

Regular Meeting – October 16, 2018

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Tuesday, October 16, 2018 for their regular monthly meeting in the Graham County Community Building located at 196 Knight Street Robbinsville NC 28771. Board present: Connie Orr, Jacob Nelms, Dale Wiggins and Raymond Williams. Board absent: Keith Eller.

1. Commissioner Williams made the motion to allow Commissioner Wiggins to convene the meeting. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous. Commissioner Orr will be arriving late due to a Vaya Health Board meeting in Asheville, NC.
2. Commissioner Wiggins called the meeting to order.
3. Commissioner Wiggins asks Commissioner Williams to give the Invocation.
4. Commissioner Wiggins asks Commissioner Nelms to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.
5. Commissioner Wiggins asks for changes to the agenda. Manager Garland stated that we needed to add under Item #9 the DSS meeting place will need to be changed as well as the Regular Commissioner Meeting; Need to add the appointment of Judy Jones to the LTC Board per Larry Reeves; and Fontana Lake Shoreline Cleanup is requesting our sanitation department to empty the dumpsters from November 1st to November 3rd; and, we need to add Juanita Colvard and Sophia Paulos to Closed Session under contracts. Commissioner Williams made the motion to approve the agenda with the changes as stated. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
6. Commissioner Wiggins asks for approval of the Regular Meeting Minutes of October 2nd. Commissioner Nelms made the motion to approve the minutes as stated. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
7. Commissioner Wiggins asks EDC Director Sophia Paulos to give the EDC Monthly Report. Ms. Paulos stated that the great partnership we have forged in the region over the past few years is beginning to bear a lot of fruit for Graham County. This past month our county became Hometown Strong and now has the direct and immediate support of Governor Cooper and his cabinet as we work to make strides in Health Care, Broadband, and Infrastructure for the people of Graham County. Last week, the North Carolina Rural Center hosted their regional listening session right here in this very room. They gathered on-the-ground knowledge and insight brought by leaders from across far western NC to give direct insight on rural issues to those working at the state level in Raleigh. It is clear that our strong partnerships are creating big developments in Graham County. Ms. Paulos stated we are set to expand high-speed internet in Graham County. Ms. Paulos thanked the board for supporting the broadband study conducted by the Mountain West Partnership and the Southwestern Commission. The critical data we gained through that study has literally created a map of where we are heading. A larger version of the map is attached to the packet. This up to date map shows where demand for internet exists throughout the county. As you can see, most of the demand follows the main roads and roads off of main roads through the county and that's good news! All of these main roads already have middle mile fiber! Even better news is that through the GREAT organization we were able to secure an additional \$100,000 for high-speed internet expansion in the county. Our broadband committee will meet in two weeks with Keith Conover from the state IT office to schedule a provider meeting, work out the RFP for the new grant, and strategize deployment of internet throughout the county. Ms. Paulos wanted to point out that these conversations would not be possible without the hard work of Shaun Garrison, Mapping Director who created the map of the demand, now with towers, necessary to facilitate these meetings and more importantly to get providers interested in Graham County. It's important to note that this series of events could not be more well-timed. As you know, the state recently announced \$10 million dollars for internet service providers big and small to roll out high-speed internet in Tier 1 counties. In addition to funding secured through GREAT, the grant money from the state will make our County an attractive investment for internet service providers. Hard work with our partners at the state IT office, the Mountain West Partnership, the Southwestern Commission and the support of this board are making this dream a reality. Ms. Paulos will continue to provide updates on this matter as they develop. Ms. Paulos stated this month she was able to deliver great news to the Graham County Historic Association after she was able to secure a \$14,500 ARC Opt-In grant through the Southwestern Commission. Russ Harris and Ann Bass proved instrumental in securing this funding and she is grateful to them for that. She is also thankful to this board for their commitment to match the grant with \$1,000. Added to the

