

## Regular Meeting – May 2, 2017

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Tuesday, May 2, 2017 for their regular monthly meeting at 5:30 p.m. in the Graham County Community Building located at 196 Knight Street Robbinsville, NC. All commissioners 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 and requests to be added to Closed Session for Personnel. Commissioner Williams made the motion to amend the agenda and approve. Commissioner Wiggins seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
5. Chairman Eller asks for approval of the Budget Meeting April 17<sup>th</sup>; Workshop Session April 18<sup>th</sup>; Regular Meeting April 18<sup>th</sup>; and the Emergency Meeting on April 24<sup>th</sup>. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve the minutes as stated. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
6. Chairman Eller stated that he needed a motion to close the regular meeting and open the public hearing for the negotiation of an installment financing contract for the Phillips and Jordan Building. Manager Garland stated that we are in the process of the final bids for the renovation of the Phillips and Jordan Building which will be used to house the DSS and the Health Department. Manager Garland stated that in the past when we were deciding to build a new structure the cost was estimated at five to six million dollars and we have saved the taxpayers of this county two million dollars by purchasing the Phillips and Jordan Building. Manager Garland stated that we will discuss options to pay off the 2006 loan of the Health Department or refinance to a taxable loan. The current loan is tax exempt due to our being a government entity. Manager Garland stated that we do not anticipate the project to have an impact on our tax rate.
7. Manager Garland asks for public comment. Bill Flannigan, a member in the audience thanked Manager Becky Garland for the good job. Commissioner Orr was very pleased that we are having a savings for the taxpayers. Manager Garland stated that the county will receive reimbursements from the state through the 1571 Report for DSS and will receive money back for the Health Department on the Medicaid Cost Report. Commissioner Wiggins stated that Manager Garland had done a good job as well. No further comment was given.
8. Chairman Eller asks for a motion to close the public hearing and reopen the regular meeting. Commissioner Williams made the motion to close the public hearing and reopen the regular meeting. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
9. Manager Garland asks Mitch Brigulio to speak on the RFP Process and the Debt Findings Resolution. Mr. Brigulio stated that he was here to present the debt study and potential options the board has on the bank financing contract. Mr. Brigulio presented the board with a 2017 Installment Financing Contract – Summary of Bids. Mr. Brigulio stated that the county recently purchased a 22,000 square foot building for \$1.5 million dollars from Phillips and Jordan. The County has adopted a Reimbursement Resolution for the purchase of the building and plans to reimburse this expenditure from bond proceeds. The County plans to move its Health Department and Department of Social Services into the P&J building. Padgett & Freeman Architects, who has been engaged to design the up fit of the building to house the departments, has completed study designs and is in the process of completing full construction drawings for the facility. The project is estimated to cost approximately \$1.3 million and will be completed through a traditional design/bid/build process. Bids for the project will be received on Wednesday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>. Future Cash Funded Project – The County is considering moving its Administrative Offices into the space currently occupied by DSS and it is estimated that renovation of the current DSS space will cost approximately \$750,000.00. The renovations on the space currently occupied by DSS will not begin until the renovated P&J building is complete. The County is also exploring a potential lease for the current Health Department building with a private health care provider and the building is expected to be converted into an Urgent Care and Dialysis Center. Doing so may require the County to pay off its existing 2006 loan or refinance it on a taxable basis. Davenport and Company LLC, on behalf of Graham County, distributed a Request for Proposals (“RFP”) to secure a commitment for an Installment Financing

Contract to finance the County's Purchase of the P&J Building, Department of Social Services Up Fit, Refinancing of 2006 loan, and fund the associated Costs of Issuance. The RFP was distributed to over 50 National, Regional and Local lending institutions. After the initial distribution, Davenport contacted each of the potential bidders to assess their interest in the financing and address any questions they had. As part of the RFP process, responding institutions were asked to provide Tax Exempt Bank Qualified and Taxable Interest rates: Tax Exempt Qualified – Purchase of the P&J Building and Department of Social Services Up Fit; Taxable – Refinancing of 2006 loan. Through this process, the County was able to secure three responses to the RFP, including: BB&T Governmental Finance; Pinnacle Public Finance and United Community Bank. The board discussed the interest rates for 15 year, 10 year and 4 year. The board discussed the interest rates between the three interested parties. The board discussed the Estimated Debt Service and the Estimated Refunding Savings. The board discussed the Estimated Debt Affordability Impact and the Financing Calendar. The board asks Manager / Finance Officer Rebecca Garland her recommendation. Manager Garland stated that she would go with Pinnacle Public Finance for a 15 Year Tax Exempt Interest Rate of 2.67%; hold on the 2006 Health Department Loan and pay it off after all has been put in place concerning the financing of the P&J Building. Commissioner Williams made the motion to go with Manager Garland's recommendation. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

