

Regular Meeting – June 6, 2017

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Tuesday, June 6, 2017 at 5:30 p.m. for their regular monthly meeting in the Graham County Community Building located at 196 Knight Street Robbinsville, NC. All board was present.

1. Chairman Eller called the meeting to order.
2. Chairman Eller asks Commissioner Williams to give the Invocation.
3. Chairman Eller asks Commissioner Orr to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.
4. Chairman Eller asks for approval of the agenda. Manager Garland stated that we needed to remove Item #7 and add Sophia Paulos to closed session. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to approve the agenda with the amendments as stated. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
5. Chairman Eller asks for approval of the minutes for: Workshop Session May 16th; Regular Meeting May 16th; Budget Meeting May 22nd and May 23rd. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve. Commissioner Wiggins seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
6. Chairman Eller asks Gary Lail to speak. Mr. Lail stated that he lives on Penhook and five of his family members own a tract of land which used to have trailers sitting on them. Mr. Lail stated that the one lot that used to have a doublewide is \$110.00 extra in taxes and the lot that used to have a singlewide is \$12.00 extra in taxes and the lots are the same size. Mr. Lail stated that this didn't sound right. Chairman Eller stated that they will check on this issue and give Mr. Lail an answer within 30 days. Mr. Lail stated that Linda Wilkey had went and spoke with the tax assessor and she told them that trailer was gone but was informed that she could not take this off the books. Mr. Lail also stated that he lived in a doublewide that was underpinned with blocks and it is 15 years old and the value has never decreased. He thanked the board for their time.
7. Chairman Eller asks Sue Dinnsen to speak with Duke Energy. Ms. Dinnsen stated that Duke Energy has an energy efficiency program designed for Duke Energy's customers in select areas and all who participate will save money and receive education on ways to improve and install products that will lower their energy costs. Ms. Dinnsen stated that this program started in 2010 and they have helped 100,000 homes and are looking to help 1000 customers in Robbinsville. The program is to provide each resident free products/ services such as: In-home energy assessment; Installation of energy conservation measures; and Energy education that will enable the residents to make behavioral changes to control and reduce energy usage. The program will install LED Lightbulbs; put aerators in bathrooms; supply covers for window a/c units to block the air in the winter months; supply refrigerator thermometers, weather-stripping and door sweeps and foam insulation spray. Ms. Dinnsen stated that they are working to implement a door to door approach and will be working with the county commissioners so that the residents know that this is not a scam. Ms. Dinnsen stated that they are available to talk to church groups, women groups and the local sheriff's department. Ms. Dinnsen stated that they will have three crews of two man teams and they will have a box truck with supplies for our customers. Ms. Dinnsen stated that they will be having a kick off dinner on July 27th and Lynn's place will be catering the event. Ms. Dinnsen stated that we will be helping a little over 1000 residents and the crews will be in this area for two months. Ms. Dinnsen stated that eligible neighborhoods are those defined segments of Duke Energy Customers where at least 50% of households may have high energy burdens with limited resources of income. Ms. Dinnsen stated that customers will receive personalized invitation letters, reminder post cards and last chance letters to encourage participation. Ms. Dinnsen hopes that the board will help her get the word out. Commissioner Wiggins asks if they work with agencies such as DSS. Ms. Dinnsen stated that this is a Duke Energy stand-alone program. Ms. Dinnsen stated that Lisa Leatherman, our local contact, will attend the kick off meeting in July.
8. Chairman Eller asks Hoke Shirley to speak. Mr. Shirley stated that he was here to introduce the High End, Turn-Key Duke Energy program to help install new energy efficient interior and exterior LED lighting (High End Lighting only, such as Cree, Hubbell and Phillips) to beautify your facility, improve safety, reduce maintenance cost and lower your energy bills. Duke Energy pays a substantial part of the material and installation cost, up front, based on yearly energy savings. Mr. Shirley stated that this is available through Duke Energy's SBES (Small Business Energy Saver) program and you can visit www.duke-energy.com/sbes for further information. Mr. Shirley stated that to take part in this Energy Efficiency program please call him at 864-597-9728

to set an appointment for a free no obligation Energy Assessment and this is for all of our Duke Customer locations under 180 kW average demand qualify. The board asks that he look at our P&J Building that we are renovating.

