

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Tuesday, March 20, 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 changes or approval of the agenda. Manager Garland stated that we needed to remove Item #6 Misty Hembree and add Jamie Hooper, SW Child Development Board Member to Item #10 under Discussion Items. Commissioner Williams made the motion to approve the agenda with the stated changes. Commissioner Wiggins seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
5. Chairman Eller asks for a motion to approve the March 6th Regular Meeting Minutes and the March 8th 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 Sophia Paulos, EDC Director to give her monthly report. Ms. Paulos stated that the folks at Wehrloom Honey are hard at work expanding their business. With an injection of capital from Mountain BizWorks, they are working with Covenant Construction to expand the building to accommodate more customers, purchased significantly upgraded equipment, and positioned themselves to truly take advantage of the growth opportunity being presented to them. Their sales for February were double those of last February and sales for March have already doubled over the same time last year. Over the next several weeks you will begin to see this growth when construction begins and she encourages each of you to stop in or drive by to witness this Graham County success story as it develops. Ms. Paulos attached a preliminary drawing for the board.
7. Ms. Paulos stated that the Graham County Historical Association continues to make progress in leaps and bounds. This afternoon, Ed Satterfield, she and several members of the historical association met with Lynn Sprague from NCDA and Ann Bass, the western representative for ARC with the Department of Commerce. They met to review the incredible amount of progress this group of volunteers has made including the purchase of the building, the HVAC and Energy the Study, Organizational Plan, structure and the capacity of the building. Ms. Paulos will be assisting them with grant acquisition and is working with them to seize as many opportunities as possible. One of those opportunities is to have two interns from WCU's graduate/undergraduate program work with the historical association over the summer to compile their research, these students will help in the very important task of developing the story of Graham County in a manner that can be presented in exhibit form for the museum. Ms. Paulos asks the board on behalf of the historical association to support this particular effort by contributing \$1,000.00 to this effort. The money would provide for two \$500.00 stipends to cover the student's gas expense of driving to the county regularly from Cullowhee. Commissioner Williams made the motion to contribute the \$1,000.00 for the two interns. Commissioner Wiggins seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
8. Ms. Paulos stated that she was excited about the efforts being made by the Church Mouse to bring to life the community garden. Ms. Paulos has met with Michelle Shiplet and is very much looking forward to working with her and the other members of the community to ensure that this project thrives. The importance of this project goes beyond the reasons presented to you by Michelle several weeks ago. It is the contribution to the efforts of many to truly revitalize Main Street. It is an exciting time and she is expecting a lot of progress toward the revitalization of Main Street as summer gets underway. With the purchase of the Snider Building by the historical association, the opening of Urgent Care, the move by the Farm Bureau to Main Street, the renovation and occupation of the old post office by P&J, the complete renovation of the building on the corner of Moose Branch and Main Street, the Community Garden, and the growing interest of building and business owners to revive Main Street are all building in a way that spells success for Graham County.
9. Ms. Paulos stated that Lucretia Stargill with Swain Community and Harris Hospitals has invited her to join the Harris Regional Hospital Business Roundtable led by Harris and Swain Hospital's CEO, Steve Heatherly. On a quarterly basis, Mr. Heatherly brings the Business Roundtable group

together to discuss updates and future plans as it relates to the hospital and the ways they are looking to continue to serve the community at large. Members of the current Business Roundtable group range from members of Jackson County Government, Swain County Government, Western Carolina University, Southwestern Community College, Harrah's, Jackson County and Swain County school systems to name a few. They use this time to work in collaboration with the community and business leaders on how they can better serve their organizations and the community as a whole from a healthy living and preventative care standpoint. They promote inter-networking between the business that are represented at their roundtable while being a catalyst to support partnerships and business-minded relationships. They have asked me to join this group from a community engagement and outreach perspective and she is looking forward to working with them in this capacity to ensure increasingly improved service for the citizens of Graham County.

