

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Thursday, January 18, 2018 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 any changes to the agenda. Manager Garland asks that we put the Election Board as Item 5A and add her to closed session for personnel. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve the changes to the agenda. Commissioner Wiggins seconded this motion. Vote unanimous. Chairman Eller asks for approval of the agenda. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve the agenda. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
5. Chairman Eller asks for approval of the January 2<sup>nd</sup> Regular Minutes and the January 2<sup>nd</sup> Special Workshop Minutes. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to approve the minutes as stated. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
6. Chairman Eller asks Lowell Crisp, Chairman of the Board of Elections to speak. Mr. Crisp thanked the board for their time and stated that he is very pleased that the board is renovating the community building for administration offices. Mr. Crisp stated that he would like to discuss the proposed space laid out for the elections board. Mr. Crisp stated that Plan 1 was the plan that the Board of Elections preferred and would better meet the needs of the election board. Mr. Crisp stated that the alternate plan removed the bathroom and shortened the amount of space allocated to the election board. Mr. Crisp stated that they feel it is necessary to have the bathroom so that the office can remain open at all times. Mr. Crisp stated that the elections board office is unique in its operations and when staff would have to go to the restroom they would be required to lock the offices in order to do so. Mr. Crisp stated that they needed to keep the office open for transparency and further stated that the board of elections are in good standing with the state officials. Mr. Crisp stated that Graham County is one of the first to send in election results and they have no voter fraud. Mr. Crisp stated that he is proud of the staff and supports their need for more office space. Mr. Crisp stated that early voting has increased each year and these are critical times for the election board. Mr. Crisp stated that they have had recounts in the past with state representatives attending and our space is very limited at present time and transparency is not good but they make it work. Mr. Crisp stated that the people watching the recount had to stand up for the entire time it took to do the recount. Mr. Crisp stated that the first draft would work for their office and would allow the extra space needed for the public. Mr. Crisp stated that over half of the public vote early and this number will only increase and voters have a right to their privacy while voting. Mr. Crisp stated that Plan 2 only increases the square footage by 55 square feet and this is too small for them. Mr. Crisp stated that Plan 1 allowed for an extra 173 square feet. Mr. Crisp stated that the election workers need to avoid candidates and voters in public restrooms, again, for transparency reasons. Mr. Crisp stated that public perception means a lot when you are dealing with the elections and perception is what they are concerned about. Mr. Crisp stated that they did not feel that it is in the best interest of the election board to go with Plan 2. Mr. Crisp stated that in Plan 2 the county employees would have to pass through the election board offices to reach a storage closet. Mr. Crisp stated that another thing to consider is that candidates cannot be within 50 foot of the entrance to the polling place on Election Day. Mr. Crisp stated that he would like for the board to consider keeping Plan 1 in place for the election board so that they can do the best that they can for the candidates and voters.
7. Chairman Eller asks Sophia Paulos to give the EDC Monthly Report. Ms. Paulos stated that Habitat for Humanity has selected a home in Graham County and they will be constructing a modular home which is good news for our community.
8. Ms. Paulos stated that we have passed the first phase for the Paramedic Grant through ARC and are eligible for a possible increase of \$250,000.00.
9. Ms. Paulos stated that it has been nearly a year since this board gave her the green light to charge forward on the issue of high-speed internet in this county and since then Balsam West procured DNet, now West Net and will be upgrading and expanding service in Graham County. Cherokee Broadband has entered the market in Graham County and is working with this board to provide service to our residents. The Southwest Commission launched an in-depth study to provide each county with critical information and providers with evidence of demand. Ms.

Paulos stated that a new Graham County based provider is emerging and will ensure fair competition, Verizon and Cherokee Broadband are both moving to expand cell service in the county.

