

Regular Meeting – January 21, 2020

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Tuesday, January 21, 2020 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 Wiggins called the meeting to order.
2. Chairman Wiggins asks Commissioner Cody to give the Invocation.
3. Chairman Wiggins asks Commissioner Orr to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.
4. Chairman Wiggins asks for changes and/or approval of the agenda. Manager Garland stated that we needed to add Beth Booth as #7A and add Attorney Coward to closed session for attorney-client privilege. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve the agenda with the stated changes. Commissioner Eller seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
5. Chairman Wiggins asks for approval of the January 7th Workshop Session and Regular Meeting Minutes. Commissioner Cody made the motion to approve the minutes as stated. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
6. Chairman Wiggins asks Sheriff Jones to speak. Sheriff Jones was not present at this time.
7. Chairman Wiggins asks Sophia Paulos to give the EDC Monthly Report. Director Paulos stated The New Year is off to a GREAT start as internet service providers prepare their North Carolina GREAT broadband grant applications. To date, our broadband committee and the State IT Office have met with three different internet service providers who intend to put in applications for high-speed internet in Graham County. Applications are due in March. She, the GREAT organization and members from the community will continue to work with any provider who is interested between now and then to ensure our greatest chance at bringing high-speed internet access to our people.
8. In other news Frontier, a provider of telecom services in (29) states, is asking creditors to help craft a turnaround deal that includes filing for bankruptcy by March 15. Company executives including Bernie Han, Frontier is new CEO, met with creditors and advisers last Thursday and told them the company wants to negotiate a pre-packaged agreement before \$356 million of debt payments come due March 15th. A Chapter 11 bankruptcy would allow the company to keep operating without interruption of telephone and broadband service to its customers. While this means our people here in Graham County are not likely to see their phones and internet cut off overnight she encourages the board to keep an eye on this situation as it develops. Opportunity can often be found in unlikely places and hopefully that will be the case here.
9. Over the last month, the holiday season made things extra busy for all of us. Yet, Graham County staff added extra tasks to their plates in order to secure funding for a variety of projects. Director Paulos worked with Ronnie Williams, Wanda Hill, and Commissioner Lynn Cody as they came up with projects and wrote applications that, when awarded, will make our county a healthier, safer, and more enjoyable place for our citizens. Director Paulos also had the pleasure of working with the Sheriff's Department and Lt. Jimmy Hyde to secure funding that would allow for an additional officer, vehicle, and the equipment necessary to improve safety here in the county. This past month, Director Paulos worked with Edd Satterfield to submit the final report for the Historical Association is planning grant as well as reports for their Department of Commerce grant and with Michelle Shiplet on the report for the Main Street Revitalization grant; we were awarded this past year. Director Paulos shared this with the board to illustrate that it takes a community to fully take advantage of grants that become available to us. Grants are unique sources of revenue for our county. These funds come pre-designated. Funders decided that they want to see more art, economic development, healthcare, infrastructure, police enforcement and allow organizations like our county to compete for those funds. The key to securing this money is and has always been working together. When Graham County set goals together, plan together, work together, we know where everyone on our team stands. This is what allows us to secure funding for extras in this county that we would never be able to afford with tax revenues alone. Director Paulos stated that she is very proud of everyone who has dipped their toe into grant writing over the last several months. It is hard, takes a lot of time, and is tedious at best.
10. Director Paulos thanked Chairman Wiggins for supporting her through the process of designing, writing, and submitting the Recovery to Work project. Director Paulos is proud to tell you that ARC's DC office notified us last week that the \$133,681 grant to fund this project has been awarded. Chairman Wiggins came up with the idea for this project last year and it was a huge idea and a tall order but with the support of partners like Tom O'Brien at IOI and Tom

Brownback at NC Works as well as our Hometown Strong support team at NC DHHS, we did it. Director Paulos stated that she is grateful to Beth Booth, Health Director for agreeing to manage this project and is optimistic about the outcomes this will have in connecting members of our community recovering from substance use disorder with the workforce that desperately needs them.