9. Chairman Eller asks Sophia Paulos to give her monthly report. Ms. Paulos stated that she is very excited to share with you the continued rise in the local economy. Our local businesses continue to open. Ms. Paulos stated that she had spoken with the owner of Willow Tree, the new restaurant and bakery and her biggest problem right now is she's too busy and is looking to add employees immediately and working towards ensuring she can facilitate the rapid growth of her business.
10. Ms. Paulos stated that the Wolf Creek Gas Station has been purchased and is now under renovation and expect to see big improvements in the appearance of the store and increased sales from that location.
11. Ms. Paulos stated that our local natural products businesses continue to grow with increased market access and greater sales revenue than this time last year.
12. Ms. Paulos stated that on May 25th she graduated from the Rural Economic Development Institute and this was an amazing experience that connected her with an immense amount of resources across the state. Ms. Paulos wanted to thank the board for supporting her participation in this amazing program and as a result, she is working with new contacts to revitalize Robbinsville. Ms. Paulos is currently organizing our first Main Street meeting to be held on June 26th at 4:00 p.m. in the Courthouse and she will have the input from our students and a broad representation of county organization and town leaders who are being invited to attend. Ms. Paulos encouraged the board to attend and would make sure that each receives a reminder the week prior.
13. Ms. Paulos stated that the forest service released its first revision plan and more than likely there will be two more before the final draft. Part of the changes included plans to allow logging alongside the roads to widen and allow more sunlight on the roads and this will create a much faster drying time reducing maintenance costs which is called Daylight;
 - a. High Clearance – This will keep cost down by decreasing the amount of money needed to maintain the need for passenger vehicles and;
 - b. Dips – Sustained grade develops channels and ruts. Instead, they will build dips along the grade; broad based dips. This will reduce erosion and maintenance costs putting them on a different maintenance schedule so they are able to manage their budget and;
 - c. Program Idea – Remove non-natives and plant native plants that absorb toxins and prevent erosion and couple with NC NPA.
14. Ms. Paulos stated the due to citizen input, many areas have been removed from recommended wilderness and for areas that were advocated for has been assigned to remove important areas in Snowbird for recreation. They pulled the area back to the original WSA. The Wilderness Society and SELC agreed to this on the front end in support of Graham County's citizens and tourism economy. Ms. Paulos stated that areas that will be smaller are Yellow Hammer Branch Tapoco Property, Joyce Kilmer Extension #2 and Snowbird. Ms. Paulos stated that all reductions in proposed Wilderness have occurred in Graham County and this is largely due to Graham County's active role in the revision process.
15. Ms. Paulos stated that the Tiered Objectives and Benchmarks for timber are. To plan direction to both interface and matrix. Interface, matrix, backcountry. For timber purposes, interface and matrix are nearly identical. The Interface accounts for a scenic buffer for areas where people spend the most time. For Vegetation management in Interface 650-1200 acres annually or more with the help of partners or natural disturbance timber harvest on 800-1600 acres annually. In this plan, where we are right now is the very bottom end of what is going to be harvested. We are not going backward anymore and over the next 10 years, regardless of how much investment we get from our partners, we're going to try to at least double timber harvest. The 3000-4000 acres will be analyzed in the Environmental Impact Statement and will not be included in that but 800-1600 acres is the immediate target and 3000-4000 acres will begin being analyzed for EIS to ensure that number can be increased annually through partnerships like the one Graham County is participating in. A significant portion of that will occur in and around Graham County and we have a disproportional amount of harvestable timber available and fewer of the factors that would make harvest more costly such as interface requirements and topographic issues. Ms. Paulos will be meeting with several stakeholder members over the next month to craft a proposal for the Unicoi Geographic area (the area taking up the majority of our county) and this group will include partners from timber, wildlife/hunting, as well as

environmental groups. The expressed goal is to come up with a proposal for the forest service that all can agree to and ensure that Graham County's needs are met with regard to re-opening roads, overall better access to the land, increased and improved maintenance of facilities including but not limited to trails, bathrooms and campgrounds, and greatly increased economic development through recreation and timber harvest.