10. Ms. Paulos stated that several weeks ago she was honored to be asked to speak at the annual Carolina Chinese Chamber of Commerce Gala in Charlotte and had the pleasure of meeting the Minister of the Embassy of China and was surprised to discover that she was seated with Senator Jim Davis and Ms. Holly Ham, Executive Director, White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. In addition to talking with Ms. Ham about the Whitehouse business development and her boss, the POTUS and had a chance to share with Senator Davis the many exciting developments that have been occurring throughout our county and several upcoming projects that we would enjoy his support. Senator Davis expressed that he is impressed with what Graham County has accomplished over the past and he reminded me that he is very much here for us. With all that, the most important part of the evening was showing our state, our country and the global community that we have a strong partnership with one of our county's greatest business leaders.
11. Ms. Paulos stated on behalf of Jimmy Lee with the guidance of the Director of Rural Grant Programs at the NC Department of Commerce, Melody Adams, she is requesting this board to release the building reuse grant initially awarded to Oak Valley Hardwoods when they purchased the Stanley Building. This location has not met the numbers reported on the original grant and in order to secure a new grant at this location, these funds must be released by the county first. If the board approves, she will prepare a letter of release to be signed by Chairman Eller and submitted to the Department of Commerce. Ms. Paulos asks if the board would release these funds. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to release these funds. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
12. Ms. Paulos thanked the board for re-appointing her to the RDA board and they are working on the property on Moose Branch that they purchased and will be meeting with McGill to finalize engineering plans for this site. OnTrack Financial will prepare potential homeowners, United Community Bank and the USDA to make affordable homeownership a reality for our citizens. Ms. Paulos stated that the board is leading the pack in the region with this effort and affordable housing is a hot topic in all surrounding counties but Graham County is the only one with a live project.
13. Ms. Paulos stated that at last week's GREAT meeting she was pleased that Representative Kevin Corbin was in attendance. He reported that he is hearing an awful lot of good coming out of Graham County and that we have the greatest decrease in unemployment in his district. Ms. Paulos gave the board unemployment numbers from the NC Department of Commerce. In January of this year our unemployment rate was at its lowest for the month of January in over a decade. At 8.4%, the unemployment rate dropped 2.2% over January 2017 when it was at 10.6%. In January 2016 the unemployment rate was even higher at 13.1% and in January 2015 it was higher still at 15.5% and over the three year period, Graham County has reduced its January unemployment rate by 7.1% from 15.5% to 8.4%. The next figure represents the history of Graham County's unemployment rate over an 8 year period. This chart is from the US Department of Labor and Statistics and is sourced by them from the NC Department of Commerce. The chart showed progress, the highest unemployment rate during this period occurred in November of 2010, long before the Stanley Furniture Plant closed, when it came in at 24.9% and since that peek, we can see that unemployment is steadily declining in Graham County. The next chart represents the historic rate of unemployment during the month of January between 2010 and 2018 and our unemployment rate has plummeted year over year since 2011 when it was 23.5%. With regard to the effect of the closing of Bojangles, this closure is extremely unlikely to affect unemployment numbers. There is currently a modest workforce shortage for this labor pool. Currently Ingles, McDonalds, Shell, The Hub, Tapoco Lodge, Fontana

and others are in need of employees and it is anticipated that they will absorb the workforce displaced by the closing. NC Works will now be at the library the first Wednesday of every month from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and she will be creating job boards at the courthouse, Department of Social Services and the library. The boards will provide walk-up access from our citizens to explore job opportunities in Graham County and throughout the region. Anyone looking to post a job will be able to do so and she is looking forward to sharing this with our local business owners and our citizens so that they may truly have the opportunity to thrive in this county.

