

Workshop Session - August 21, 2018

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Tuesday, August 21, 2018 at 5:00 p.m. at the Graham County Community Building located at 196 Knight Street Robbinsville, NC for their regular workshop session. All board was present.

1. Chairman Eller called the workshop session to order.
2. Chairman Eller asks Graham County School Superintendent Angela Knight to speak. Manager Garland stated that she asked Ms. Knight to come and speak to the board about a Needs-Based Public School Capital Fund for Tier 1 Counties. The purpose of the fund is to assist lower counties (development tier one and tier two counties) with their critical public school building capital needs. Grant funds must be used for construction of new school buildings only and cannot be used for real property acquisition. Manager Garland stated that we needed to look at all avenues in obtaining monies to help our schools and save our taxpayers.
3. Ms. Knight stated that there are (40) Tier 1 Counties; (40) Tier 2 Counties and (20) Tier 3 Counties. Ms. Knight stated that there is a point system for the most distressed and we rank 25 out of 100 and according to ARC we will be the most distressed county for 2019. Ms. Knight stated that she is here asking for a partnership and thanked the board again for assisting the schools. Ms. Knight stated that we need a new elementary school that is safer and more efficient and we are landlocked at the current location. Ms. Knight stated that she hoped the school could be near the high school which would allow them to make the entire school safer. Ms. Knight stated that she met with Manager Garland over this opportunity for grant funding and would like to focus on next year which will give us some time to put our heads together because finding property for a new school is a big issue. Commissioner Nelms stated that we can all work together. Commissioner Orr stated that this is a great opportunity and given the short notice she agrees that applying next year is more feasible. Commissioner Wiggins asks how much land would be needed. Ms. Knight stated that she felt 10 or more acres is needed if we build up and may need around 20 acres. Commissioner Wiggins asks if there is any property available at this time. Ms. Knight stated that there is some adjacent property but it is not on the market and asks how to approach a property owner respectfully to ask if he would be willing to discuss the property. Commissioner Nelms stated that this is ideal for the school. Manager Garland asks if there is an estimated cost. Ms. Knight stated that the cost would be around \$186.00 per square foot for construction of a Pre K to 5th Grade. Ms. Knight stated that she would like to put the 6th Grade at the existing middle school because they are more in tune with 7th Graders than they are with 5th Graders. Ms. Knight stated that there would need to be discussion on moving the administration and maintenance offices and the football field would be another discussion. The board discussed surrounding properties and the approximate cost. Commissioner Nelms stated that we needed to do our best to meet the needs of the school. Ms. Knight stated that she believed that we should apply for all grant opportunities. Commissioner Nelms stated that we definitely did not want to miss out on this opportunity. Commissioner Orr stated that we need to apply for the grants. Ms. Knight stated that our enrollment has dropped 100 kids and she thinks that our economy and lost jobs are the biggest reason for this. Manager Garland stated that we needed to do our due diligence now in applying for this opportunity which will save the taxpayers a lot of money. Ms. Knight stated that the grant application is easy but we have to have the construction date and the contractor's names prior to submitting the application. Commissioner Orr stated that we definitely needed to apply next year given that Graham County will be the most distressed county in the state. Commissioner Wiggins discussed the property surrounding the school. Ms. Knight stated that she is excited to provide state of the art classrooms where special needs rooms are equipped with lifts and they would not have to rely on portable equipment but further stated that they are very grateful for the portable equipment that they have. Chairman Eller stated that this also would provide for a safer school. Ms. Knight stated that she stays worried about lockdown because there are so many entrances into the elementary school that it is impossible to protect the whole area. Commissioner Nelms stated that you cannot put a price tag on one child's life. Manager Garland stated that we have heard loud and clear not to move the county offices from Main Street and this could be a chance to partner with the school on the buildings they will be vacating. Ms. Knight stated that a new school will increase capacity for gym space that the county has needs for with the Youth Athletic Program. Everyone agreed that we have a lot to look at and they loved hearing good things for

our kids and the next step is to look for land to acquire, get with an architect and start. Manager Garland stated that we needed to set up a planning committee. Commissioner Williams asks how much is still owed on the school. Manager Garland stated around \$12,000,000.00 total is still owed on the school bond and loan. Ms. Knight stated that we can look at the option of moving a portion of the school and continue in phases until completely moved. Commissioner Williams stated that our new school looks just as good now as when it was built and he offers thanks to all concerned for keeping pride in the facility. Commissioner Orr stated that our elementary school is beautiful and well kept. Ms. Knight stated that they need to be more secure. Commissioner Orr stated that the next step is to form the planning committee and have monthly meetings. Manager Garland stated that (1) commissioner, (1) school board member, (1) general public member, (1) school facility person and she needed to sit on this board. Everyone agreed and thanked Ms. Knight for all of her hard work for our schools.

4. Chairman Eller adjourned the workshop session.

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