16. Ms. Paulos stated that she had recently met with Keith Conover, the broadband official for NC's Broadband Infrastructure Office serving the Western Region of NC and Ann Bass, ARC's new WNC Representative and we discussed strategies to formulate several more proposals for ARC funding to increase access in Graham County. Ms. Paulos will be creating an asset map of existing broadband infrastructure, telephone poles and owners, DOT projects, easements and CDBG projects so that we can implement the resulting projects as swiftly as possible.
17. Ms. Paulos stated that several months ago she thanked the board for supporting the Broadband Initiative in Graham County and at that meeting she was informed that Graham County's efforts had served as the inspiration for a broader plan for the region and that plans were in the works to complete such a project. That project came to life today when the RFP for the first phase of the regional broadband plan was released by the Southwest Commission on behalf of the Mountain West Partnership. The purpose of this project is to develop a plan to advance broadband infrastructure investment in the region by training local officials on pertinent issues and conducting community assessments / profiles. The project will fund broadband training and community assessment/profiles for the counties of Region A. Training will be a 1-1/2 day retreat with seminar topics such as legal and regulatory matters, net neutrality, broadband friendly policies and administrative procedures for local governments, types of public/private partnership models, review of resident and business survey instruments to be provided by consultant for use by the counties and review of the community profile tool. The survey of residents and businesses as well as community support organizations serving vulnerable populations. The next step will be to train and assist local governments to use the community profile tool to catalog resources, broadband friendly policies, streamlined administrative procedures, asset, and service provider revenue opportunities that could attract a provider. The consultant will then meet with communities to identify findings, share information and ideas and discuss emerging strategies. The consultant will combine findings into a comprehensive regional assessment and inventory.
18. Ms. Paulos stated that last month she reported on an item in Governor Cooper's budget: \$20 million dollars to expand middle and last mile broadband in rural NC. That money disappeared from the NC Senate budget as well as the NC House Budget. The BRIGHT ACT, co-sponsored by Kevin Corbin, does not have a financial component nor is there one in the works. While the BRIGHT ACT has done a world of good getting rural broadband on the minds of folks in Raleigh, we are going to need funding much like rural electrification. Our businesses and our children deserve access to this increasingly essential service.
19. Ms. Paulos stated that the proposed budget impact on WNC Counties is not good where SRS, PILT, USFS is concerned. Ms. Paulos stated that the PILT payments would drop by \$830,000.00 and the Secure Rural Schools was reverted back to the 1908 law under which counties received 25% of the revenue generated on USFS lands (largely from timber harvest). Ms. Paulos encourages the board to write letters to our representatives to support SRS and PILT funding.
20. Chairman Eller asks Manager Garland to give the Manager's Report. Manager Garland stated that we are in the middle of several projects one of which is the P&J Building. The Local Government Commission met this afternoon and we are waiting on their approval, the loan is set to close on June 22nd or June 23rd and we will need the Chairman to be available for signatures. Commissioner Nelms is coordinating the move of the contents to another site and Claudine Gibson has volunteered some space. Manager Garland stated that we need a decision about the "war room" furnishings whether we will be keeping it for this meeting room.
21. Manager Garland stated that the 911 Call Center has the footings poured and the foundation work is underway.
22. Manager Garland stated that the Shooting Range permit application has been submitted to DENR and we are waiting to hear back from them. The contractor did hydro seeding, however, it has not taken. Manager Garland stated that Commissioner Nelms went to a school board meeting and they have a gift of the land under consideration.
23. Manager Garland stated that we have been asked to sign a resolution concerning Mental Health. Commissioner Orr stated that the Senate has proposed cuts to the Mental Health Funding for indigent populations for clients with mental health issues that are not qualified for

Medicaid. Commissioner Orr stated that these cuts will impact the folks that have opioid addiction and we will also see deep cuts to the disabled population. Commissioner Orr asks that the board pass the resolution that will support adequate funding to meet the Mental Health, Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and Substance Use Disorder service needs for citizens of Graham County. Commissioner Williams made the motion to approve the resolution. Commissioner Wiggins seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

