

Regular Meeting
July 21, 2020

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Tuesday, July 21, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. in the Graham County Community Building located at 196 Knight Street Robbinsville, NC for their regular monthly meeting. All board was present.

1. Chairman Wiggins called the meeting to order.
2. Chairman Wiggins asks Commissioner Cody to give the Invocation.
3. Chairman Wiggins asks Commissioner Orr to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.
4. Chairman Wiggins asks for changes to the agenda. Clerk Crisp stated that the board needed to delete Item #7. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve the agenda with the stated change. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
5. Chairman Wiggins asks for approval of the minutes for the Board of Equalization & Review June 16th; Workshop and Regular Meeting June 16th; Continued Meeting June 25th, and Special Meeting July 7th. Commissioner Eller made the motion to approve the minutes as stated. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
6. Chairman Wiggins asks Burt Robinson, TVA Representative to speak. Mr. Robinson stated that he was the Director of Government Relations for TVA based in Knoxville, Tennessee and stated that they were here tonight to give an update on Fontana Village and answer any questions that board had. Mr. Robinson introduced Bob Deacy, Senior Vice-President of TVA and David Bowling, Vice-President of Land & River Management. Mr. Deacy stated that on June 1st the current lease holders, FBI Inc., surrendered their lease back to TVA due to financial considerations and due to the COVID19 closures and restrictions. Mr. Deacy stated that he hated to see Fontana Village close but respected FBI's decisions. Mr. Deacy stated that this decision returns the resorts 359 acres back to TVA and this property dates back to World War II. Mr. Deacy stated that the resort has been around for a long time and has a special part of TVA legacy and has a special part with historical markings such as the Appalachian Trail and many other unique factors that make up the resort. Mr. Deacy stated that historically TVA is invested in the site due to its historical landmark and serves as an economic driver to Graham County. Mr. Deacy stated that these features make for a special and unique place as one of TVA's historical sites. Mr. Deacy stated that they are currently exploring their options and getting the resort back into good condition but they do not have an opening date at this time. Mr. Deacy stated that Baker Construction was hired to get the resort ready and they have (21) employees. Mr. Deacy stated that they currently have employees at the resort doing maintenance and upkeep. Mr. Deacy stated Baker will be an Interim Operator for TVA short-term but TVA will continue to seek someone with the wherewithal and the right financial backing to be a long-term operator. Mr. Deacy stated that Fontana Village is very unique because it is a resort that is isolated and secluded sitting out in the Smokies. Mr. Deacy stated that they need someone who is experienced in WNC who is in the hospitality business, has the financial backing and understands the needs of WNC. Mr. Deacy stated they will keep Graham County informed as they go along and currently have one organization, a Hydro Operations Crew of (30) people doing maintenance on the Dam and the Hydro so they intend to spend quite a bit of time here in Graham County. Mr. Deacy stated that they have David Bolin who is with the Natural Resources Group for questions as well. Mr. Deacy stated their goal is to get the resort ready and everyone is working hard to get this done. Mr. Deacy commented on the Veteran's Flag. Commissioner Orr thanked TVA for their donation of the Flag and the Lettering and further stated that they are completing the details on the cement work for the lettering. Commissioner Orr stated that she is a complete spectator and relying on Harold Phillips and Clay Lovelace and will get pictures to them. Chairman Wiggins thanked TVA for taking a serious interest in the resort and stated that the resort was dear to us and has been a major asset to the county and thanked TVA for keeping the resort open. Commissioner Wiggins stated that the resort employees a lot of our people and many kids have worked there in the summertime. Commissioner Wiggins stated that the history is awesome. Mr. Deacy stated that TVA recognizes that Fontana Village is a key part to the economy.
7. Chairman Wiggins asks Manager Garland for the finance and manager's report. Manager Garland joined the meeting by teleconference. Manager Garland stated that the end of the month cash balance was \$7,955,098.69; current tax collection \$48,107.65; prior year collection

\$7,216.62 and DMV collections of \$40,797.46. Manager Garland stated that the year to date tax collection was \$7,012,663.38 and DMV \$539,679.29. Manager Garland stated that the tax rate was 96.56%.