14. Chairman Eller asks for the finance report. Manager Garland stated that our cash balance for the month is \$9,347,837.99 which is up around \$315,000.00. Manager Garland stated that she is still owed 911 funds and when we receive those our cash balance will go up another \$1,004,295.90. Manager Garland stated that our current year tax collections is \$170,609.05, prior year \$12,248.77 and DMV \$37,755.63. Manager Garland stated that our year to date collections are \$6,037,634.93 for real taxes and \$304,133.06 for DMV taxes which is above from this time last year. Manager Garland stated that the revenues for the month was \$701,879.84 and expenditures for \$1,019,338.75 giving us a deficit of \$317,458.91 and again we are awaiting the 911 fund reimbursement. Manager Garland stated that our year to date revenues is \$10,830,421.29 and our expenditures of \$8,223,660.66 giving us a year to date surplus of \$2,606,760.63. Manager Garland stated that our expenses are down by \$362,826.95 from this time last year. Manager Garland stated that the budget is holding well and she will begin to be more savings. Manager Garland stated that the budget is holding at 43% which is above the projected 34%. Manager Garland stated that our sales tax revenue was \$193,464.26 which is up from last year's total of \$157,736.19. Manager Garland stated that projected sales tax reversion is \$97,701.73. Manager Garland stated that our past due tax collections is \$521,876.00 and gave a thank you to the tax office for their hard work.
 - a. Manager Garland stated that she has three budget amendments for the board's approval. Budget Amendment #10 – amend to increase timber allocations to actual per USFS for \$5,933.00. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve Budget Amendment #10. Commissioner Wiggins seconded this motion. Vote unanimous
 - b. Budget Amendment #11 – amend Senior Center Budget due to overrun on contracted services when the center was feeding the Snowbird Center while they were building their new facility in the amount of \$25,810.00. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve Budget Amendment #11. Commissioner Wiggins seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
 - c. Budget Amendment #12 – to amend the Transit Mobility Management with an increase of funds of \$37,605.00. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve Budget Amendment #13. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
15. Manager Garland stated that the great move of 2018 will begin on March 26th with the Health Department and DSS. Internet is to be installed this week or early next and she had to get ZITO Media temporarily due to issues with an easement that has been resolved. Balsam West has begun their buildout but we were too close and they couldn't get it finished in time. Furniture has been ordered and we only ordered what was absolutely necessary. The move will be done by combination of our buildings, grounds and cemetery crews to keep our costs at a minimum.
16. Manager Garland stated that an issue was found in the older part of the building with Zone 11 HVAC system and we received three quotes.
 - a. Elliott Brothers – 16 Seer system \$7350.00
 - b. Cherokee Mechanical – 16 Seer system \$5175.00
 - c. Andrews Heating and Cooling – 14 Seer system \$6200.00
 - d. Stiles HVAC – no quote given.Commissioner Williams made the motion to go with the lowest quote of the 16 Seer system which is Cherokee Mechanical. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
17. Manager Garland stated that we needed to stripe the parking lot at P&J for ADA and the cost is \$2650.00. Manager Garland stated that the parking lot would need to be repaved at some point and asks if we can wait to the next budget cycle. The board was fine with waiting until next budget year.
18. Manager Garland stated that we are still waiting on technology to be delivered to the 911 Call Center and Director Hembree will be working with Southern Software within the next week or two. There is a change order in the works. Manager Garland stated that the budget on the

building is fine and has room for landscaping and we are waiting for more information on the landscaping.