24. Commissioner Orr stated that VAYA Health is having a ribbon cutting on Friday, June 09, 2017 at the Health Department to open their new kiosk located at this facility.
25. Manager Garland stated that she received a conference call with NCDOT about Highway 28 on May 25th and it related to setting the priority for the total project. The part that will be placed in the deliverable STOP is section 2 that goes to the Town of Fontana Dam due to the number of accidents occurring. This will occur in the next five years and the next stretch would be Highway 143 upgrade. Manager Garland stated all other upgrades will be in years to come.
26. Manager Garland presented the board with an attached draft of an advertisement letting the public know that it is illegal to dump anything other than bagged household garbage and that we will be fining folks and working on citations. Manager Garland stated a reminder to the public that under our solid waste plan, she as county manager and Gavin as sanitation director have the authority to enforce our ordinance and we will be doing so effective immediately. Manager Garland stated that we needed to amend our ordinance to add criminal consequences. Manager Garland stated that she has found some grant opportunities on compactors for recycling and the board is actively pursuing avenues of creating greater efficiencies and she has attached a draft of an advertisement for the paper.
27. Manager Garland stated that we received the final invoice from Cox and Son Roofing for the Stecoah Valley Center roof and she has attached a budget amendment to move \$55,000.00 from contingency into public building repairs. Manager Garland stated that the final cost was \$67,361.00 which included some additional rotted decking. Manager Garland stated that SVC will be reimbursing us for \$4428.00 and she spoke with Beth Fields who will be sending the check as soon as we get it invoiced. Ms. Fields stated that there was some minor issues with the flashing around the chimney and has called for a return repair and she will advise me when we are good to make the payment. Manager Garland stated that she needed approval of Budget Amendment #9. Commissioner Orr made the motion to accept Budget Amendment #9. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
28. Manager Garland stated that Wes Jameson from NCDOT had called regarding the sidewalks crossing the bridge into the school entry way. The final cost to Graham County for our part is \$11,224.00 and he also said that if the final cost is less then we will be reimbursed however, if it exceeds that amount the County will be required to pay the difference. Chairman Eller stated that the price quoted to the board in the past was \$9,000.00 and the cost would be split with the town, the school and the county. The board asks that Manager Garland call the school and find out their intention.
29. Manager Garland stated that it was time to renew our Barracuda web filter and we can purchase a one year contract for \$1927.48 plus tax or a three year renewal for \$4917.86. Manager Garland stated that she reached out to Katalyst and they advise that if we were to replace or upgrade the device within the three year window that the contract would extend to the upgraded device. Manager Garland recommended getting the three year option at a savings of \$863.00 to the County. Manager Garland stated that this is not something that we will ever terminate in our security features. Commissioner Orr made the motion to go with the three year renewal. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
30. Manager Garland stated that she received a letter of response from Mark Meadows on our letter regarding the SRS timber payments and placed it in the board's packet.
31. Manager Garland stated that she received an email from Mr. Forbis with Habitat for Humanity and he has received four applications, one of which looks very promising and he will be back in touch within the next few weeks.
32. Manager Garland stated that the Rural Center meeting has been cancelled tomorrow due to illness of one of the presenters and they will advise of a rescheduled date later.
33. Manager Garland stated that she met with the Provost at WCU and it went very well. Manager Garland stated that she is very supportive of what is happening in Graham County and wants to partner with us with Internships and other initiatives and there will be more information on this effort forthcoming.

