hurt our county's finances very quickly. Commissioner Holder stated that the county would be supporting two months back to back so the true amount would be \$257,000.00 with no guarantee that we would get that money back and if the government dries up then the county dries up. That is just too risky! Ms. Garland stated that Essential Services are hard to understand and we need to get guidance from the state to see what they would fund concerning these services but as of right now the state is not saying. Manager Cable stated that if there is another shutdown January 15th

maybe there will be more communication and they will tell us what will be funded but if it does happen we must provide \$44,300.00 program services regardless of funding. Commissioner Edwards stated that we were the only state in the union to deny WIC Vouchers and this was not right. Commissioner Edwards felt that the counties had been hung out to dry. Commissioner Edwards stated that the county needed a plan in place before January 15th on how the county needed to proceed and be proactive. Commissioner Edwards stated he needed an understanding of what employees were working under grant funded programs and a plan of how these employees will be affected by the possible upcoming shutdown. Commissioner Holder stated that if the grant dried up then the train has stopped. Commissioner Edwards asks Manager Cable to contact Region A on the Childcare funding issue. Jay Kelly, a member from the audience, stated that the taxpayers cannot continue to pay more taxes for a problem that will continue into next year. Mr. Kelly stated that we needed to start making cuts now and make a contingency plan now and that is all he had to say. Commissioner Edwards stated that he understands essential services are critical and one example is dialysis for our residents and he agrees that the county has to have a plan in place. Mr. Kelly stated that having a plan is not being an alarmist it is having a future and looking at all programs and knowing where we stand. Manager Cable stated that our first foreclosure is going into the paper this week and he thanked the staff for their hard work and thanked the board of commissioners for their decisions to pursue these back tax collections as a way of closing the debt gap. Manager Cable stated that the county has saved money and built the fund balance to a level that the Local Government Commission approves of and is pleased, considering where we were at in 2008. Ms. Garland stated that it was important to remember that with federally funded programs if you don't spend down the dollars then you lose the money for the next fiscal upcoming year so it's important to expend those dollars to the full use so we have to be careful when we implement our plan on the furloughs making sure that they follow the shutdown where the impact will not harm our indirects but will only reflect the impact from the shutdown.

5. Commissioner Edwards asks for further comment. No further comment was given.

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