

Regular Meeting – March 17, 2020

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Tuesday, March 17, 2020 by teleconference for their Regular Monthly Meeting located at 196 Knight Street Robbinsville, NC. Board present by teleconference was Chairman Dale Wiggins, Vice-Chairman Lynn Cody, Commissioner Connie Orr and Commissioner Jacob Nelms. Board present in-person Commissioner Keith Eller. Also present was Manager Rebecca Garland.

1. Chairman Wiggins called the meeting to order.
2. Chairman Wiggins asks Commissioner Nelms to give the Invocation.
3. Chairman Wiggins asks Commissioner Orr to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.
4. Chairman Wiggins asks for approval or changes to the agenda. Manager Garland stated that we needed to add Item 7A Limited Services due to Covid19 for Transit – Juanita Colvard; Delete Sophia Paulos from Item 9 and add Commissioner Connie Orr; Delete Item 14 Closed Session due to meeting being held by teleconference. Chairman Wiggins asks for a motion to approve the changes as stated. Commissioner Eller made the motion to approve the changes as stated. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
5. Chairman Wiggins asks for approval of the Workshop and Regular Minutes for February 18th and the Continued Meeting for February 19th. Commissioner Eller made the motion to approve the minutes as stated. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
6. Chairman Wiggins asks Health Director Beth Booth to discuss the COVID 19 HR Policy. Director Booth stated that DHHS has called and wanted any employee coughing, sneezing or having fever to be sent home on sick leave and to have an evaluation done prior to returning. Director Booth stated that Urgent Care is seeing patients in their cars and their evaluations may take longer than regular appointments did due to the heavy influx of patients. Director Booth stated that everyone that is being seen at the Urgent Care are being screened with questions concerning travel or exposure to COVID 19. Director Booth stated that the State did request that we allow for negative balances in sick leave and when the employee returns to work, they will be required to build their balance back up prior to using any further leave time. Director Booth stated that the quarantine time is now (7) days and/or (72) hours after the fever is gone without the aid of medication. Director Booth stated that in North Carolina at this time COVID19 is not community spread and can be traced to persons traveling from other states. Director Booth stated that within the next (7) weeks North Carolina will see a spike in cases. Director Booth stated that Graham County has zero positive cases at this time and the positive case in Macon County came from New York. Commissioner Cody asks what dictates symptoms with the allergy season here. Director Booth stated that congestion, stuffy nose or running nose is not a symptom of COVID19. Director Booth stated that cough, fever over 101, shortness of breath and a dry hacking cough are symptoms of COVID19. Commissioner Orr asks if any congestion is in COVID19 and Director Booth stated congestion in the chest yes but congestion in the nasal passage, no. Manager Garland stated that she will be sending out directives concerning sick leave on the specifics of symptoms. Manager Garland stated that the federal government has allotted \$13.8 million in North Carolina for repayment of overtime hours spent on COVID19 and some of these expenses will fall under FEMA. The board all agreed to give a directive to Manager Garland to take care of leave use on a case-by-case basis. Manager Garland stated that she is willing to donate time to people who face the COVID10 illness. Director Booth stated that personnel is afraid of losing a paycheck and they will not test. Commissioner Orr stated that we needed to document and get the facts and all the information prior to any decision. Chairman Wiggins stated that we needed to track all hours associated with COVID19 and any leave usage and track this very well. The board all agreed,
7. Chairman Wiggins asks Transit Director Juanita Colvard to speak to the board on the Title VI Plan for Transit. Director Colvard stated that she needed permission by the board to allow Manager Garland to sign the Title VI plan for transit once it was completed. Commissioner Orr made the motion to grant permission to Manager Garland to sign any papers necessary regarding the Transit Title VI Plan. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
8. Director Colvard stated that the board needed to give her guidelines on how to operate Transit during the COVID10 Crisis. Director Colvard stated that she was using common sense decisions with no unnecessary trips out of county because this is exposing the Transit Drivers and the passengers. Director Colvard stated that she did not have a problem taking people to get groceries but she was having an issue with taking persons out of town. Director Colvard stated that she would always do the life-sustaining trips out of town but she was concerned about trips

that are not medically necessary. The board was fine with limiting the trips to essential services only. Director Colvard stated that she received calls for routine appointments and not necessary appointments and felt that these can be rescheduled. The board gave a directive to Director Colvard to provide essential services and life-sustaining trips only. The board all agreed to the directive. Director Colvard stated that she was having a hard time obtaining hand sanitizer for the vans and would do her best to make sure that all passengers and the drivers are kept as safe as possible.