10. Ms. Paulos stated that she met with Angie Bailey who is heading up the broadband study with the Southwest Commission and they are moving full speed ahead with Phase II. Phase I of the project was a huge success for our county, not only did we have the highest response rate to the online survey, we had twice as many paper surveys than any of our neighboring counties and she thanked Mary Griffin and Angie Knight for helping to make that happen. Ms. Paulos will be meeting with representatives from Balsam West and West Net to hear their expansion and upgrade plans for the county which she is rather excited about. Ms. Paulos attached a copy of this report for a new 200 foot cell tower that Verizon will be putting up on John's Drive off of Moose Branch. The tower will not only improve service in town but likely up Tallulah, Sweetwater and out toward Snowbird as well. This project has gotten the go ahead from the county and will move swiftly forward once they receive the same from the tribe. Ms. Paulos stated that completion is set for 6 to 18 months.
11. Ms. Paulos stated that the efforts to put pressure on Frontier to provide reasonable service to our residents is working. Ms. Paulos received notice that while we were not originally included in the FCC's Connect America Fund Phase II initiative (CAF II) Frontier is now "tentatively planning some projects in Graham County but this will be toward the end of the 6-year planning period and probably will not occur until 2019 or 2020. Ms. Paulos strongly recommended that we continue to put pressure on them until this plan is no longer tentative and our citizens have the service that they deserve.
12. Ms. Paulos stated that she attended the monthly Travel and Tourism meeting to pitch an idea that will ensure the success of our Main Street Revitalization, the Graham County Historic Society Museum and restoration of the historic Snider Building and the success of the new visitor center. Ms. Paulos stated that the fates of time have provided a unique opportunity to leverage shared resources for the betterment of all. Ms. Paulos stated that the T&T Board will be going in to talks with the Graham County Historic Society about locating the new visitor center inside the Snider Building. Ms. Paulos stated that this move would draw tourist to Main Street, increase business in our downtown and most importantly provide visitors with a reason to go to the visitor centers less and less. Ms. Paulos stated that as a result, major markets like Gatlinburg and Pigeon Forge have begun combining their visitor centers with attractions like the museum. Ms. Paulos stated that she hopes this board will support Commissioner Williams and the T&T Board as they work to improve and support our community through this exceptional partnership.
13. Ms. Paulos stated that T&T made some big moves over the past year with hiring a new Director, Daniel Allison. Mr. Allison is doing an excellent job thus far and we are looking forward to connecting him to all the partners that were created through our participation in the USFS Forest Plan Revision process. Ms. Paulos stated that she will be meeting him to go over all of the tourism focused activities that she has worked with over the past year such as, SORBA, the mountain biking organization, Trout Unlimited, American Whitewater and the Backcountry Horsemen; all national organizations. These groups have agreed to work directly with the county to begin marketing us as the natural destination for biking, hiking, horseback riding, fishing and more. Ms. Paulos stated that in addition to focusing on the natural assets that we already have, these groups will be working with her, Mr. Allison and the USFS to generate new projects that will increase opportunity for visitors to our county.
14. Ms. Paulos stated that not far into her work with the Nantahala Pisgah Forest Partnership, it became very apparent that the continued decrease in funding for the USFS and National Park Service is an issue facing all interest in the partnership. Funding cuts make it increasingly difficult to perform basic maintenance, create new projects that are economic drivers like new recreation opportunities and reduce staff for the administration of timber harvest programs. Additionally, placing the burden of unpredictable and increasing firefighting services on this budget as opposed to having that as a separate budget managed solely for emergencies, has continued to reduce the number of jobs that the USFS provides in this county and the ability to maintain the assets we are to be leveraging for our growing tourism industry. As a result, the Pew Charitable Trust is pushing Congress to act and take responsibility for these federally held lands. Ms. Paulos presented the board with a resolution encouraging Congress to create a reliable, predictable stream of resources to address deferred maintenance needs on USFS Lands and in America's National Park System. Ms. Paulos stated that similar resolutions have been passed by the Town of Robbinsville, the Town of Franklin, Maggie Valley, Jackson County, Alleghany County, Haywood County, the Town of Waynesville, Avery County, Watauga County

and Ashe County. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve the resolution as stated. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