11. Director Paulos stated that partnerships are imperative to the health and livelihood of our county and our citizens. Our partnerships with private industry, regional government entities, non-profits and others are what make it possible for us to continue to do more for our people. One of the greater challenges we have in the community right now is finding a new employer or employers to locate at the former Stanley Furniture site. Director Paulos will be pulling together a team of partners to help in tackling this challenge. The heads of Outdoor Recreation Industry and Agriculture from EDP NC, the Western Director of NC Biotech, Bill Steigerwald of SVN and broker for the site, and she will meet next week to put the full weight of our team into locating new business for this site. In addition, Western Carolina University has stepped in to help. Two students with WCU's business program will be working with her office to do a feasibility study for the facility that can be used to assist in recruitment. Our partners are standing with us to see a healthier more affluent Graham County and she is grateful to them for that.
12. Chairman Wiggins asks Beth Booth, Health Director to speak. Director Booth stated that she would like to discuss a new Navigator position for the Health Department. Director Booth stated that the position would work 29 hours per week for 33 months and further stated that this is a temporary position. Director Booth stated that the applicant must have a High School Diploma and take additional training. Director Booth stated that she would like to set the pay grade higher at \$16.91 per hour due to this being a temporary position. Director Booth asks permission to send this position to NCDHHS for approval and to obtain a correct title for the position. Chairman Wiggins asks if this position is in regards to the Recovery to Work Grant. Director Booth stated that it was and the employee would go into the jails, help obtain basic needs for the people in the program and assist with their decision to either return to school or get a job. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve of this temporary position for a period of 33 months per grant requirements. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
13. Chairman Wiggins asks Sheriff Jones to speak. Sheriff Jones stated that he went to speak with Manager Garland on moving money between line items in his budget and to have the \$6,000.00 gift from Brandon Lovin to be deposited into his supplies. Sheriff Jones stated that Manager Garland had previously ask permission for an amendment concerning the \$6,000.00. Sheriff Jones stated that some line items in his budget are over and he has extra money to go towards things that they need. Commissioner Orr made the motion to give Manager Garland standing authority to automatically move monies between line items within the budget as necessary. Commissioner Eller seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
14. Sheriff Jones stated that there was some questions concerning time sheets on training. Sheriff Jones stated that they left on Sunday and according to county policy, they are allowed travel time. Clerk Crisp asks permission to speak as the Human Resource Officer and stated that this was not the question. The question concerned the time that the employee clocked in on the morning of the training. Clerk Crisp asks that the board develop a clear and concise policy that specifically states what hours will be covered when an employee is in training. The board agreed to this request. Manager Garland stated that some employees need to flex their time when they must travel for training to keep the over-time hours down. Manager Garland stated that she would call a meeting with the personnel committee and begin work on a more firm policy.
15. Chairman Wiggins asks for public comment. No public comment.
16. Chairman Wiggins asks Manager Garland for the Finance and Manager's report. Manager Garland stated that she is very proud to announce that our end of the month cash balance is \$10,118,686.85 and we are ahead \$1,935,953.30 from this time last year. Manager Garland commends the board and the staff for the hard work we have done for our county.
17. Manager Garland stated that our current monthly tax collections is \$2,909,595.31 and our prior year \$5,640.19 for a total of \$2,915,235.50. Manager Garland stated that our monthly DMV collections was \$272,028.30.
18. Manager Garland stated that our tax collection rate is 78.46%.
19. Manager Garland stated that our revenues for the month was \$3,700,930.27 and our expenditures was \$1,337,325.50 for a surplus of \$2,363,604.77. Manager Garland stated that she would be asking the board to transfer some of this overage to the Capital Projects account.
20. Manager Garland stated that our sales tax collection for the month was \$195,847.43, which is up from \$174,999.14 from this time last year.

