

## Continued Emergency Meeting – March 29, 2020

### COVID19 Update with the Board of Commissioners

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Sunday, March 29, 2020 at 12:00 noon by teleconference to discuss the issues related to the COVID19 pandemic. All board was present. Team members present: Manager Garland, Jason Marino, Sheriff Jones, Beth Booth, Andy Gaston, Brian Burch, Dennis Crisp, Zelerie Rogers, Jimmy Hyde, Tina Lee and Emily Collins.

1. Chairman Wiggins called the meeting to order.
2. Chairman Wiggins asks Andy Gaston to speak. Ranger Gaston stated that he was a little concerned about the North River Road coming from Tennessee due to this being ramp season and the beginning of trout season. Ranger Gaston stated that people would cut the lock because they want into Graham County. Chairman Wiggins stated that they are firm that this will remain closed and they will move more barricades to this site. Dennis Crisp stated that most people have been very nice at the checkpoints and some thanked us for what we were doing. Chairman Wiggins stated that people were carrying the signs off at the Cherohala Skyway and this will need to be addressed. Mr. Marino stated that we will be moving the barriers back and Monroe County Tennessee was willing to work with us. Mr. Marino stated that we can barricade the Santeetlah Road but he did not feel that we have the labor to operate that site. Mr. Marino stated that people pulled the barricades back on the Cherohala site and the Tapoco site and stated that these sites would need to be manned. The board all agreed to move the Tapoco site to the Meadow Branch Road where they will have enough room to turn around. Mr. Marino stated that all sites would be set up per NCDOT requirements with the signage and barriers. Mr. Marino stated that Tennessee has put up signage announcing the closures in Graham County.
3. The board discussed parking a sheriff's vehicle at the Skyway and leave to slow traffic down.
4. The board discussed PPE's and the importance of the individuals operating the sites to wear. Manager Garland stated that she and Clerk Crisp could work on supplies if they are needed at these sites.
5. Ranger Gaston stated that Tatham Gap will not stay locked and they are trying to keep a check on this area as much as possible. The board discussed concrete barriers at this location. Ranger Gaston stated that they could go ahead and place the barriers.
6. Sheriff Jones stated that he has masks that are coming and would give those out to his deputies. Manager Garland asks that Sheriff Jones email her a list of needed items and we would try to supply them.
7. Manager Garland stated that we have processed 1000 permits and lack 80 as of Friday Night. Manager Garland asks how the team wants to continue with the permits. The board all agreed that only workers and public service workers should be given a permit at this time. The board discussed entry issues. Commissioner Cody stated that people are being told to stay at home.
8. Commissioner Nelms stated that we needed to put out a 14-day quarantine for persons entering the county for the first time just like Swain and Jackson. The board discussed taking the permits from the non-residents that leave the county and they would not be allowed to come back in until they get another permit.
9. The board discussed that people needed to be told to bring their groceries with them instead of getting out and shopping when they get here.
10. Sheriff Jones stated that they arrested a man yesterday and he stated that he had been exposed to COVID19 and this leads to a whole set of new problems.
11. Manager Garland stated that she told Duke Energy employees just to show their badges because there was over 500 employees on the list. Manager Garland stated that Dare County has issued stickers for their local residents to place on their cars and we may need to think about something like this as well.
12. The board all agreed to a 14-day moratorium on permits beginning March 30<sup>th</sup> for any non-resident. The board also agreed that after this date we need to find ways to place a quarantine on persons entering the county after this date. The board stated that there will be one exemption and that will be for the houseboats due to the lake levels not being maintained at a continuous level but they need to be told to self-quarantine while they are here.
13. Manager Garland asks if the board wanted to put a shelter-in-place for the county if you come here to stay. The board wanted further discussion. The board also discussed that permits will be good for one trip into our county but that will need further discussion.

14. Beth Booth stated that if anyone leaves this county they have the same level of exposure as the non-residents coming in to the county. Chairman Wiggins stated that this is why we will put a 14-day hold on permits with the exception of houseboats at this time.
15. Jimmy Hyde stated that he did see three or four people requesting to check on their houseboats but they did not have a bag full of groceries, which to him meant they were truly going to check on their houseboat and return home.
16. Commissioner Orr was not sure about stopping the application for permitting process altogether due to certain circumstances. Commissioner Nelms stated that they could provide us information on why they are coming into the county during this pandemic.
17. EM Director stated that we needed to do case by case permitting and this would eliminate a lot of the asking.
18. Ranger Gaston asks about the bike trails at Tsali if they will be closed. The board stated that these could remain open. Ranger Gaston stated that Brookfield would be do the water releases at night instead of allowing white water rafting. Ranger Gaston stated that the Appalachian Trail has been closed. Ranger Gaston stated that we do have timber logging on Santeetlah but they can use the gate at the Skyway in order to get through. Ranger Gaston asks that the barricades be put so that in the event of a wildfire they would be able to move them aside fairly easy. Chairman Wiggins stated that the Tsali bike trails was fine to stay opened and the access to the Lemon Branch Boat Dock would remain open. Chairman Wiggins stated that Swain County has also issued a shelter in place for their residents and he would like to see that order and mirror that order exactly.
19. Manager Garland stated that she did hold a staff meeting and told staff to stay at home as much as possible and for those working outside to keep the distancing in place if there is any interaction with people. Manager Garland stated that all the buildings are closed down now with the exception of the courthouse.
20. Health Director Booth stated that we have 1040 cases with five deaths in NC. Director Booth stated that this illness will peak in May and we could continue to deal with this up into July.
21. Zelerie Rogers, Town of Fontana Dam Administrator stated that they have laid everyone off and if they needed help at the checkpoints to please let her know.
22. Chairman Wiggins stated that he would charge businesses with violations later for ignoring the State of Emergency such as a business located in the Stecoah Community.
23. Chairman Wiggins thanked the team for their time and stated that we will meet again March 31<sup>st</sup> at 12:00 noon. Manager Garland stated that she would send a new GoToMeeting number prior to the meeting time.
24. Chairman Wiggins continued the meeting to Tuesday, March 31, 2020 at 12:00 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