\$3,000 in cash and in-kind match from GCHA this \$18,500 project will support all of the hard work they've done over the last year and help take them to the next level. The project will fund a sustainability study where the selected consultant will work hand in hand with the community to identify the best, most sustainable use of the building as a whole. The project will last for 3 months. When the project is complete, it will be immediately followed with an architectural study that uses the results of the sustainability study as its base. Funding for the architectural study has already been secured through the generous efforts of Rep. Kevin Corbin who secured a special appropriations grant for this project. In total, we have secured \$43,500 for GCHA in grants, cash, and in-kind contributions. The studies that result from these two projects will give GCHA the precise tools they need to secure additional funding and re-open the Snider Building and the new Graham County History Museum. As a side note, Secretary of Commerce Tony Copeland was very impressed with the Main Street efforts being brought about through the community garden and GCHA. He was able to tour both projects and Main Street when he was here for Hometown Strong. He was so impressed that he is now officially a member of GCHA. Ms. Paulos stated some of you may have seen this very exciting announcement on WLOS or read about it in the Sunday Citizen-Times. Ms. Paulos attached a copy of the full press release to their packets. Following our first advisory council meeting at the first annual Economy Conference at WCU, she was excited to announce Graham County's partnership in a \$940,000 ARC POWER grant announced this past Thursday. With this grant and \$787,000 in matching funds secured by Mountain BizWorks, *Growing Outdoors* is a \$1.7 million dollar project to expand the Outdoor Recreation Industry in Western North Carolina. Two additional counties, both impacted by the decline of coal the hardest, will serve on the advisory council for the project. They are Mitchell and Burke counties. Additional partners include WCU, Outdoor Gear Builders of WNC (which is 33 gear manufacturers and companies located in WNC), David Knight the State Outdoor Recreation Industry Director, and Mountain BizWorks as the fiscal agent and recipient of the grant. ***Growing Outdoors* will have 5 focus areas.**

- * **Workforce + Outdoor Careers:** Creating a world-class talent pipeline for the region's growing outdoor industry, through new degree programs, certificates, continuing education, a new Outdoor Industry Job Board, and more.

- * **Entrepreneurship + Access to Capital:** Supporting innovation and the next generation of outdoor entrepreneurs through customized training, \$800,000 in dedicated funding, and connections to business resources as well as peer-to-peer trainings.

- * **Connecting the Industry:** Helping WNC's outdoor industry connect, share information, and collaborate through a flagship annual conference and expanding the Outdoor Gear Builders of WNC.

- * **Economic Development:** Engaging with regional economic development partners as well as partners from neighboring states like Eastern TN to establish Appalachia's competitive advantage for outdoor industry investment.

- * **Growing Markets:** Expanding national & global markets for WNC-made gear, promoting Appalachian outdoor heroes, and branding the region as the East Coast Pinnacle for Outdoor Industry. So what does this mean for Graham County? The grant is structured in a way that serves the whole region. It is a very full pie. That said, Graham County has a strong seat at the center of the table. With some of the best resources for the outdoor recreation industry of any county in the region Ms. Paulos expects the benefits of this grant to land right here in Graham County and in many ways she wants to thank this board for supporting her presence on the Mountain BizWorks credit committee and more recently her appointment to their Board of Directors allowing this strong partnership to form. While we provided \$0 dollars in cash match our strong partnerships have created this very exciting and well-funded opportunity.

Ms. Paulos would also like to congratulate the Southwestern Commission who was the only other recipient of an ARC POWER grant in western North Carolina. They were awarded a \$1.25 million dollar grant for physical improvements to the Western North Carolina Farmers Market (WNCFM). Construction of a Value-Added Food Business Support Center, managed by Blue Ridge Food Ventures, will expand operations at the WNCFM to include entrepreneurs engaged in production and sale of foods, cosmetics, and natural products in an FDA certified facility. Performance outcomes from this investment are expected to include 64 businesses improved, 36 businesses created, 50 new jobs created, 120 existing jobs retained, 150 students improved, 25 worker trainees improved, and \$700,000 in leveraged private investment. Additional funding is being provided by the North Carolina Department of Agriculture. Through the state Main Street and Rural Planning Office Ms. Paulos has been working with Manager Garland and Ann

Bass to begin an Outdoor Recreation Economy Strategic Development Plan. The proposed scope of work would include the following:

Identify and assemble a working team from the Industry with Graham County Economic Development Director

Review Existing Plans and Conditions:

- Review previous plans and applicable data – past and potential (as available)
- Inventory and map existing outdoor recreation facilities (condition, size, location, etc.) and activities
- Tour primary facilities and interview owners/operators
- Inventory existing outdoor recreation businesses - products, markets, plans, needs

Understand Existing and possible Participant Experiences

- Identify existing participants (target markets) and their experiences
- Examine carrying capacities, development limitations, future demand as possible
- Explore potential for new facilities, activities, experiences

Establish a niche for Graham County in the region's Outdoor Recreation economy

- Define gaps/opportunities for investment and development
- Generate Outdoor Recreation Economic Positioning Statement

Create a Strategic Development Plan

- Create action plan with priorities, specific tasks, assignments, and target dates

The proposed products to be delivered are:

- A map of existing outdoor recreation facilities + conditions report
- A priority list of needed & desired facilities for investment
- A list of potential businesses & experiences needed & desired
- A Strategic plan for development with priorities, timelines, assignments, etc.