10. Manager Garland stated that the board would need to adopt the Resolution of the County of Graham, North Carolina Authorizing The Negotiation Of An Installment Financing Contract And Providing For Certain Other Related Matters Thereto. Commissioner Orr made the motion to adopt the resolution as stated. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
11. Chairman Eller asks Sophia Paulos to give her monthly report. Ms. Paulos stated that she included the USFS report on the Citizen Input gathered through the public meeting and other various opportunities (citizen emails etc.) in their packets. Having compiled all that information, the findings are as follows:
  - a. Locations: Arguably the most valuable information provided by Graham County's citizens. Public input produced invaluable information with regard to what areas are ideal for timber, where roads need to be reopened, and where future and expanded recreation opportunities may be. This information was used to create the public interest map included in your packets.
  - b. The closing of forest service roads for public use prohibits access for our citizens, our guests (tourists), and emergency medical services. Re-opening roads and extending the duration of access on roads that are seasonal is something that the vast majority of citizens who provided input support and are advocating for. Most citizens feel that even 4x4 only access would meet their needs without creating a major maintenance burden for the USFS. The re-opening of and greater access to USFS roads in Graham County will be advocated for in discussions between the County and Cheoah Ranger District, the Nantahala Pisgah Forest Partnership, and federal representatives as the forest revision plan moves forward.
  - c. Tourism is becoming an ever greater contributor to our economy, to date, no attempt has been made by the County or the USFS to complete a full inventory on recreation opportunities in the County. We have it all. Hiking, biking, fishing, hunting, camping, boating, whitewater, horseback riding, etc. Ms. Paulos will be working with the Nantahala Pisgah Partnership and others to create such an inventory and will be advocating for certain areas to be designated as recreation priority areas.
  - d. A number of people strongly advocated the "No more Wilderness" position. In the data there is a positive correlation between that position and pro-timber interests. Many are under the impression that having areas declared wilderness is the cause of the decline in timber harvest. This is not necessarily the case. Timber harvest in the areas of USFS lands that are not wilderness have declined to record low levels. Timber harvests need to be significantly increased to levels that improve the local economy as well as assist in the management of the forests for recreation, habitat, road management, maintenance, and the health of the forest.
  - e. Joyce Kilmer: I asked many of those who are in the no more wilderness block how they would feel about the extensions proposed for Joyce Kilmer being designated wilderness. They are not opposed to it. Joyce Kilmer is recognized as a special circumstance by the overwhelming majority of Graham County's Citizens. However, it has been made very clear that the County will absolutely, under no circumstances, support a forest revision

plan that does not actively provide for significant economic opportunities through timber harvest.

- f. Lastly, many citizens referenced the lack of maintenance to current USFS facilities, campsites, trails and forests. As the County relies more and more on tourism to support our economy proper maintenance of all facilities will have to be addressed. Ms. Paulos will be requesting that the USFS devise a maintenance plan that will address these issues in the most efficient manner possible.

At the last meeting of the Nantahala Pisgah Forests Partnership, members agreed to delay decisions on positions regarding the USFS land in Graham County until they have ample time to listen to and understand the details of Graham County's citizens. With the goal of coming up with recommendations all parties can agree on, the partnership felt it necessary in order to support as much of our citizens needs as possible. In the meantime, the County's relationship with the USFS is slowly beginning to improve. We have established a monthly meeting time between myself, the County Manager Becky Garland, and the District Ranger Angela Gee. The goal of these meetings is to have regular opportunities to discuss issues and concerns on the County's end as well as a chance for the USFS to share progress report with regard to the County's needs as declared by our citizens.