8. Manager Garland stated that the revenues for the month was \$937,22.33 and expenditures of \$252,378.84.
9. Manager Galand stated that we ended the year with a surplus of \$1,675,671.26 which is a good positive variance.
10. Manager Garland stated that our revenues to date were \$16,232,731.08 and expenditures was \$15,738,032.70 for a year to date surplus of \$494,698.38.
11. Manager Garland stated that our sales tax collection for the month was \$182,292.05 which is ahead from this time last year. Manager Garland stated that our sales tax has remained steady and we have a positive variance of \$125,651.62 and estimates that we can put \$110,000.00 away for the school project.
12. Manager Garland stated that our past due collections since 2013 are \$627,889.87.
13. Manager Garland stated that she met on the Recovery to Work Grant Project and had a really good meeting and they are close to launching that grant project which will work in conjunction with the justice related grant that Health Director Beth Booth is working with Clay County. Manager Garland stated that these grants combined will call for and fund two positions.
 1. Part-Time (29 hour/week) Community Services Technician – Grade 58 at \$16.90 per hour which will require a high school education at a minimum.
 2. Full-Time (40 hour/week) Peer Support Specialist – Grade 76 at \$25.00 per hour which will require a bachelor’s degree.

Manager Garland stated that these positions will be for grant funded positions but she will need board approval to add these positions to the pay plan and to advise State Personnel.

Commissioner Eller asks if these positions would end when the grant ended. Manager Garland stated that they would end when the grant was complete. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve the positions as stated with the knowledge that when the grant runs out these positions will be deleted. Commissioner Eller seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

14. Manager Garland stated that Larry Hembree had received a gift of \$1,000.00 and asks that this be dedicated to the EMS Response Team. Commissioner Cody made the motion to dedicated the money as requested. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
15. Manager Garland stated that the Community Paramedicine vehicle had arrived and they would be installing the striping this week then she would be making request to ARC for reimbursement.
16. Manager Garland stated that the Dogwood Trust had given \$2500.00 to the county for advertising for the census. Manager Garland stated that our census response rate is 28% and needs to be higher. Manager Garland stated that the response rate for WNC region is low, mainly due to COVID; people are not paying attention. Manager Garland stated that the Census response is vitally important to federal funding and we will also get an additional \$1000.00 per percentage rate increase so we will be redoubling our efforts to make outreach into the community to encourage and enhance the response rate here in the county.
17. Manager Garland stated that EMS Director Larry Hembree received additional funding via CARES/COVID funding for equipment via the Emergency Management Performance Grant and is requesting to purchase (3) Viper radios at a total cost of \$8295.00 and asks for board approval. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approval the purchase of the radios as requested. Commissioner Eller seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
18. Manager Garland stated that she and Project Manager Jason Marino had a phone conversation with Davenport, our debt advisors, and advised pulling the funds from the capital projects fund and then back finance the funding when we begin the financing on the courthouse project. Manager Garland stated that he gave two reasons: 1) Marketability of debt financing under \$1M is not feasible for these projects and 2) the cost of financing could offset any interest rate gains which could affect the timing of getting Local Government Commission approval could further delay the projects. Manager Garland stated that they were advised to form a resolution to reimburse the County for the costs of the projects when we have bids in hand on the projects. Manager Garland stated that PM Marino is waiting on final spec costs on all three projects and the bid advertisements will be issued soon, the plans and designs are finished and he is finishing the bid packages and working to get the pre-bid conference scheduled.
19. Manager Garland stated that she and Project Manager Marino had an impromptu meeting with Judge Coward a few weeks ago following a meeting regarding courts and social distancing and

took the Judge to Fort Hill to walk the property and he approved of the potential site. Manager Garland stated that PM Marino has been communicating with HEERY on the blocking and stacking and will continue meeting with the Court System and the Sheriff's office regarding square footage configuration.

