

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Tuesday, June 28, 2016 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 Nelms called the meeting to order.
2. Chairman Nelms asks Commissioner Williams to give the Invocation.
3. Chairman Nelms asks Commissioner Orr to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.
4. Chairman Nelms asks for approval of the agenda. Commissioner Williams made the motion to approve the agenda. Commissioner Eller seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
5. Chairman Nelms asks for approval of the June 9, 2016 Regular Meeting Minutes. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve the minutes as stated. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
6. Chairman Nelms asks for a motion to close the regular meeting and open the public hearing for the 2016/2017 Fiscal Year Budget Presentation. Commissioner Orr made the motion as stated. Commissioner Eller seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
7. Chairman Nelms asks Finance Officer Rebecca Garland to speak. Ms. Garland stated that she is presenting the 2016-2017 Fiscal Year Budget which was laid out for public review on June 9, 2016 for consideration by the Board of County Commissioners and Residents of Graham County. Ms. Garland stated that the budget is balanced in accordance with the Local Government Budget and Fiscal Control Act with total revenue and expenditures for \$15,314,196.00. Ms. Garland stated that the Ad valorem Tax Rate of \$.585 per \$100.00 at full valuation is hereby established as the official tax for the County of Graham for the Fiscal Year 2016/2017. Ms. Garland stated that the tax rate remained the same as last year even though the budget decreased by approximately \$50,000.00 and the main reason for maintaining this tax rate is to recognize the many projects that are ongoing in the County and our tax base did not grow and this will help us accomplish our goals and maintain a steady workforce. Ms. Garland stated that the county is implementing a better pay plan and this will enable employee's predictability. Ms. Garland stated that our pay plan is based on a percentage of the state grades. Ms. Garland stated that the county will be implementing our fleet policy which will allow the purchase of vehicles for DSS which will be reimbursed to the county by two-thirds and the Building Inspections Office. Ms. Garland stated that one of the Equinox's from DSS will be transferred to the Administration Office. Ms. Garland stated that we will be receiving a new ambulance which is budgeted and a new transit bus which is 90% grant funded. Ms. Garland stated that a 3% COLA based on the CTI Index will be given to the employees and Phase II of the salary adjustments will be made for those employees earning \$13.00 and above. Ms. Garland stated that our health insurance costs went up 13.9% but our retirement dropped from 12% to 7% due to the satisfaction of the buying in retirement to all county employee in 2000. Ms. Garland stated that the Commissioners have been doing extensive repairs to the buildings and all the details are available for the public's review.
8. Ms. Garland asks for public comment. Commissioner Williams thanked Rebecca Garland and Mike Edwards for the budget and further thanked Rebecca Garland for her assistance on the Travel and Tourism budget. Ms. Garland stated that she did make one change to the budget concerning Stecoah Valley Center. The Board allocated \$10,000.00 for general operating expenses and \$55,000.00 for a new roof to the center and due to the price of the roof being unknown at this time this money was transferred into contingency. No further comment was given.
9. Commissioner Williams made the motion to close the public hearing and reopen the regular meeting. Commissioner Eller seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
10. Commissioner Orr made the motion to adopt the 2016/2017 Fiscal Year Budget Ordinance as presented. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
11. The board asks Butch Sanders, DSS Director if he would like to speak. Mr. Sanders thanked the board for their time and stated that the DSS employees have been working very vigorously on completing audits and surveys. Mr. Sanders stated that he hopes that his staff's pay will commiserate with the jobs that they perform. Mr. Sanders stated that a Social Worker with a four year college degree did not receive enough pay at the current level of \$12.25 an hour. Mr. Sanders stated that he was here to reaffirm to his staff of where we are concerning pay raises and further stated that the staff has completed 99.9% of the work that needed attention and if the board has any questions she is always available for them. Commissioner Connie Orr stated

that she has received reports when he has been attending meetings in Raleigh and Asheville that Graham County has showed no exceptions and she thanked Mr. Sanders and the staff for the hard work. Commissioner Williams also thanked Mr. Sanders and stated that he has not received any complaints since Mr. Sanders was hired.