19. Manager Garland stated that the Snowbird Dumpster site would need repair to the fencing and we need to replace some cans. Director Colvard had asked a local vendor to build the cans but he could not do them any cheaper than what we could purchase them for. Baker's Waste gave us a quote of \$802.00 per can and if we order (12) a full truck load, the cost will be \$9624.00. Manager Garland stated that they did a ride about last Friday and several dumpsters are needing repair. Sweetwater site is in need of significant repair work and Sawyer's Creek needs a minor repair. Manager Garland stated that these sites needed a little more attention from the staff and once the weather breaks they will be doing heavier cleaning. The fencing at the Snowbird site is \$8,774.37 and she needed board approval on the cans and the fencing. Commissioner Williams made the motion to order the new cans, if our local vendor did not want to build them and to order the fencing. Commissioner Wiggins seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
20. Manager Garland stated that the DOJ Project Toolkit is enclosed in the board's packets for the A-0009 project. The handout has a site to log into to review project documents and an online GIS Viewer.
21. Manager Garland stated that Representative Kevin Corbin visited Graham County and Commissioner Orr took him on a tour of the P&J Building. Manager Garland stated that he spoke at the GREAT meeting and reported that he had gotten bipartisan legislation passed relieving small counties of the minimum class size requirement for four more years which will relieve the schools budget by \$350,000.00 this coming year and he reported strong job growth in WNC. Representative Corbin also held a focus group discussion about the challenges of small schools and asserted his support of public education and funding for public education. He also mentioned that he will be traveling more in his district due to their having a short session for this year. Manager Garland gave him the resolution supporting the occupancy tax increase and he indicated his support for our bill.
22. Manager Garland stated that she spoke with Lester Green, Finance Officer for Graham County Schools and he has estimated that they will be having a shortfall as anticipated. He has asked that I double up appropriations from April to June. I doubled up twice already in addition to following your directive to release the additional \$60,000.00 we appropriated in contingency. Manager Garland has only two months of appropriations to provide and if she doubles up in April then we would be out of appropriation. With the budget amendment today, she will be releasing the timber money however those funds are usually in addition to and not supplanting their current expense. Manager Garland is estimating the additional sales tax reversion and we may need to use it for the additional funding they request for this fiscal year. Manager Garland thinks that we need another meeting with them with a board member present because their estimated cash reserves for the end of the year will be approximately \$25,000.00. Manager Garland stated that she needed direction from the board. Commissioner Wiggins stated that we needed a joint meeting with the school board. Commissioner Williams made the motion to schedule a joint meeting with the School board as soon as possible. Commissioner Wiggins seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
23. Manager Garland stated that she has asked Stecoah Valley Center and the schools if they could take the exercise equipment but they did not want too or did not have the room. Manager Garland stated that we have (1) treadmill, (2) elliptical machines, (1) stationary bike and (1) weight machine. Manager Garland asks that board what they would like to do. The board will study on this and give suggestions at a later date.
24. Manager Garland gave the board some dates to remember. NCACC 2018 District Meeting April 26th in Jackson County. Commissioner Orr will attend.
25. Expert panel on Forest Service Management plans will be at the Andrews Community Center on March 29th at 6:00 p.m. and she plans to attend.
26. Robbinsville Elementary School is holding its 2nd annual Leadership Day Friday, April 6th from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. and they invited the commissioners to attend.
27. Manager Garland stated that she is looking into the CDBG Scattered Site Housing Grant funds and hopes that some of the money will be available for housing and not only for sewer and water. Commissioner Orr stated that she has people calling her who have a need for new roofs and repairs.
28. Chairman Eller asks for the Discussion Items. Manager Garland stated that Angela Knight resigned from the SW Child Development board and Jamie Hooper was willing to serve if the

