

## Continued Emergency Meeting – April 10, 2020

### COVID19 Update with the Board of Commissioners

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Friday, April 10, 2020 at noon by teleconference to discuss the issues related to the COVID19 pandemic. All board was present. Also present: Manager Garland, Attorney Coward, Health Director Beth Booth, DSS Director Cris Weatherford, Town of Robbinsville Mayor Steve Hooper, Health Nursing Supervisor Lorita Eller, NCDOT Commissioner Dirk Cody, Town of Fontana Dam Administrator Zelerie Rogers, Graham Star Editor Kevin Hensley, EM Director Larry Hembree, 911 Director Misty Hembree, Project Manager Jason Marino, Sheriff Joe Jones, Lt. Dennis Crisp, Lt. Jimmy Hyde, School Superintendent Angela Knight, Preparedness Coordinator Emily Collins, Community Paramedicine Billy Hyde, and citizen Susan Kirkpatrick.

1. Chairman Wiggins called the meeting to order.
2. Chairman Wiggins asks Manager Garland for an update. Manager Garland stated that there has been a substantial reduction in calls but have had calls from non-residents stating their case on why they should be allowed into the county. Manager Garland stated that Governor Cooper ordered the Stay in Place through April 29<sup>th</sup> yet still people are not taking this seriously. Manager Garland stated that she reached out to the faith-based community to line out volunteers to make contacts for people in the county who may need assistance. Manager Garland stated that she and Jason Marino updated protocol at the checkpoints to wear their PPE's.
3. Chairman Wiggins asks Director Booth to give an update from the health department. Director Booth stated that we have zero cases and gave big congratulations to our county. Director Booth stated that we have 3,908 cases in North Carolina, 74 deaths and 423 in the hospital and these numbers are doubling every three days. Director Booth stated that she was notified yesterday that the state is allocating \$54,000.00 to her department for preparedness. Director Booth stated that she received hand sanitizer for her department and shared with DSS and the School. Director Booth thanked Dogwood Trust and Nantahala Foundation for providing the funds to a distillery in Asheville to make this possible. Director Booth stated that tests are coming back and they have all been negative. Director Booth stated that EBCI did a drive through testing for their enrolled members and one was found symptomatic but the test has not come back. Editor Hensley asks if one comes back positive from the Tribe will we be notified. Director Booth stated they do not have to tell but as of right now we have been receiving the news of all testing being done in Graham County. Director Booth stated that Swain and Jackson had two people test positive but it is not community spread.
4. Chairman Wiggins asks EM Director Larry Hembree for an update. Director Hembree stated that EM is still looking at the Ramsey Center to be used as a morgue if needed and they are looking for coolers that can be used with forklifts if the need arises, we should be able to use Swain or Cherokees coolers due to our capacity being three at our local funeral home. Director Hembree stated that all funeral services at this time are graveside only. Director Hembree stated that EMS is steady with no real problems yet concerning COVID19. Chairman Wiggins stated that it is sad times when we have to discuss morgues.
5. Chairman Wiggins asks DSS Director Cris Weatherford to give a DSS update. Director Weatherford stated that his department was doing fine and working from home as much as feasible. Director Weatherford stated that their numbers are going up with extra folks needing assistance due to being laid off and this can work out to our advantage with the school lunches. Director Weatherford stated that if we reach our numbers then the kids could qualify for free lunches at our schools. Director Weatherford stated that APS and CPS continue to go out and check on their clients and children and are taking precautions by standing six feet apart and wearing their protective equipment. Director Weatherford stated that the courts are being delayed and this will ensure that CPS will have a backlog on their cases as well as Child Support Enforcement.
6. Chairman Wiggins asks Project Manager Jason Marino to give an update. Mr. Marino stated that he has been having conversation with Graham Land Company and Sheriff Jones on collecting some data of how much traffic is being turned away or being allowed into the county. Mr. Marino stated that they were making some changes with Deputies going to the Tapoco site due to vehicles not stopping at the checkpoints. Mr. Marino stated that the storm took out two

canopies and for the safety of the officers and employees of Graham Land; they sent them home at the Cherohala site. Sheriff Jones stated that he had a canopy that they could use and Mayor Hooper stated that they had five or six if they were needed. Mayor Hooper stated that one of their canopies was being used at the Urgent Care center as well. Chairman Wiggins stated that the storm was terrible on Sunday and it is supposed to be very cold tonight and stated that they needed to make sure that the attendants dressed warmly.