9. Chairman Wiggins asks Brady Cody with the Prosperity Committee to speak. Mr. Cody thanked the board for their time and stated that due to pressing issues concerning COVID19 he would postpone his questions until the next commissioner meeting in two weeks.
10. Chairman Wiggins asks Commissioner Orr to speak. Commissioner Orr stated that she had received some information for a possible grant for the COVID19 expenses. Commissioner Orr stated that communications was listed to be funded and wanted our county to apply for \$22 to \$26 million to complete our connectivity in Graham County. Commissioner Orr stated that it is now more evident of the need for broadband connectivity with our school kids needing access to internet for their schoolwork and the need for telemedicine during this COVID19 epidemic. The board agreed to apply for the funds that are available for our county.
11. Chairman Wiggins asks Commissioner Cody to speak. Commissioner Cody stated that people in the Stecoah Community are asking if we can request a bike lane and sidewalks in our Stecoah Community. Commissioner Cody stated that he reached out to Brian Burch and he stated that a bike lane was doable by the NCDOT but sidewalks will come with cost sharing. Commissioner Orr stated that a bike lane is usually wide enough for people to use to walk. Chairman Wiggins asks if the Stecoah Community would consider creating a Town Charter because all kinds of funds are available for Town's. Commissioner Orr stated that our roads are getting a lot of attention due to the Nantahala Gorge being closed and our county seeing a fatality.
12. Chairman Wiggins asks Manager Garland to give the Finance and Manager's Report. Manager Garland stated that she did not have finance report for the first time in 10 ½ years due to being on the phone and teleconferences for the last 96 hours due to the threat of the COVID19. Manager Garland stated that she would mail the finance report to the board when she had it completed.
13. Manager Garland stated that she completed the Internship Policy as the board requested based on her research with the UNC School of Government and the Society of Human Resources Managers. Manager Garland stated that if the county derives no true benefit from the work of the Intern and it meets an educational purpose in fulfilling their educational program requirements, we can have unpaid internships as a State or Local Government. Manager Garland stated that an agreement signed between the Intern and the County would be needed. Manager Garland stated that Diane Juffras from the School of Government did counsel that this is an area that is under review by the Department of Labor and could change. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve the Internship Policy as presented by Manager Garland. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
14. Manager Garland stated she received a call from Kevin Leonard with NCACC requesting that she sit as one of the five county managers on a work group to advocate for the settlement of the Opioid Settlement. Manager Garland stated that she would travel to Winston Salem and will be the only one representing the far west counties. The board all agreed for Manager Garland to sit on this board.
15. Manager Garland stated that she, Ronnie Williams and Sophia Paulos met with PPI at WCU regarding our recreation master plan. Manager Garland stated that they will extend the surveys to have a fair representation of the residents of the County and there would be no cost to the county for the survey.
16. Manager Garland stated that she is trying to stay on top of all the rapidly developing information on the COVID19 breakout. Manager Garland thanked the board for all the support in keeping staff and residents safe from the outbreak. Manager Garland stated that all county buildings are closed that are not essential services but the courthouse would remain open for court related issues only. Manager Garland stated that she would provide updates on the website. Manager Garland stated that she has stopped all non-emergency travel and enacted a spending freeze for essential items only.
17. Manager Garland stated that she spoke with Gary Porter with the NC Capital Management Trust Fund on shifting money even though we are not in any investments that could lose money. Manager Garland stated that she would like to move \$3.6 million to a CD if the board approves. Commissioner Orr made the motion to transfer funds to CD's from the NC Capital Management Trust Fund. Commissioner Eller seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