21. Manager Garland stated that \$623,404.40 has been collected in back taxes with \$381,850.47 since 2015.
22. Manager Garland stated that our budget should be at 50% and we are tracking at 56% at this time.
23. Attorney Coward asks what the fund balance is at this time. Manager Garland stated that our fund balance is 40%. Attorney Coward stated that this is excellent. The board all agreed.
24. Manager Garland stated that starting next week she will begin budget requests and is asking every budget to do a 1% reduction from last fiscal year.
25. Manager Garland stated that she did have a Budget Amendment #9 for Board approval on the donation of \$6,000.00 to be added to the Sheriff's budget. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve the budget amendment as stated. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
26. Manager Garland began presenting the Manager Report and stated that Heery Associates is on the ground and she had a meeting with the Sheriff/Jail Staff since there has been a change in administration since they last met in 2018. Manager Garland stated that they brought their civil engineer on site to evaluate the Fort Hill site and they will be at the site tomorrow to evaluate the feasibility for the location and size.
27. Manager Garland stated that our Project Manager Jason Marino is preparing to send out the RFP for the cemetery and recreation buildings and he met with Withers Ravenel while they were in Town to do an evaluation of the sites for civil work and preparation of the civil site plans for utilities, drainage, grading and construction details. Manager Garland stated that they have presented a proposal to do that work for \$11,000.00 and asks if the board would consider this work to forestall any issues with drainage and design of the foundations of the buildings. Commissioner Orr stated that she would like to see more quotes. Chairman Wiggins stated that a couple more quotes was needed.
28. Manager Garland stated that we are still awaiting final approval of the environmental studies and funds cannot be obligated to start the new CDBG Projects until that is completed. Manager Garland stated that we are looking for the old plans that was used in the past and then Jason Marino will begin doing the write ups of the projects soon.
29. Manager Garland stated that Jason Marino has met with Mr. Green with EBCI regarding the relocation of their clinic to the P&J Building. Manager Garland stated that they have been able to find a feasible solution for the location that will not interfere with the operations of the DSS/HDept, as well as the construction of the recreation building, including access to water and sewer. Manager Garland stated that there are contractual issues that will need to discuss in closed session.
30. Manager Garland stated that we received notification that the United States Forest Service is getting prepared to issue the final Forest Management Plan and there will be a (90) day comment period. Manager Garland stated that the board would need to read this plan thoroughly because this will affect our county for many years to come.
31. Manager Garland stated that she participated in a conference call on Thursday regarding the Opioid litigation that the Attorney General of North Carolina has been working on for the State of NC and they have a settlement of approximately \$46 billion dollars on the table with various pharmaceutical companies over an (18) year period. Manager Garland stated that the settlement will be split between states and then down to the local level and it will be a combination of (\$22 million) cash with the remainder in products and services. Manager Garland stated that it would mandate that pharmaceutical companies do a better job of monitoring and education of the public and physicians about the dangers of addiction.
32. Manager Garland stated that the county received a sales tax refund of \$214,006.53 last week, which was deposited in the General Fund. Manager Garland stated that she would like to propose transferring these funds over to the Courthouse Fund that we established when we back financed the P&J Building as seed money toward the courthouse project. Manager Garland stated that this would bring the fund to a little over \$1.9 million dollars. The board all agreed and gave a directive to Manager Garland to transfer the funds as stated.
33. Manager Garland stated that she received a request from Wildlife to participate in the Beaver Management Program for \$6000.00. The board replied NO.
34. Manager Garland stated that she has been working with Dr. Cooper with WCU and would like to have an Intern help us the Recreation Master Plan. The board was fine with this suggestion.
35. Chairman Wiggins stated that we would now go to the discussion items. Chairman Wiggins asks for approval of the Releases for \$137.49. Commissioner Cody made the motion to approve the Releases as stated. Commissioner Eller seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

36. Chairman Wiggins asks if a commissioner will attend the NACO Conference February 29th to March 4th. Commissioner Orr will be planning to attend and she is a member on the Land Use Rural Action Committee.
37. Chairman Wiggins asks if a commissioner will be attending the NCACC County Assembly Day May 8th. Commissioner Orr stated that she would like to attend this meeting as well.
38. Chairman Wiggins asks if a commissioner will be attending the NCACC Annual Conference in August. Commissioner Orr stated that she would attend this meeting.
39. Chairman Wiggins stated that we have Open House January 27th from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
40. Chairman Wiggins asks for approval to transfer the old EM Truck to Harold Millsaps, Grounds Director. Commissioner Cody made the motion to transfer the truck as stated between departments. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
41. Chairman Wiggins asks about the Four Square Lease for 30 years on the Child Care Facilities located behind the Rescue Squad Building. Commissioner Orr made the motion to honor a 30-year lease with Four Square in regards to the Child Care Facilities. Commissioner Eller seconded this motion. Vote unanimous. The board asks that Attorney Coward draft a lease agreement.
42. Chairman Wiggins asks for a motion to appoint Deputy Tax Collector Amy Johnson as a Privilege Tax Collector. Commissioner Orr made the motion to appoint Amy Johnson as a Privilege Tax Collector. Commissioner Eller seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
43. Chairman Wiggins asks for new or old business. Manager Garland stated that we needed to reschedule the March 3rd Commissioner Meeting due to the primary election being held in the commissioner meeting room. Commissioner Eller made the motion to cancel the meeting and if needed a special meeting could be called later. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
44. Chairman Wiggins asks for a motion to go into closed session under G.S. 143-318.11(a) (1) (3) (5) (6) for privileged or confidential information, attorney-client privilege, personnel and contracts. Commissioner Eller made the motion to go into closed session as stated. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
45. Chairman Wiggins asks for a motion to go into open session. Commissioner Cody made the motion to go back into open session. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
46. The board all agreed to a lease agreement with the Tribe on the placement of a temporary building at the P&J properties with the understanding that they settle the prior agreement concerning the Tribal POP located next door to the Balsam West POP.
47. Chairman Wiggins asks for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Orr made the motion to adjourn. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

Dale Wiggins, Chairman, Graham County Board of Commissioners

Lynn Cody, Vice-Chairman, Graham County Board of Commissioners

Keith Eller, Member, Graham County Board of Commissioners

Jacob Nelms, Member, Graham County Board of Commissioners

Connie Orr, Member, Graham County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:

Kim Crisp, Clerk to the Board