

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Thursday, November 2, 2017 at 5:00 p.m. in the Graham County Transit Facility located at 201 West Fort Hill Robbinsville NC for a special meeting to discuss Economic Development Planning. All board was present. Also present was: Sophia Paulos, EDC Director; Josh Carpenter, Regional Industry Manager, Economic Development Partnership in North Carolina ; Keith Rogers, EDC Board Chairman and Carla Icenhower, Vice-President/Executive-Robbinsville Branch SECU.

1. Chairman Eller called the meeting to order.
2. Chairman Eller asks for approval of the agenda. Commissioner Nelms made the motion to approve the agenda. Commissioner Wiggins seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
3. Chairman Eller asks if any of this information needed to be in closed. Manager Garland stated that as long as we speak in general and not name specifics we would be fine in open session. Chairman Eller asks Josh Carpenter to speak. Mr. Carpenter stated that he was here to obtain information on development of property to possibly market the counties properties located at Fort Hill, P&J and Stanley Park. Mr. Carpenter stated that the board needed to discuss promotions and marking and felt that this needed to be open as much as possible and the main question is to figure out which properties could be marketed to be used for development. Mr. Carpenter also asks if it is okay to put a package together to give to potential clients. Beefy Rogers stated that from the EDC standpoint we began a year ago targeting focus areas to attract businesses and a call center / data center would be a win in our town. Commissioner Nelms asks if they are speaking about new construction. Josh Carpenter stated that could be an option but before you could propose these sites for new construction we would need to see if the infrastructure was around them. Commissioner Nelms asks how much property are we discussing and the answer was two acres or more. Commissioner Williams asks how many will be employed. Mr. Carpenter stated seven to ten employees with an investment of ten to twenty million. Manager Garland stated that this would help our tax base. Mr. Carpenter stated that the job would create jobs that paid \$34,000.00 to \$40,000.00 per year and felt this is a good investment. Commissioner Nelms stated that the average yearly wage is \$28,000.00 for Graham County. Commissioner Nelms asks if the property had to belong to Graham County Government. Mr. Carpenter stated that the land would serve as a match for a deal and maybe a reduction in permit fees, etc. and further stated that the EDC board could grant a match on their taxes. Mr. Carpenter stated that the One NC Grants will match 25%. Commissioner Wiggins asks if we develop the site and then lease the 30,000 square foot building to a potential buyer what would be the benefit. Mr. Carpenter stated that the benefit will be in tax revenue for the infrastructure that would be placed in the building. Carla Icenhower stated that she has a total of 25 employees with 16 of those being in the call center. Sophia Paulos stated that the data center is like the Balsam West building next to the building inspections office only larger and they store high end equipment that would be a taxable benefit for the county. Commissioner Williams stated that the next project that Graham County needed to be thinking about is a new Justice Center and this will cost from eight to ten million so he isn't sure that the county could afford to build a 30,000 square foot building to lease out. Carla Icenhower stated that a data center is looking for locations like our area. Commissioner Williams stated that the five acres at P&J are the kid's ballfields and stated that we do not own the cornfield. Commissioner Orr stated that our main focus is getting the information out for marketing. Chairman Eller stated that we do not have fiber to the P&J Building to date and this could be an issue. The board discussed the way that the fiber will run to the building. Commissioner Nelms stated that the lower end of the property would take up a vast amount of parking. Commissioner Wiggins stated that the property to the left belongs to Ray Greene. Mr. Rogers stated that we needed to get with the tax office to see how much property belongs to the county. Commissioner Williams stated that our kids practice on the airport field and it belongs to Ted and Avis Phillips. The board discussed other areas that could possibly be a potential site. Commissioner Wiggins stated that the Rural Development Authority is an independent entity and could be used to obtain USDA loans is needed. Commissioner Wiggins stated that the RDA has bought land on Moose Branch for a development and built houses on Mill Creek of which one more is almost finished. Mr. Rogers stated that our kids need to be trained on how to work at a data center. Commissioner Wiggins stated that they will be having a RDA meeting Monday at 4:00 p.m. and he could find out if they

would be interested in inventorying and marketing potential sights. Ms. Icenhower stated that she had received 80 applications for 8 positions so the need is here in our county for another data center. The board all agreed to doing an inventory of our properties and marketing these properties and then meet again. Commissioner Orr asks the time frame for the inventory. Manager Garland stated that this should be completed within two weeks. Commissioner Wiggins stated that we needed to find ten sites which would be most ideal and then narrow those sites to five and then market them. Ms. Paulos stated that she could pull all of the Graham County sites.

4. Manager Garland stated that the Tribe has approached her about a potential site for them to construct a building similar to the one that Balsam West has next to the building inspections office and wanted the board to let her know if they would sell or lease the land to the Tribe for this building. Commissioner Wiggins stated that we needed to sit down with the Tribe for discussion.
5. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to adjourn. Commissioner Orr 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