12. Carolyn Blevins, DSS Supervisor asks if the 3% COLA will be given to all employees even the ones that will be receiving the longevity pay. The board all stated that every employee will receive the 3% COLA. Ms. Blevins further stated that she needed to make sure that all the assigned grades are aligning correctly with the pay plan. Ms. Garland stated that she will be sending our pay rates to department heads and they are to make sure that these are correct prior to the first payroll. Ms. Blevins stated that the auditors had been with the department all week and they finished.
13. Chairman Nelms asks for the finance report. Ms. Garland stated that the cash balance for May 31st is \$6,506,150.00 which is up one million from this time last year. Ms. Garland stated that when she first came to Graham County our fund balance was 7% and the lowest the state allows is 8% but she is proud to report that our fund balance is 40% at this time. Ms. Garland stated that this percentage will go down some due to the expenditures that the county has paid out such as the P&J Building which will require renovation to house the Health and DSS Departments and further stated that the county has come a long way. Ms. Garland stated that the Real Tax collection for the month was \$24,000.00 and the DMV collections was \$38,800.00. Ms. Garland stated that we have collected \$6,000,000.00 in taxes this year and \$354,000.00 in DMV taxes and we are ahead \$604,000.00 in Real taxes and \$21,000.00 ahead in DMV taxes. Ms. Garland stated that our tax collection rate is 95.39% at this time but the tax office is hoping for 97% by the fiscal year end. Ms. Garland stated that we have \$1,700,000.00 surplus to date and our sales tax collections increased in June giving us a year end surplus of \$82,000.00 which shows an 8% growth in sales taxes. Ms. Garland stated that the tax office has collected a half million in back taxes and commended the tax office. Ms. Garland stated that the budget is holding at 13% and she is working very hard on getting all the bills and receivables into the system. Ms. Garland thanked the department managers for a job well done.
14. Ms. Garland stated that she did have several budget amendments for the board's approval.
 - a. Budget Amendment #18 – To amend budget for purchase of the Phillips and Jordan Office Facility.
 - b. Budget Amendment #19 – Amendments for additional shared revenues and expenditures of those restricted funds.
 - c. Budget Amendment #20 – Final year end amendments to reallocate funds between departments and recognize additional jail medical costs incurred for inmates.
 - d. Budget Amendment #1 – To amend the revaluation fund.
 - e. Budget Amendment #1 – To amend to spend down fund balance of 911 funds to maintain 2015-2016 funding levels.

Commissioner Williams made the motion to approve the budget amendments as stated. Commissioner Eller seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

15. Ms. Garland stated that the new 911 Center was moving along and the committee was reviewing the floor plans which will be presented to the Board of Commissioners for final approval. Ms. Garland stated that she did have one bill from Mission Critical Partners that needed to be paid for \$5,703.50. Commissioner Eller made the motion to approve this expenditure. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
16. Ms. Garland stated that the Sheriff's Department needed to renew their Cellebrite System which is for \$3,299.00. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve this expenditure. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
17. Ms. Garland stated that she received the WCC Contract for the maintenance of our radios in the amount of \$1025.00 monthly. Commissioner Williams made the motion to approve this contract. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
18. Ms. Garland stated that she needed approval for a Service Agreement with Cost Tree for \$2,500.00. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve this agreement. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
19. Ms. Garland stated that she needed the board chair to sign the Declaration of Official Intent to Reimburse. All board was in agreement.
20. Chairman Nelms asks for public comment. Jay Kelly stated that he is not being critical but concerned when he knows that the tax base is not growing and we have millions of dollars of expenditures. Mr. Kelly stated that this makes him nervous. Mr. Kelly stated that he read the article about a new jail, new courthouse and the plans to raise the sales tax by ¼ cent which will cause the taxpayers to pay more taxes. Mr. Kelly stated that the people of Graham County are

aging and the majority population is on a fixed income and Medicare goes up every year and takes away COLA every year. Mr. Kelly stated that the county employees needed a good pay raise but the bottom line is that the county still has no future plans and we continually get pop up targets and unplanned expenses. Mr. Kelly stated that he is all for Urgent Care but we are now going to be required to keep up another building which is a stand-alone facility and asks what the future plan is for the extra ¼ tax increase. Mr. Kelly stated that we needed a new courthouse but what happens to the old one, who is left in it. Mr. Kelly stated that not one more dime needed to be spent until a plan is put in place. Mr. Kelly stated that we are left with dead dumb buildings, single function buildings and where is the money going to come from to keep these up because we need a new ambulance every year. Mr. Kelly stated that the occupancy tax could be raised by 1% and T&T could foot the bill on some of this because a lot of emergency personnel respond to visitors and they need to pay their share. Mr. Kelly stated no more taxes on citizens because that is dead wrong.