20. Manager Garland stated that the HVAC evaluation was performed at the DHHS Building and the engineer largely concurred with the recommendations that Elliott presented to add air returns and move thermostats; whereby a plenum system is not the correct configuration for a building that is large and zoned. Manager Garland stated that he did show where some thermostats needed to be moved to accommodate appropriate zones and where outside ducting and dampers is inappropriate. Manager Garland stated that he noted that the entire system is undersized and she, Building Director Colvard and PM Marino will begin creating a cost estimate to clean up this mess.
21. Manager Garland stated that we have received a short reprieve on the trial that was set to be heard next week at Stecoah Valley Center. The judge moved all felony criminal court trials for Graham County that require a jury to be seated until November 9 which will allow us time to complete the agreement with the Center for the information regarding usage of the building for court proceedings and they are in the process of gathering the data to support their request for \$700.00 per day for usage of the building.
22. Manager Garland stated that the NC Forest Service vehicle will be available early fall and Frank Cline reached out to verify our interest in the purchase. Manager Garland stated that the truck has 105,000 miles and the value will not be given until the vehicle is taken offline. Commissioner Eller stated that we did want to get this vehicle. The board all agreed.
23. Manager Garland stated that they are continuing the Opioid Workshops with positive results and procedures are being put in place to support placement of the funds in the county. Manager Garland stated that we need to continue to advocate to ensure that the General Assembly does not frame a funding resolution that would allow them to raid the fund for general purposes.
24. Manager Garland stated that she has been advised by Jonathan Shuffield that the plan that Senator Wyden proposed with the federal land's legislation did not provide for any permanency or semi-permanency in SRS funding and we need to continue our strong support in this arena. Manager Garland stated that with the COVID situation, a PILT fly-in is unlikely, therefore she will be reaching out to see if there is anything that we can do to strongly advocate, such as resolutions, etc. Commissioner Orr stated that most meetings are being held through ZOOM and she will continue to meet on this very important issue.
25. Chairman Wiggins asks for public comment. No public comment.
26. Chairman Wiggins asks for approval of the Releases \$3,572.85 and the Discoveries \$6,494.42. Commissioner Eller made the motion to approve the releases and discoveries as stated. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
27. Chairman Wiggins asks for a motion to reappoint Randy Collins, Angela Knight and Connie Orr to the EDC Board and to replace Adam Wachacha with Billy Brown and replace Joe Jones with Michelle Shiplet on the EDC Board. Commissioner Orr stated that Adam Wachacha was an excellent board member but his time is limited due to EBCI obligations. Commissioner Nelms made the motion to approve the requests for the EDC board. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
28. Chairman Wiggins asks for a motion to reappoint Debbie Beasley and Marshall McClung to the Road Naming Board for a three-year term. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve the request for the Road Naming Board as stated. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
29. Chairman Wiggins asks for a motion to reappoint Dirk Cody to the Transportation Advisory Board for a four-year term. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve the request for the TAB Board as stated. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
30. Chairman Wiggins asks for a motion to reappoint Meredith Jenkins and Jess Wehr to the Travel and Tourism Board for a one-year term. Chairman Wiggins asks that we hold on Jess Wehr until he has a chance to speak with her. Commissioner Orr made the motion to reappoint Meredith Jenkins to the T&T Board. Commissioner Eller seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
31. Chairman Wiggins asks for new or old business. Chairman Wiggins stated that there is an ongoing effort to block a proposed casino being built in Cleveland County by a South Carolina Indian Tribe and asks the board if they would support a letter opposing this casino. Chairman Wiggins stated that if this casino is built this will result in job losses to our county and our neighboring counties and EBCI employees 5% of our workforce. Commissioner Orr made the

motion to support the efforts to block this casino from being built by a South Carolina Tribe in Cleveland County. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

32. Chairman 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 Eller made the motion to go into closed session as stated. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
33. Chairman Wiggins asks for a motion to go back into open session. Commissioner Orr made the motion to go back into open session. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
34. Commissioner Orr stated that she received a letter from the Graham County Historical Association which stated to please let this letter serve as the Graham County Historical Associates request for an appropriation of funds to assist with the Sniders Store project. In the past Graham County has appropriated \$10,000.00 and we ask that the same amount be appropriated for the 2020-2021 fiscal year. The project on Main Street is a project for the entire county and will hopefully spur the redevelopment of Main Street. To date, we have invested \$275,000.00 in the project and plan on spending over \$90,000.00 on a new roof in June. Thank you to the Board of Commissioners for your consideration and help in the past to this worthwhile project. Commissioner Orr stated that she wanted this on the record of their request.
35. Commissioner Orr stated that she made a visit to Clay County on July 20, 2020 and toured the new Health/DSS Department guided by County Manager Debbie Mauney. Commissioner Orr stated that as they toured the new facility, Manager Mauney shared with her that she and staff had recently visited Graham County's Senior Center and the staff was very welcoming and offered much information of help. Commissioner Orr stated that Manager Mauney stated that she is new to the position of County Manager and is looking to learn best practices in running a successful efficient Senior Center in Clay County and was particularly grateful to Melissa Crisp and Wanda Hill for their help and graciousness. Commissioner Orr stated that she appreciated this positive representation of Graham County and willingness to help our sister county exemplified by Melissa and Wanda and requests that this statement be made a permanent document of each of their personnel files.
36. Attorney Coward asks that the board set a Special Meeting to meet with Republican Executive Committee if needed. The board agreed to meet Tuesday, July 28, 2020 at 2:00 p.m. in the Community Building located at 196 Knight Street Robbinsville, NC.
37. Chairman Wiggins asks for a motion to continue this meeting to Friday, July 24, 2020 at 2:00 p.m. to meet with Dr. Castor with Smoky Mountain Urgent Care. Commissioner Cody made the motion to continue the meeting as stated. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

Dale Wiggins, Chairman

Lynn Cody, Vice-Chairman

Keith Eller, Member

Jacob Nelms, Member

Connie Orr, Member

ATTEST: _____
Kim Crisp, Clerk to the Board