7. Chairman Wiggins asks School Superintendent Angela Knight to give an update. Superintendent Knight stated that they are continuing with the food distribution and she met with the MANNA Director on extra food that could be sent to the homes as well. Superintendent Knight stated that the United Methodist Church was also giving food out. Superintendent Knight stated that no food would be delivered during spring break but they would give extra and the end of the week.
8. Chairman Wiggins asks Town of Fontana Dam Administrator Zelerie Rogers to speak. Ms. Rogers stated that she was concerned about the Governor's Executive Order 131 on grocery stores limiting the number of people that can come in the store at one time and was worried about our disabled and elderly having to wait in line. Commissioner Orr stated that they were being allowed to enter the store first. Ms. Rogers asks if she can wear her bandanas as a mask and Director Booth stated yes.
9. Chairman Wiggins asks NCDOT Commissioner Dirk Cody for updates. Mr. Cody stated that the new executive order goes into place on Monday, April 13, 2020 and this applies to any retailers. Commissioner Lynn Cody stated that his understanding was five people per one thousand square feet with six-foot intervals and they must disinfect continually. Commissioner Orr stated that our Ingles has already began these steps. The board asks if Ingles would allow for call in orders as an alternative. Ms. Rogers asks if the committee can call the store and see if they would considering allowing curbside pickup. Ms. Rogers stated that certain foods including dog & cat food have been hard to get as well, and this is hard on persons with a limited fixed income. Manager Garland stated that she and the staff have been discussing ways to let the public know of other locations that they can purchase food and necessities. Commissioner Orr stated that DSS needed to be called if they are unable to purchase foods that they need. Lt. Hyde stated that we needed to reach out to the corporate office of Ingles.
10. Chairman Wiggins stated we had a major communication problem in the last three or four days in the farther areas of our county and we need to have a conversation with Sheriff Jones. Sheriff Jones stated that they are continuing to have problems with their radios and yesterday Dispatch could not hear anything the officers were saying and he did not like to hear this due to the safety of his officers. Sheriff Jones stated that he inherited the radios that he now has and they were cheap. Sheriff Jones stated that his department needs the viper radios, like the ones that he signed out with EM Director Hembree. Sheriff Jones stated that those radios were clear and consistent. Lt. Crisp stated that the traffic has increased and not hearing the officers is very dangerous. Chairman Wiggins stated that he has been hearing complaints from citizens not being able to hear on the scanners. Manager Garland stated that she has spoken with WCC Communications on the purchase of twenty-five radios and the price is \$52,000.00 before taxes, which will include Phase 1 and Phase 2, but Phase 2 would not be utilized until 2025. Manager Garland stated that the county would buy the license for the Phase 2 and worried that if one of the radios was destroyed, lost or stolen then we would lose the Phase 2 license before it was ever implemented. Manager Garland stated that it would take around two weeks to order the radios and another day to get them programmed then delivered. Sheriff Jones stated that this was more about the officer's safety to him and asks if these radios could be purchased through FEMA funds during this crisis. Manager Garland stated that she would reach out to FEMA and see. Commissioner Eller asks why do we need twenty-five radios and could they not be checked out at the office after shifts. Sheriff Jones stated that all of his officers are on duty 24x7 and he would need that amount. Commissioner Eller stated that he worries there would not be enough FEMA monies to go around. Sheriff Jones asks that they check to see if FEMA could help with the cost because he is looking at more than cost he is looking at safety. Commissioner Cody stated that he had some reservations and was not sure that FEMA would approve this purchase. Sheriff Jones stated that his officers are not always in their cars. Lt. Hyde stated that he could not get dispatch from Topton the other night with the radio that he carries. Chairman Wiggins stated that it would cost \$53,693.75 for the radios with the Phase 1 and 2 licenses. Manager Garland stated that she would insure these radios under our VSIF Insurance in the event they are lost or stolen. Commissioner Eller asks where the funds will be taken from in the budget to pay this

expense and Manager Garland stated it would come from fund balance. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve the purchase of the radios as requested by Sheriff Jones. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote called. Commissioner Wiggins, Orr, Nelms and Eller voted yes. Commissioner Cody voted no. Motion carried four to one.

11. Manager Garland stated that she did have a budget amendment for approval. Budget Amendment #15 - Amend to increase funding allocation for May \$7,493.00 and accept the Duke Energy Funds of \$1500.00. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve the budget amendment as stated. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
12. Chairman Wiggins stated that this meeting would be continued to Wednesday, April 15, 2020 at noon.

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Dale Wiggins, Chairman

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Lynn Cody, Vice-Chairman

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Keith Eller, Member

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Jacob Nelms, Member

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Connie Orr, Member

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
Kim Crisp, Clerk to the Board