

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Tuesday, October 17, 2017 at 5:00 p.m. in the Graham County Community Building located at 196 Knight Street for their regular workshop session. Board present was: Keith Eller, Jacob Nelms, Connie Orr and Dale Wiggins. Board absent: Raymond Williams.

1. Chairman Eller called the meeting to order.
2. Chairman Eller asks Sophia Paulos to speak on the Cherokee Broadband. Ms. Paulos stated that Jeremy Brown and Chief Sneed were here today to discuss the Cherokee Broadband.
3. Jeremy Brown thanked the board for their time and stated that the tribe is laying major fiber to Snowbird. Mr. Brown stated that our service is spotty and cell towers cost around \$500,000.00 each and the fiber optics run around \$60,000.00 per mile. Mr. Brown stated that Verizon Wireless and Frontier have a monopoly in this area as everyone is aware and our county which has approximately 9000 people which is 27 persons per square mile is not enough for other companies to look at us. Mr. Brown stated that the fiber begins at the building belonging to Balsam West and the purpose is to expand cell coverage to Snowbird. Mr. Brown stated that they are trying to provide service to all enrolled members. At the beginning, the service will be to only enrolled members but hope to partner with Graham County in reaching other non-enrolled members. Mr. Brown introduced Chief Sneed. Chief Sneed stated that were taking coverage to the Rehab Center at Cornsilk and further stated that at their health care and home health care they are using video conference with the doctors in the Cherokee hospital and they are doing mental health via conference. Chief Sneed stated that Snowbird is an isolated community and we are creating 49 jobs once we get the technology in place. Chief Sneed stated that the technology will open up education opportunities. Chief Sneed stated that the tribal members will now have access to online education which would have been non-existent in the past. Chief Sneed stated that he would like to partner with Graham County. Chief Sneed stated that the tribe is in a good financial position and his commitment is to reach out and partner with the region and then we all prosper. Chief Sneed wants to partner with the surrounding towns and counties. Commissioner Eller thanked Chief Sneed for all that the Tribe has done for Graham County and mentioned the child care center that the Tribe has built here in Graham County. Chief Sneed stated that they are redoing the Junaluska Museum and it has to be taken down and redone. Chief Sneed stated that he would like to see it closer to town and maybe along Highway 129. Chief Sneed stated that its present location is off the beaten path and they would like more of a presence. Chief Sneed stated that Frontier does not want to expand and hopes that with partnerships we can share resources and provide another option. Commissioner Nelms asks what the time frame was on the fiber being blown in. Chief Sneed stated that he hoped to be completed by December but they hit some snags and they are still trying to locate an area to install a building to hold the infrastructure due to the Balsam West building not being large enough to hold both. Commissioner Wiggins stated that he would be glad to have a better working relationship with the Tribe and looks forward to working with them. Commissioner Orr thanked Chief Sneed for his time and assured him that we will work with the Tribe. Chief Sneed stated that technology exists and our pressing priority is to get access in the rural areas which are served last but feels that we will have an effective beneficial relationship. Commissioner Wiggins asks if only enrolled members would have access to the new Treatment Facility at Snowbird. Chief Sneed stated that it was only enrolled members at this time. The board thanked Chief Sneed and Jeremy Brown for their time and looked forward to a working relationship with the Tribe.

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