- board so chooses. Commissioner Orr made the motion to appoint Jamie Hooper to the SW Child Development Board. Commissioner Wiggins seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
29. Manager Garland stated that Robin Turner and John Powell needed to be reappointed to the T&T Board. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to reappoint Robin Turner and John Powell to the T&T Board. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
 30. Manager Garland stated that the sheriff had requested two new Ford Explorers. The board had discussion and decided to purchase one Explorer now and one in the new budget. Commissioner Orr made the motion to purchase one new Explorer which will be paid by insurance money and to allow another one to be ordered at next budget. Commissioner Wiggins seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
 31. Manager Garland stated that Jimmie Holder had been accepted on the LTC Advisory Committee and the board needed to give the final approval. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to appoint Jimmie Holder to the LTC Advisory Committee. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
 32. Manager Garland stated that we had a request from the Local Government Federal Credit Union for an advisory board committee. Commissioner Orr volunteered for this committee. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to appoint Commissioner Orr to the Local Government Federal Credit Union Advisory Board. Commissioner Eller seconded this motion. Vote was called. Commissioners Wiggins, Eller, Nelms and Orr voted yes. Commissioner Williams voted no. Motion carried four to one.
 33. Manager Garland stated that we needed to appoint a committee member for the Historical Society. Commissioner Orr made the motion to appoint Commissioner Williams to this committee. Commissioner Wiggins seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
 34. Manager Garland stated that we had a public records request from Carolina Public Press and they stated that they think our policy referencing GS 159 is among the clearest and most precise they had seen for consequences of violations and he has reviewed most of the policies in the 100 counties.
 35. Chairman Eller asks for new or old business. No new or old business was discussed.
 36. Chairman Eller asks for public comment. Chairman Eller asks Joe Deddo to speak. Mr. Deddo stated that he lives on Panther Creek Road and owns a campground there. Mr. Deddo stated that all three of his kids have graduated from Robbinsville High School. Mr. Deddo stated that he has an issue with the trash at the Stecoah site. Mr. Deddo stated that he hauls his garbage off on Wednesday's and Sundays and this past Sunday every can was filled and running over and this needed to be fixed. Mr. Deddo suggested that the sanitation crew pick up later on weekends, or have a weekend crew for Sundays to help fix this problem. Mr. Deddo stated that something needed to be figured out and he also stated that we needed to pay more attention to the recycling items that are put in the garbage cans that can be taken out. Mr. Deddo stated that in Swain County they have manned sites and they are always neat and clean and we should visit Swain County and see how they do their garbage collections.
 37. Mr. Deddo stated that his other comment is harvesting of trees. Mr. Deddo stated that a vast majority of our trees are sent to China and someone needed to replant the trees that are removed. Mr. Deddo stated that they are logging on Shellstand now but the loggers are not able to replant trees they barely get enough money to make payroll and pay the expenses. Mr. Deddo stated that the forest service should have to replant these trees since they only pay minimal taxes for their lands in the county. Mr. Deddo stated that the people from the tax office had come to his property and they took pictures of his house and when he asked what he was doing there he told me not to worry his taxes would not go up. Mr. Deddo stated that he talked to Erma Phillips and she told him that it was a commercial property appraiser for the county for the next revaluation but found it odd that the gentleman did not take pictures of his campground. Mr. Deddo stated that the issue has been brought before the board on the increase in occupancy tax and he asks that the board research all the renters in the county because not everyone pays this tax and they should. Mr. Deddo stated that he read the paper about the county needing a new courthouse and felt that we didn't need to listen to a car salesman on this importance of an issue. Manager Garland stated that the gentleman that spoke on the finances concerning the courthouse was a financial analyst and he did not try to sell us anything he was just telling us our borrowing capabilities.
 38. Chairman Eller asks Bill Flannigan to speak. Mr. Flannigan stated that he didn't know exactly who that man was who talked about the courthouse but his vision to spend \$9.4 million dollars redoing the courthouse is not a good idea when for the last 25 years Main Street has not

improved any. Mr. Flannigan stated that we need to look for grants and build a new courthouse, jail and new administrative building and there must be someplace we can put this center. Mr. Flannigan stated that he loved this county but he did not want to see something done that we don't need. Manager Garland stated that she had a couple of things to clarify. Manager Garland stated that the individual that spoke about the courthouse is a debt analyst and he was not trying to sell us anything. Manager Garland stated that we will not spend one dime of money without thought and consideration and that a lot of research will need to be done and it begins with a debt analysis of our borrowing capabilities. Manager Garland stated that we are under a judge's order to make the courthouse a safe place and this will require a lot of public input and a lot of planning. Manager Garland stated that the board may even need to do a bond referendum and this will go to the people for a vote. Manager Garland stated that if and when the board decided to move forward with any project the people will be told step by step. Manager Garland stated that the courthouse has major problems and we are under a time restraint with a judge and we will keep the public informed.

39. Chairman Eller stated that we needed to go into closed session under G.S. 143-318.11(a) (1) (3) (5) for privileged or confidential information, attorney-client privilege and contracts.

Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to go into closed session as stated. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

40. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to go back into open session. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

41. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to accept the contract with Heery to do the courthouse assessment. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

42. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to adjourn. Commissioner Williams 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