21. Manager Edwards proceeded with the manager's report. Manager Edwards thanked the staff for all their work on the budget and commended Rebecca Garland for her work on the budget and the pay plan. Manager Edwards stated that 21% of our employees qualify for SNAP and this pay plan will allow us to have grades that are 85% of the 2014 State Pay Plan and sees good changes coming.
22. Manager Edwards stated that the NCACC had requested that the counties take opposition to House Bill 483 and asks that the board study this bill and then let the office know if an opposing resolution needed to be typed.
23. Manager Edwards stated that the new Health Department vehicle had arrived and it was tagged, insured and delivered to the Health Department.
24. Manager Edwards asks the board what direction the office staff needed to take on the four vehicles that we are purchasing in the new budget. Commissioner Eller stated that we needed to stay with the Nissan Pathfinder or the Explorer. The board gave a directive to get quotes for Pathfinders and Explorers.
25. Manager Edwards stated that the new EDC Director Sophia Paulos would be starting work on Tuesday, July 05, 2016.
26. Manager Edwards stated that our Senior Center had obtained Senior Center of Excellence and extra funding will now be available to the center. The board was pleased of this accomplishment.
27. Manager Edwards stated that he had received a letter from Randy Mundt with FEMA on the areas of study that is to be conducted and needed to know if any comments needed to be submitted to them.
28. Manager Edwards stated that he would now go to the discussion items. Manager Edwards asks for approval of the Releases in the amount of \$18,150.25. Commissioner Williams made the motion to approve the releases. Commissioner Eller seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
29. Manager Edwards asks for approval of the board poll that was taken on the Library Heat and Air Unit for \$19,250.00 which was an emergency repair. Commissioner Williams made the motion to approve the poll. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
30. Manager Edwards stated that the recommendation for the Assistant Tax Assessor is Wendy Millsaps. Commissioner Williams made the motion to go with the department heads recommendation, Wendy Millsaps. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
31. Manager Edwards stated that Brian Johnson had resigned the Road Naming Committee and someone needed to be placed in this seat. Commissioner Orr made the motion to appoint Raymond Williams for this seat. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
32. Manager Edwards stated that the recommendation from the department head for the two cemetery employees is: Nicholas Franks and Hunter Garland. Commissioner Orr made the motion to go with the department heads recommendation. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
33. Manager Edwards stated that some repairs needed to be made to the courthouse courtyard and he had reached out to different vendors for this repair and only received one quote which was from Noah Williams at \$4225.31. Commissioner Williams made the motion to approve the repair. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
34. Manager Edwards stated that the board needed to appoint a NCACC Voting Delegate. Commissioner Williams made the motion to appoint Commissioner Connie Orr as the NCACC Voting Delegate. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
35. Manager Edwards stated that he did receive a study from Marty Ritter on the Stecoah Valley Center Roof Repair and recommends that this be put out to bid. The board was in agreement to this being bid out.

36. Manager Edwards stated that he had received notice from the Selective Service that they will be seeking members by county to serve on their boards and we should receive more information at a later date.
37. Manager Edwards stated that he would be presenting the fleet plan to the commissioners in July to be considered for approval.
38. Clerk Crisp stated that the Meadow Branch Fire Department had entered into an agreement with Tapoco Lodge to install a tower on their property to set up a repeater which will serve as what's known as a "Link Up" to the county's repeater on Wachacha Bald and Asheville Communications needs a signed letter of support from the Graham County Commissioners. Commissioner Williams made the motion to give the letter of support for "Link Up". Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve. Vote unanimous.
39. Clerk Crisp stated that the board needed to approve an Order of Collection under G.S. 105-321 for the Tax Collector Tajuana Ledwell to be able to collect the taxes. Commissioner Williams made the motion to approve the Order of Collection. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
40. Commissioner Williams stated that dumpster sites needed to be mowed and requested that Manager Edwards take care of this issue.
41. Commissioner Williams made the 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 Eller seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
42. Commissioner Orr made the motion to go back into open session. Commissioner Eller seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
43. Commissioner Orr made the motion to transfer Jacob Nelms from Environmental Health Program Coordinator to Assistant Building Inspector / Special Project's Coordinator with a 30 day notice and the understanding that he will also be in succession training for the Director of Building Inspections position for an easy transition when the current Director of Building Inspections David Hyatt retires. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vice-Chairman Eller stated that Chairman Jacob Nelms would abstain from the vote and calls for a vote. Commissioner Williams, Orr, Eller and Cody voted yes. Motion passed unanimously.
44. Manager Edwards stated that he was proud of how this board conducts itself with the issuance of the pay raises and further stated that this board gets things done.
45. Commissioner Orr made the motion to adjourn. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

Jacob Nelms, Chairman, Graham County Commissioner

Keith Eller, Vice-Chairman, Graham County Commissioner

Lynn Cody, Member, Graham County Commissioner

Connie Orr, Member, Graham County Commissioner

Raymond Williams, Member, Graham County Commissioner

ATTEST:

Kim Crisp, Clerk to the Board