Ms. Paulos attached draft copies of the MOU, Scope of Work, and board resolution that will be required for this project to go forward. It is important to note that the state Main Street & Rural Planning office, in partnership with ARC, will provide this service at zero cost to Graham County with the only exception being materials printing or copy costs for large numbers of copies if requested. Ms. Paulos will finalize these drafts with Manager Garland and Ann Bass to present to the board at next month's board meeting. Commissioner Wiggins asks if there will be a creation of an outdoor industry manufacturer. Ms. Paulos stated that this is already being worked on.

8. Commissioner Wiggins asks Manager Garland to give the finance and manager's report. Manager Garland stated that we ended the month with a \$7,366,969.14 cash balance and we are up \$618,000.00 from this time last year. Manager Garland stated that we are owed \$228,278.00 from the 911 Board which will raise our balance even more. Manager Garland stated that we have current tax collections of \$202,480.30 and prior year taxes of \$9,695.18 for a total of \$212,175.48. Manager Garland stated that we have collected \$46,918.68 in DMV for the month and we are in the positive on DMV collections at this time of \$25,000.00. Manager Garland stated that our tax rate is 20.87% and commends the tax office for their hard work. Manager Garland stated that our revenues for the month was \$815,029.36 and our expenditures was \$1,184,582.32 giving us a deficit of \$369,552.96. Manager Garland stated that we pay our big debt payments in this month such as QZAB, CITRIX, and CISCO. Manager Garland stated that we have a surplus of \$222,960.78 for the year. Manager Garland stated that our sales tax collections for the month was \$184,942.65 and the school will be receiving \$20,633.44 from the 524 Expansion. Manager Garland stated that she did have a budget amendment for approval. Budget Amendment #1 to recognize refunds and expenditures approved in previous board meetings. The expenditures was \$70,699.00 and the net increase was \$119,453.00. Commissioner Williams made the motion to approve the budget amendment as stated. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
9. Manager Garland stated that she would now go to the manager's report. Manager Garland stated our 911 Call Center is nearly complete and we anticipate a go live date in mid-November. Manager Garland stated that she has received the final billing from the contractor for retainage and we have saved over \$25,000.00 by segregating the sales tax out of the project which has provided more room for improvements to our technology infrastructure. The consultants with Mission Critical will be requesting an extension on the grant in order to provide more enhanced redundancy with our neighboring counties.