12. **Broadband:** The County continues to make progress in our initiative to bring the essential service of high speed internet access to Graham County. The GREAT Broadband Committee has experienced a revitalization since we hired a consultant. While Mr. Carmanico is no longer under contract with us he has agreed to serve on the GREAT Broadband Committee. Since his service with Graham County a lot of things have transpired. The Southwest Commission has released an RFP to hire the consultant that will assist Graham County and the others in Region A in gathering all the data absolutely necessary to gain the funding to support and data to demonstrate need for this essential service. Through the GREAT Broadband Committee we are now working to access to high-speed internet for a large portion of the County's citizens. As you know, NC law prohibits counties from operating internet services and ARC grants must be applied for through non-profits to be viable. Two weeks ago, on behalf of the Broadband Committee, Rick Davis submitted an ARC pre-app, if granted, will allow for \$125,000 worth of equipment to provide service for citizens on Sweetwater, Beech Creek, Pinhook, Meadow Branch and parts of Tallulah and the Town of Robbinsville. Ms. Paulos recently learned that there will hopefully be an 80 foot tower placed on top of the new 911 facility. It is likely that we will be able to attach high speed wireless equipment to this tower that would provide service to everyone within a 5 to 7 mile radius of the tower. At the end of this week, Keith Conover, NC Commerce's Broadband Representative in the West, will be spending the day with Ms. Paulos scouring the County and assessing and pinpointing potential sites for the equipment necessary to provide high speed service to the citizens of Graham County.
13. **Oak Valley Hardwoods:** Over the last month Ms. Paulos has been working a lot with Jimmy Lee, owner of Oak Valley Hardwoods. With a lot of positive shifts anticipated in the regional economy, Mr. Lee is looking into several opportunities to expand operations at his Robbinsville facility. Next week, Mr. Lee and she will be meeting with Sandra Dennison, the newly appointed Director of our SBTDC. We will tour the plant to discuss logistics, finance and new opportunities to expand markets for Oak Valley Hardwoods. An expansion of operations in Robbinsville will mean a large number of added jobs.
14. **Agriculture:** Sandra Dennison, Director of the SBTDC and Board Member of the North Carolina Natural Products Association (NCNPA) has requested that Ms. Paulos serve on a subcommittee for rural outreach with the NCNPA. Their organization is currently working on an initiative that would bring back small farms and revitalize the agriculture industry in Western NC. With participation from NC Biotech and ample interest from investors, this project has an incredible amount of potential to greatly stimulate the agriculture business particularly in Graham County. Ms. Paulos has mentioned this initiative in prior meetings and will remind all present that this is a long term initiative. However, it is gaining momentum more quickly than many of us had thought and Ms. Paulos will continue to ensure that Graham County has a permanent seat at the table. Small scale agriculture provided added income to families across the County and she will continue to work to bring that back.
15. **Small Business Report:** It is a very exciting time for small businesses in Graham County as businesses continue to expand. SASS E. SISTERS, the business created by stay at home mom Dana Thacker, has found a marketing partner in Asheville to help take her business to the next level. As her business grows through this opportunity she will be looking to hire local people to

help her produce her just natural line of personal care products. Wehrloom's expansion continues and they will be looking to hire additional employees in the coming month. One of the economic indicators of a growing economy is the creation of new business. It shows confidence in the market and creates confidence in consumers. Over the last few months we have had two new restaurants open in town, Moonshiners Steakhouse and Willow Tree Bakery and Fine Dining and there is a third one on the way. They are currently rehabilitating a building on Main Street and look to open as soon as the building is ready. This year, in addition to seeing new businesses open, we have seen a lot of businesses reinvesting. All good signs that our economy is growing.

REDI: Ms. Paulos stated that she cannot thank the board enough for granting her the opportunity to be in the REDI's Class of XXVII. While it has been incredibly informative it has also been very productive. As mentioned prior to her beginning REDI, there is "homework". Each student has to formulate a project through REDI that will carry on beyond the class. Ms. Paulos has chosen "Revitalizing Robbinsville". This project will bring all of the players to the same table to create a shared vision that everyone will be eager to account to. First, while Robbinsville is not our only town it is the County seat. People from all of the towns will need to be involved to create a shared vision that everyone can support. Second, our youth are not only leaving but are often encouraged to do so. We need to find out what type of place they want to live and what would make them want to stay. Third, we need to build on Reimagining Robbinsville, the project completed by GREAT. The truth is, we can talk all day long about revitalizing the town but if we truly want to breathe life back into it we are going to have to work as a team, determine our goals, and hold each other accountable to them. Ms. Paulos has already arranged for a meeting with students at Robbinsville High School during the afternoon of May 17<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Paulos will be working out the specific time with Angela Knight and will let the Board know you are all welcome and encouraged to attend. Also, I would like permission from the Board to schedule a meeting. This meeting would have in attendance the Board of Commissioners, the Alderman from all of the County's towns, members of GREAT and the Graham County Historical Society, and our County's Department Heads, and others as suggested. The leaders of the County are needed in order to create a shared vision for all to work towards so that our County seat can be revitalized.

While at REDI, Ms. Paulos discovered one of her classmate, Nicole Gross who works very closely with Commerce's grant programs. She was able to work with her to find several grants, funding and incentive programs that may help us in funding such as endeavor. Examples are: Downtown Redevelopment Fund; Main Street Solutions Fund; Demolition Grant Programs; 20/20 Historic Tax Credits & 10% tax credits for pre 1936 buildings; Building Reuse for Rural Health Category; Carolina Small Business Fund; and NC Rural Center. Additionally, Ms. Paulos met with ARC's newly added point person in the West, Anne Bass, to discuss this initiative. She is working with her on several opportunities including the possibility of us qualifying to do an Economic Development Plan specifically for our County seat, Robbinsville. Ms. Paulos will continue to provide updates on this initiative as it progresses.