34. Manager Garland stated that she would be gone on Friday for a conference at WCU and she will be taking a comp day to facilitate her son's participation in the NC-TASH Inclusion Conference and he will be telling how Graham County has played a big role in his inclusive community life.
35. Manager Garland stated that she would now go to the discussion items. The county had Releases in the amount of \$702.27 and asks for board approval. Commissioner Williams made the motion to approve. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
36. Manager Garland stated that Commissioner Williams wanted to discuss the Santeetlah Fire Department. Commissioner Williams stated that the fire department holds the deed to the land that the fire department is built on but the building is co-owned by the Town of Santeetlah and the Fire Department. Commissioner Williams stated that they rented the parking lot out to Malibu Boats and the fire department did not receive one dime of this revenue and he is asking the board to see that this is handled fairly. The board agreed that this is between the Santeetlah Fire Department and the Town of Santeetlah.
37. Manager Garland stated Commissioner Williams would discuss the Frontier Service. Commissioner Williams stated that the board of commissioners need to write a letter complaining of the service that our residents are given by Frontier. The board was in agreement to this request and would send a letter to the Attorney General's office.
38. Manager Garland stated that we received a request from Polk County to sign a resolution on Property Tax Reform. Manager Garland stated that Polk County went through a REVAL and the property has increased over 300% in some areas and the residents cannot pay this amount. Commissioner Orr made the motion to write a resolution regarding Property Tax Reform. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
39. Manager Garland stated that the board had been polled for the repairs to an air conditioner at the EMS Base. The poll stated to replace the Air Conditioner unit that is 12 years old that cools the dispatch office. The cost to repair is \$2000.00 or you can replace for \$5000.00 and have a 5 year warranty. The vote was unanimous to replace the unit. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve the poll. Commissioner Wiggins seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
40. Manager Garland stated that we have a request from Tapoco Lodge to sign a Local Government Opinion that they are suitable people and the location is a suitable place for them to be considered by the ABC Commission. It is noted that this is a courtesy only and a mere indication of no without an explanation is an insufficient basis for rejection and cannot be considered by the Commission. Commissioner Orr made the motion to sign off on the letter request. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Chairman Eller calls for a vote. Commissioner Eller, Nelms, Orr and Wiggins voted yes. Commissioner Williams voted no. Motion carried four to one.
41. Chairman Eller asks for new or old business. Commissioner Williams stated that Darrin Stewart lives on property that is in the floodplain and he moved trailers out and moved new ones in and they are trying to charge \$500.00 per trailer for the elevation certificate. Commissioner Williams wanted Manager Garland to speak with Larry Hembree and find out what the charge is for and why is it so much.
42. Manager Garland stated that an email just came through and we have been approved by the Local Government Commission for the loan on the renovations of the P&J Building. The board was pleased to hear this good news.
43. Chairman Eller asks for public comment. Katy Lynch was signed in for public comment. Ms. Lynch stated that she realizes that the county has a lot going on and dealing with the budget is hard especially when dealing with drastic cuts but in (10) weeks we will have thousands of people here to view the total solar eclipse and this is an excellent opportunity to showcase our county. Ms. Lynch asks who is responsible for the food, toilets, traffic control, and transportation. Ms. Sophia Paulos stated that Larry Hembree, the Sheriff, NCDOT, USFS and a lot of separate entities are working on their pieces but everyone needed to be on the same page. Ms. Paulos stated that the Transit vehicles will be used for transport on this day. The board discussed that this will be a good time for our vendors to make some quick capital. Commissioner Williams stated that Stecoah Valley Center is hosting events on this day as well. Ms. Lynch stated that the anticipated number of people coming to the WNC counties is 100,000 people and an estimated 25,000 to 35,000 will be coming to Graham County. The board all stated that the Hooper Bald was ground zero and we needed to make this event as pleasant as possible. Ms. Lynch stated that we needed to get all people together and invite as many volunteers as we can.
44. Chairman Eller stated that we now needed to go into closed session under G.S. 143-318.11(a) (1) (3) (5) (6) for privileged or confidential information, attorney-client privilege, personnel and

contracts. Commissioner Nelms made the motion to go into closed session as stated.

Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

45. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to go back into open session. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
46. Commissioner Williams made the motion to hire RS&M Appraisal Services, Inc. to do our commercial business property revaluation for up to \$30,000.00. Commissioner Wiggins seconded this motion. Vote unanimous. Manager Garland stated that this is the same company who did our revaluation in 2015 and the price remained the same.
47. Commissioner Williams made the motion to allow Sophia Paulos, Economic Development Director to sign off on the letter to Director Mick Mulvaney with the inclusion of the verbiage to paragraph six: More timber management; more timber harvest and add "existing wilderness" with the board of commissioners approving the final changes. Commissioner Wiggins seconded this motion. Chairman Eller called for a motion. Commissioner Eller, Nelms, Wiggins and Williams voted yes. Commissioner Orr voted no. Motion carried four to one.
48. Commissioner Williams made the motion to allow Sophia Paulos, Economic Development Director to sign off on the letter to the Congressional Appropriations Committee with the inclusion of the verbiage to paragraph seven: More timber management; more timber harvest; and add "existing wilderness" with the board of commissioners approving the final changes. Commissioner Wiggins seconded this motion. Chairman Eller calls for a vote. Commissioner Eller, Nelms, Wiggins and Williams voted yes. Commissioner Orr voted no. Motion carried four to one.
49. Commissioner Orr made the motion to deny the proposed revisions from Owle Construction on #1 (1a & 1b) and to accept the revisions (2) through (6) on the Graham County DSS and DPH Facility for a total savings of \$19,350.00. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
50. Commissioner Williams made the motion to adjourn. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

Keith Eller, Chairman, Graham County Commissioner

Connie Orr, Vice-Chairman, Graham County Commissioner

Jacob Nelms, Member, Graham County Commissioner

Dale E. Wiggins, Member, Graham County Commissioner

Raymond Williams, Member, Graham County Commissioner

ATTEST:

Kim Crisp, Clerk to the Board