15. Chairman Eller asks for the Manager's Report. Manager Garland stated that the county ended the month with a cash balance of \$9,568,479.00 which is up 1.2 million from this time last year. Manager Garland stated that we have collected \$2,389,304.86 in current property taxes, \$11,819.02 in prior year's property taxes and \$32,490.38 in DMV Taxes which is ahead from this time last year. Ms. Garland stated that we are \$87,619.29 ahead in property tax collections and \$6,780.18 ahead in DMV tax collections. Manager Garland stated that our tax collection rate is 78.80% and she was very pleased with this percentage. Manager Garland stated that we collected \$167,547.00 in sales tax collections which is still running ahead from this time last year and reminded the board that a portion of this collection will go to the school through the Sales tax expansion. Manager Garland stated that we have collected \$521,876.00 of past due taxes including \$77,279.08 of 2017 taxes.
16. Manager Garland stated that we should have 50% of budget remaining and we are sitting at 59% and she is very pleased with the department heads. Manager Garland stated that the employee turnover is affecting the Sheriff's Budget. Manager Garland stated that EMS looks low but we bought a new ambulance this year and she will be speaking with the Senior Center Director about her budget. The main reason for the shortage was when they fed the Snowbird Senior Center and the cost was not factored in.
17. Manager Garland stated that she had two budget amendments for approval.
  - a. Budget Amendment #5 – to recognize reimbursement of school capital projects funds expended by Board of Education and drawn down on their behalf under the county budget. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve Budget Amendment #5. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
  - b. Budget Amendment #6 – Amend to pay premiums that should have been billed and paid in prior fiscal year. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve Budget Amendment #6. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
18. Manager Garland stated that she would now go into the Manager's report. Manager Garland stated that we are continuing to iron out the details on the Phillips and Jordan Building and we have a proposed additional scope report for the storefront to be installed in the DSS waiting area and also some additional add-ons requested by the departments for security. Manager Garland stated that the big ticket items are the handicap door access buttons (\$7500.00) and the sprinkler system in the main waiting area that the previous owners did not complete (\$11,750.00). Manager Garland and Building Inspector Nelms would like to do another walk through with the contractor regarding the additional door controls for DSS before a final decision is made. If the board approves these items we will still have some reserve left, however, this money will be needed to defray the cost of the internet bore and also any furniture and fixtures needed for the new building. Manager Garland stated that the board needed to name the building so she can proceed to order signage. Manager Garland stated that she would need approval to pay the handicap door access buttons and the sprinkler system. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve the expenditures as stated. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Jacob Nelms recused himself due to his position as Building Inspector. Vote unanimous.
19. Manager Garland stated that the administration building plans are ready to go to engineering, pending any changes to the election board. The total estimated cost of the building, including the architect and programming fees is \$1,273,200.00. Manager Garland stated that she would need to do a capital project ordinance for this amount if the board is ready to do so and she can have this ready by the next board meeting. Manager Garland stated that he has been in contact with Davenport and they will be giving us a presentation March 6<sup>th</sup> during our workshop session. They are preliminarily recommending using the \$1.5 million that is sitting in our NCCMT fund to pay for the Administration building with the resolution to back finance that project, use fund balance to pay off the Health Department / EMS Loan since we have surplus in that area and then we decide on needed renovations to the courthouse. Manager Garland stated that we would finance it all at one time. Manager Garland stated that Davenport will confirm this plan with his updated debt model. Manager Garland stated that she made it clear that the Board would not support a tax increase therefore he is modeling it to give us a feel for what debt capacity we will have by accelerating this project. Chairman Eller stated that if the board had to increase taxes then he wanted everyone to know who was at fault in reference to the courthouse facilities.
20. Manager Garland asks the board if they wish to put the Sales Tax Referendum on the General Election Ballot or the Primary Election Ballot. Commissioner Orr stated that the general election will represent all of our citizens and she is in favor for the general election. The board all agreed.

