

Continued Emergency Meeting – April 22, 2020

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Wednesday, April 22, 2020 at 12:00 noon by teleconference to discuss the issues related to the COVID19 pandemic. Board present: Lynn Cody, Connie Orr. Also present: Manager Garland, Mayor Steve Hooper, Health Director Beth Booth, DSS Director Cris Weatherford, Town of Santeetlah Kim Matheson and Emily Hooper, Preparedness Coordinator Emily Collins, Nursing Supervisor Lorita Eller, EM Director Larry Hembree, 911 Director Misty Hembree, Medic Billy Hyde, Project Manager Jason Marino, Graham Star Editor Kevin Hensley, USFS Andy Gaston, Town of Fontana Dam Administrator Zelerie Rogers, School Superintendent Angie Knight, NCDOT Brian Burch, Town of Fontana Dam Mayor Rob Hardy, NCDOT Commissioner Dirk Cody and Appalachian Community Health Administrator Tina Lee. Board absent: Dale Wiggins, Keith Eller and Jacob Nelms.

1. Vice-Chairman Cody called the meeting to order.
2. Vice-Chairman Cody asks Manager Garland to give an update. Manager Garland stated that she is trying to get administration to a new normal and trying to put our resources to business at hand. Manager Garland stated that the phone call volume has reduced and we are posting COVID19 information of our website and the Health Department website.
3. Vice-Chairman Cody asks Health Director Beth Booth to give her update. Director Booth stated that we have 121 tests that all read negative, we have Tallulah Health Center and Urgent Care who can perform these tests. Director Booth stated that we are looking for 100 more tests to be taken and the pricing varies from zero to \$90.00. Director Booth stated that the testing capabilities are still questionable. Director Booth stated that we have 7000 cases in North Carolina and over 200 deaths as of yesterday. Mayor Hooper asks if Graham County is still at zero cases. Director Booth stated that we are still at zero. Vice-Chairman Cody asks how much the health department charges for tests. Director Booth stated that they have a flat fee of \$89.70 cash only; Appalachian/Tallulah has a sliding fee scale. Tina Lee stated that they use LABCORP, their supply is good, and they have no issues getting the supplies at this time. Ms. Lee stated that they would make the test as affordable as possible based on income.
4. Vice-Chairman Cody asks EM Director Larry Hembree for an update. Director Hembree stated that they have installed a digital sign to alert people coming into the county that we are under a State of Emergency and they are required to self-isolate for 14-days. Director Hembree stated that Cherokee County has their signs on any entrances into their county and Swain County is doing this as well and asks if we need to put up signs at every entrance into the county. Commissioner Orr stated that this would be a good idea to put at all checkpoint locations with the exception of the Cherohala. Commissioner Orr stated that we needed to welcome our visitors and ask them to adhere to the State of Emergency Ordinance. Director Hembree stated that Harold Millsaps and Tim Ledwell would be assisting him in putting the signs up. Manager Garland stated that the county also put a page article in the paper showing resources for people such as food, etc. Brian Burch asks that they work with the District Office on the location of the signs to make sure that a hazard would not be present. Dirk Cody thanked the board for all their efforts and for their time in doing a fine job.
5. Vice-Chairman Cody asks Angela Knight to speak. Superintendent Knight stated that the State would tell us by the end of the week if school will start back or not and they will continue to do meal distribution through the summer months. Superintendent Knight stated that if the students do go back there would not be much instructing it will be more for mental health and social activities and to have a chance for staff to put eyes on our kids.
6. Vice-Chairman Cody asks Sheriff Jones to speak. Sheriff Jones stated that he has arrested (12) people for violating the curfew and they had been warned more than once to stay off the roads.
7. Vice-Chairman Cody asks Andy Gaston for an update. Ranger Gaston stated that there are no changes to report and they are leaving their webpage up with the Graham County restrictions. Ranger Gaston stated that there are still a lot of roads closed and wanted to know if the board wanted the roads opened. EM Director Larry Hembree stated that he did not have any objection to the roads being opened by the end of the week. Ranger Gaston stated that the Joyce Kilmer road would remain closed due to hazard trees but you can walk in to access the Joyce Kilmer Trail. Ranger Gaston stated that all recreation areas would remain closed. Ranger Gaston stated that there have been many complaints at the Tsali bike trail with many fallen trees. Ranger Gaston stated that they need the proposal sent to them on the Wachacha Tower so that they

can make sure that the NEPA process is followed. EM Director stated that he did receive the email and Manager Garland will call and get this information sent.

8. Commissioner Orr asks about the primitive campsites and the board did not have a problem with people camping in these campsites. Commissioner Orr stated that she was seeing a lot of out of state plates at the campsites. Ranger Gaston stated that they have one man to patrol and they would do the best that they can and asks that Sheriff Jones assist with this patrol.
9. Sheriff Jones stated that Sheriff Cochran had four federal law suites filled against him for pulling persons over with out of state plates so his staff will not follow that direction unless they are breaking the law. Sheriff Jones stated that he is trying to keep his staff safe including the jail.
10. Zelerie Rogers stated that she was hearing complaints of Brookfield workers coming into the county from Michigan to clean the dams and they are coming from a hot area. Manager Garland stated that we could ask for safety measures that they keep social distancing in place and follow all safety protocols.
11. Manager Garland stated that we have many calls from the accommodation owners wanting to know when they could open up and we are still following the Stay at Home order from the Governor. Vice-Chairman Cody stated that the Governor would address this Friday.
12. Vice-Chairman Cody stated that we would continue this meeting to April 29, 2020 at noon.

Dale Wiggins, Chairman

Lynn Cody, Vice-Chairman

Keith Eller, Member

Jacob Nelms, Member

Connie Orr, Member

ATTEST: _____
Kim Crisp, Clerk to the Board