16. Chairman Eller asks for public comment. No one was signed in for public comment.
17. Chairman Eller asks for the Finance / Manager's Report and the Discussion Items. Manager Garland stated that she and Commissioner Orr would be attending County Assembly Day on May 10<sup>th</sup> and she has scheduled an appointment with Representative Kevin Corbin at his office for 11:00 a.m. and is waiting to see if Senator Jim Davis will be available to meet that day as well.
18. Manager Garland presented the board with two color schemes for the new 911 Call Center and the board wanted the beige color.
19. Manager Garland stated that NCACC is sponsoring a one day seminar on May 31<sup>st</sup> for commissioners and managers on rules, roles and responsibilities for commissioners in public health, social services and mental health. Manager Garland stated that they will be broadcasting the seminar from Pitt County to the Asheville MAHEC office and she recommends that some of the board attend.
20. Manager Garland stated that she had some old business. Manager Garland asks if the board made a decision on the Resolution for TCCC tuition. The board did not move on this resolution.
21. Manager Garland stated that she had a MOU with Cherokee Tribal for the use of our Environmental Health Services and asks the board if they would agree to this MOU. The board

directed Manager Garland to get with our attorney and if he is okay with the MOU then they would be.

22. Manager Garland discussed the Bollards at Bear Creek Dumpster Site and the quote from Asheville Fence is \$1356.40 or Johnny Collins can sell the pipes to us for \$300.00 and then the county staff would have to rent equipment to cut up the concrete and bore the holes and install the bollards. After discussion the board agreed to leave the site as is.
23. Manager Garland stated that Habitat for Humanity is meeting with her on Thursday and they have funding for at least one house in Graham County. Manager Garland attached the application and eligibility requirements for the board's review and she will provide more information to the board after that meeting.
24. Manager Garland stated that she received an email from the NCDOT about a District 14 meeting concerning R5839 and the meeting will be held in Waynesville and someone needs to go because she will be in Raleigh.
25. Manager Garland stated that she will be meeting with the Provost at WCU concerning interns that could be available to work for us in the summer.
26. Manager Garland stated that she had reached out to Kevin Corbin on the occupancy tax bill and it was too late for this to be on this agenda this session.
27. Manager Garland stated that she would now go to the discussion items. Manager Garland stated that the board had received a Thank You from the Boy Scouts for the donation that the board gave them.
28. Manager Garland stated that we needed to address the garbage ordinance and would work with our county attorney on this issue.
29. Manager Garland stated that we have an amendment to the personnel policy for FMLA – Moonlighting.
30. Manager Garland stated that the Health Department would be having a luncheon and training on May 24<sup>th</sup> from 11:00 to 1:30 p.m. and they have asked the board their approval. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to approve the luncheon and training. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote was called. Commissioners Wiggins, Orr, Nelms and Eller voted yes. Commissioner Williams voted no. Motion carried four to one.
31. Manager Garland stated that the DSS Director had requested security doors to be installed for a price of \$20,000.00. The board had discussion. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to table this discussion. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
32. Manager Garland stated that she would like to have a Public Safety Appreciation on May 16<sup>th</sup> to recognize our public safety officers. The board agreed to this appreciation.
33. Manager Garland stated that we did submit the sale of property located at the Stecoah Valley Center and there is a 10 day upset period to meet and after this date she would get with the attorney to finalize the sale.
34. Manager Garland stated that she needed approval for the poll that was taken for the change order on concrete sidewalk at pool-deck for \$1029.00 which includes second changes with no cost. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to approve the poll. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
35. Manager Garland stated that she did have one item of new business. Manager Garland stated that the Town of Lake Santeetlah was asking the county to adopt an Interlocal Agreement Between Graham County and the Town of Lake Santeetlah to use the services of the Emergency Services Director of the County to administer the Town's Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance within the corporate limits and extra-territorial jurisdiction of the Town and that the services be performed at no cost to the Town. Commissioner Williams made the motion to enter into the Interlocal Agreement with the Town of Lake Santeetlah concerning the Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
36. Chairman Eller asks for further new or old business. No further business was discussed.
37. Chairman Eller stated that he needed a motion to go into closed session under G.S. 143-318.11(a) (1) (3) (6) for privileged or confidential information, attorney-client privilege, personnel and contracts. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to go into closed session as stated. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
38. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to go back into open session. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
39. Commissioner Orr made the motion to salvage and store all personal property that we can that is located at the P&J Building, Commissioner Wiggins seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

40. Commissioner Orr made the motion to adopt Amendment #6 to the Personnel Policy. Commissioner Wiggins seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
41. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to adjourn. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

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Keith Eller, Chairman, Graham County Commissioner

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Connie Orr, Vice-Chairman, Graham County Commissioner

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Jacob Nelms, Member, Graham County Commissioner

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Dale E. Wiggins, Member, Graham County Commissioner

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Raymond Williams, Member, Graham County Commissioner

ATTEST:

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Kim Crisp, Clerk to the Board