10. Manager Garland has a meeting with Brookfield about the river releases for next year in Asheville and she is hoping to have a quiet conversation with Marshall Olson regarding the impact of a ruling that the NC Utilities Commission made about contracts with Duke Energy to sell power to Duke that has adversely affected the ability of small power supplies to sustain earnings capacity. Ms. Garland attached some articles about this issue for the boards review and worries about the impact this could have on the value of their assets in Graham County and our tax base.
11. Manager Garland stated that we had a visit from NC Department of Labor two weeks ago and they inspected our sanitation and recreation departments due to some accidents which were reported on our 2016 report. Manager Garland stated that in conjunction with their visit, the auditor provided some resources to enhance our safety program. We have reinstated the safety committee this past spring and we have begun an enhanced safety awareness program in the areas of Hazardous Communications, Personal Protective Equipment and Blood Borne Pathogens (assessment and training). We are looking at the audit as an opportunity to do better which will in turn help us in risk assessment and mitigation, resulting in lower worker's comp and liability insurance premiums.
12. Manager Garland stated that she attached minutes from our latest safety committee meeting. We have identified a fall hazard due to the many files still in the floor in the DSS. The NCDOL auditor but did not cite that recreation has potential hazards. The committee explored the options of moving the units out back of the community building. There is concern about the viability of moving the buildings due to age and deterioration and in addition when we have some storage space as well. The older buildings will not work aesthetically and we recommended putting either a stick built storage building or a pre-built storage large enough to accommodate the needs of DSS and recreation. When we move from the P&J Building we will have no place to put it and Gavin Colvard is getting costs. We also recommended that the building be put on a concrete slab for permanency and long term care of the building.
13. Manager Garland stated that we kicked off the wellness program this month and so far we have had 30 employees sign on with getting their wellness panel drawn and we expect another 15 who have scheduled their blood work. We will be having a 5K run/walk on Saturday, October 27th and in total 71 participants have registered. About 30 of those are county employees and Amber Williams reported that Swain County has 45 participating so we are doing well in comparison based on population site.
14. Manager Garland stated that Larry Hembree, EMS Director has been contacted by AT&T regarding placing a tower at Wachacha Bald and replacing our tower. The USFS will only allow towers up to 160 feet so he has been in contact with the USFS permitting officer but we need to know if this is a project that the commissioners want to pursue before Mr. Hembree continues to work on it. It will require a road maintenance agreement with the USFS and we will have to re-license the tower with them as well. It would allow more options for cell service in the County. The board was in unanimous agreement to this request.
15. Manager Garland stated that Chowan County had mirrored our resolution for HB 320 and she is pleased that our resolution is getting some attention.
16. Manager Garland stated that Clerk Crisp provided the board a report from DOT and STANTEC and this report will be presented at our A-0009 meeting on Friday. Manager Garland also attached some information related to the Map Act and the process of the State acquiring right of way in highway projects to give some additional perspective.
17. Manager Garland stated that Angela Knight had contacted her over the paving that we had done at the community building and they would like to pave the gym parking lot next to library and asks if the board would cost share the cost. The cost would be \$7500.00 each. Commissioner Orr made the motion to cost share and pay \$7500.00 for paving. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous. Commissioner Wiggins stated that we might need to check with Tri-County Community College to make sure that this is not their property.
18. Commissioner Wiggins asks for public comment. No public comment was made.
19. Commissioner Wiggins asks for the discussion items. Manager Garland stated that we have Releases of \$574.88 and Discoveries of \$412.89. Commissioner Williams made the motion to approve the releases and discoveries. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
20. Manager Garland stated that some of the board has a HCCBG meeting October 17, 2018 at 1:00 p.m.

21. Manager Garland stated that there will be an AAA Advisory and Region A Senior Tar Heel Meeting Thursday, November 8th at 10:00 a.m.
22. Manager Garland stated that we will need to move the November 6th Regular Commissioner Meeting and the DSS Board Meeting to the EMS Base due to Election Day because the elections use our community building. Commissioner Nelms made the motion to move the meetings as stated to the EMS Facility located at 70 West Fort Hill. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
23. Manager Garland stated that Judy Jones had been recommended to the LTC Advisory Board by Larry Reeves and asks if the board would like to appoint Ms. Jones. Commissioner Orr made the motion to appoint Judy Jones to the board as stated. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
24. Manager Garland stated that there will be a Shoreline Cleanup on Fontana Lake on November 1st through November 3rd and they are requesting the county to pick up the dumpsters in-kind. Commissioner Orr made the motion to pick up the dumpsters on this date as an in-kind donation. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
25. Commissioner Wiggins asks for new or old business. No further business was discussed.
26. Commissioner Wiggins asks for a motion to go into closed session under G.S. 143-318.11(a) (1) (3) (5) (6) for privileged or confidential information, attorney-client privilege, personnel and contracts. Commissioner Orr made the motion to go into closed session as stated. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
27. Commissioner Williams made the motion to go back into open session. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
28. Commissioner Orr made the motion to hire Nancy Lane for the RFQ and RFP's for the CT and Mammogram Machines which will be used at the Urgent Care for \$4000.00. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
29. Commissioner Williams made the motion to continue this meeting to Thursday, October 18, 2018 at 2:00 p.m. at the DSS Building. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

Keith Eller, Chairman, Graham County Board of Commissioners

Connie Orr, Vice-Chairman, Graham County Board of Commissioners

Jacob Nelms, Member, Graham County Board of Commissioners

Dale Wiggins, Member, Graham County Board of Commissioners

Raymond Williams, Member, Graham County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:

Kim Crisp, Clerk to the Board