18. Manager Garland stated that Attorney Coward reviewed a telecommuting policy and approved and she has begun implementing this policy with departments who need to send staff home for childcare or at risk employees. Manager Garland stated that she would do everything possible to keep the staff healthy. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve the policy as written. Commissioner Eller seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
19. Manager Garland stated that she did need the board's approval Letter of Condition for our USDA Grant for Sanitation. Manager Garland stated that she also had a Resolution for approval to obligate the funds. Commissioner Eller made the motion to approve the Letter of Condition and the Resolution as stated. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
20. Chairman Wiggins asks for public comment. The board asks where the bike lane/walking trail would be located in the Stecoah Township. Commissioner Cody stated that it would follow the creek and go around Hyde Town Road.
21. Chairman Wiggins stated that we would now go to the discussion items.
22. Chairman Wiggins asks for a motion to approve the Releases for \$811.46 and the Discoveries for \$439.41. Commissioner Nelms made the motion to approve the releases and discoveries as stated. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
23. Chairman Wiggins asks for a motion to reappoint Rick Davis to the Travel and Tourism Board. Commissioner Orr made the motion to reappoint Rick Davis to the Travel and Tourism Board. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote called. Commissioners Wiggins, Orr, Cody and Nelms voted for. Commissioner Eller voted no. Motion carried four to one.
24. Chairman Wiggins asks for a motion to replace Sophia Paulos on the RDA Board with Jason Marino. Commissioner Orr made the motion to appoint Jason Marino to the RDA Board for a two-year term. Commissioner Eller seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
25. Chairman Wiggins asks for a motion to approve the poll on the Broadband Letter of Support. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve the poll as stated. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
26. Chairman Wiggins made the motion to approve the poll on the Civil Design Company – Withers Ravenel for \$11,000.00. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve the poll as stated. Commissioner Eller seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
27. Chairman Wiggins asks for discussion to transfer the deed for the Old Mother Church Cemetery Property to the Cemetery Commission. Manager Garland stated that Matthew Smith, Cemetery Director stated that the plots set aside for paupers was being filled up with casket burials. The board all agreed that anyone receiving a pauper burial would be cremation only. Manager Garland stated that Matthew Smith had affirmed that there is a NC General Statute for cremation only. Manager Garland stated that our DSS Director Cris Weatherford needed to be told that these burials would be cremation only due to the limited number of gravesites that are available. All board agreed to the cremation only for pauper burials. Commissioner Cody made the motion to transfer the deed as stated to the Cemetery Commission with the exception of the pauper graves. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
28. Chairman Wiggins asks for approval on the purchase of a new mower and weed eater for the Cemetery Commission for \$8567.75. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve the purchase as requested. Commissioner Eller seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
29. Chairman Wiggins asks for a motion to transfer the old EM Truck to the Jail Inmate Program. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve the transfer as stated. Commissioner Eller seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
30. Chairman Wiggins asks about scheduling the Board of E&R meetings in April. Commissioner Eller made the motion to schedule the meetings for every Tuesday in April at 5:00 p.m... Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
31. Chairman Wiggins asks for discussion on having one meeting a month instead of two and to have our meeting on the second Tuesday of the month at 5:00 p.m. beginning with the Workshop Session. Commissioner Eller made the motion to go to one meeting per month on the second Tuesday. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
32. Chairman Wiggins asks for new or old business. Chairman Wiggins asks about a resolution for Parsons Branch Road closure. Manager Garland stated that she has not completed the resolution at this time due to the COVID19 Issues.
33. Manager Garland stated that she did receive a call from Alice Cohen with the USFS asking if we would televise meetings for the public comment on the Forest Management Plan. Manager Garland asks if the board wanted her to type a letter to the USFS requesting that they postpone the public comment period on the plan due to the COVID19 issues. The board all agreed.
34. Manager Garland stated that she received an email from Gavin Colvard, our Sanitation Director that our Septic Receiving Station is down due to plumbing issues and it will take \$3,000.00 to

repair this once again. The board directed Manager Garland to talk to the Town about these problems and see what can be done.

35. Manager Garland stated that Beth Booth, Health Director wanted to have a COVID Workshop with the board. The board all agreed to meet Friday, March 20, 2020 at 10:00 a.m. by teleconference.
36. Attorney Coward stated that the board might need to think about doing an ordinance for a State of Emergency to allow for more law enforcement and to apply for federal monies. Attorney Coward stated that the county can do it or they can authorize Chairman Dale Wiggins to declare a state of emergency. Attorney Coward stated that Chairman Wiggins, Manger Garland and Larry Hembree Emergency Management Director would need to sign the ordinance. Commissioner Orr made the motion to authorize Chairman Wiggins, Manager Garland and Larry Hembree handle the operation necessary for a state of emergency ordinance. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
37. The board gave a directive to Manager Garland to take care of all the leave without pay requests at this time.
38. Commissioner Eller stated that the fence needed to be repaired at the playground to keep kids out of the creek and away from the sewer pipe.
39. Chairman Wiggins asks for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Orr made the motion to adjourn. Commissioner Cody 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