21. Manager Garland stated that Judge Coward wants a planning committee and he recommended: 2 commissioners; Clerk of Court; Sheriff; Superior Court Judge Coward; Register of Deeds; Tax Assessor; Tax Collector; County Planner; District Attorney; Lead Detention Officer and Finance Officer/County Manager. Commissioner Williams stated that he would sit on the board. Commissioner Orr made the motion to table this issue for further discussion. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
22. Manager Garland stated that after a three day notice from the Clerk of Court she rented a bus to transport the Grand Jury to the health department. After the Grand Jury met, they walked back to their vehicles without letting us know that they did not need transportation any longer and we had to pay a driver to wait around. Manager Garland stated that she asked Judge Coward if we could transport the Grand Jury in two separate vehicles if the Sheriff approves as each vehicle requires a deputy. Manager Garland stated that the next court date is April 30, 2018. Commissioner Wiggins stated that if this issue is shoved upon us then everyone needed to know why their taxes are going up.
23. Manager Garland stated that WCU Human Resource Consulting has offered to do pro bono work for Graham County to assist us in getting systems set up that align with our new personnel manual and any other work that we have pending. Manager Garland stated that she has received the results from the Interns on the wage study and she is reviewing those findings and would report to the board at the first meeting in February.
24. Manager Garland stated that she has enclosed the minutes from the last TCC Committee meeting with NCDOT as well as the agenda and previous minutes from the Southwestern Commission meeting to be held Monday, January 22, 2108. Manager Garland stated that the TCC meetings are now held in Andrews and Franklin on a rotation basis and she has enclosed that schedule.
25. Manager Garland stated that she contacted Representative Kevin Corbin's office on the potential of getting special legislation for an increase to the occupancy tax and as of today he is doing the investigatory work and we hope to hear from him soon.
26. Manager Garland stated that our county attorney completed the deed of the Shooting Range property to the Graham Youth Heritage Foundation on December 29, 2017 and we will now need to name a secondary site for Disaster Debris as requested by DNER due to this property being our secondary location. Manager Garland stated that our primary location is Fort Hill.
27. The board discussed possible names for the Phillips and Jordan building and wanted to recognize Avis and Ted Phillips for allowing our purchase of the building. The board would like to speak with Avis prior to any decisions.
28. Manager Garland stated that she would be needing to replace her desktop computer soon. It is six years old and beginning to have issues. Manager Garland stated that she would prefer to purchase a laptop than can be docked so that she can be portable for board and budget meetings. Manager Garland stated that the finance laptop would need replacing soon as well. Manager Garland stated that she realizes this is under the spending limits but she wants to keep the board apprised on all expenditures.
29. Manager Garland asks for public comment. No public comment was given.
30. Manager Garland stated that we had Discoveries in the amount of \$8,823.14. Commissioner Williams made the motion to approve the Discoveries. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
31. Manager Garland reminded the board of the AAA Aging Advisory Board Meeting February 8<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 a.m. in Sylva. Commissioner Orr stated that she would be speaking with Larry Reeves on the board members and see if the applications for Jimmie Holder and Johnnie Brooms had been received.
32. Manager Garland presented the application for the Four Square Community Service Grant Request and stated that this is done on a yearly basis. Our area will be receiving \$156,431.00. Commissioner Orr made the motion to accept the application for the grant request. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
33. Manager Garland stated that Chairman Eller had received a proclamation request from Andrew Campanella concerning schools. The board wanted Angie Knight contacted to see if this is something that she would like for them to do. Commissioner Nelms stated that Clerk Crisp can poll the board if this is something they would like done. All board agreed.
34. Chairman Eller asks for new or old business. Commissioner Williams stated that he had spoken with some deputies at the Sheriff's Department and they were discussing the price of our insurance to add a spouse and asks that we allocate money to them since we cannot afford to give them a raise. Manager Garland asks if we needed to go ahead and get started on our insurance renewals. Commissioner Orr stated that we should stay with Claudine but asks that we get the best pricing for the best coverage. Clerk Crisp stated that we have developed a good

relationship with BCBS by staying with them. Manager Garland stated that we will be working closely with our worker's compensation insurance to make sure that our coding is correct. Manager Garland stated that cheaper is not always the best.

35. Chairman Eller asks for a motion to go into closed session under G.S. 143-318.11(a) (1) (5) (6) for privileged or confidential information, personnel and contracts. Commissioner Orr made the motion to go into closed session as stated. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
36. Commissioner Williams made the motion to go back into open session. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
37. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to pay Pauline Hyde (8) eight hours per week at the Senior Center due to the cutbacks from the State of Franklin and revisit this June 30<sup>th</sup>. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
38. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to allow annual leave to be rolled into sick reserve at retirement with written request from the employee. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
39. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to approve the Lease Agreement with the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians with the conditions as stated for the property located at 227 Knight Street Robbinsville, NC. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
40. Commissioner Orr made the motion to allow for a Grade change in salary for Nikki Stewart, Brandi Cook and Amy Johnson due to their passing their required certifications. Commissioner Wiggins seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
41. Commissioner Orr made the motion to change the ambulance fee charged for DOA's of county residents to a \$300.00 flat fee plus mileage. Commissioner Wiggins seconded this motion. Vote called. Commissioner Eller, Orr, Wiggins and Nelms voted yes. Commissioner Williams voted no. Motion carried four to one.
42. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to allow Mapping to change their office hours to assist Graham County Schools Baseball Team. The hours will be Monday – Friday 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Commissioner Williams asks that the signs be put up throughout the county prior to the time change. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
43. 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