

Regular Meeting – October 20, 2020

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Tuesday, October 20, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. in the Graham County Senior Center Building located at 185 West Fort Hill Robbinsville, NC for their regular monthly meeting. The meeting location was changed due the Election Board using the Community Room for one-stop voting. All board was present. Also, present Manager Garland, Clerk Crisp, Graham Star Editor Kevin Hensley, TVA Representatives Bob Deacy, Senior Vice President and Burt Robinson, Director, District, State and Local Government Relations and Kimberly Lequire, Deputy Register of Deeds.

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 to the agenda. Manager Garland stated that we would add Item 5A – TVA Representatives. Commissioner Eller made the motion to approve the agenda with the stated change. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
5. Chairman Wiggins asks for approval of the Workshop & Regular Meeting September 15th; Continued Meetings September 23rd & 29th and Joint Meeting September 23rd. Commissioner Eller made the motion to approve the minutes as stated. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
6. Chairman Wiggins asks TVA Representative Bob Deacy to speak. Mr. Deacy stated that he was here with Burt Robinson to talk about Fontana Village. Mr. Deacy stated that TVA took back control of the Village in June 2020 when the former owner surrendered their lease. Mr. Deacy stated that TVA carefully considered whether to leave the resort open and look for a new lessee or close the Village. Mr. Deacy stated that they retained eight (8) employees from the beginning and are now happy to announce that they reopened the Village on August 15th with seventy (70) employees which has an economic impact on the county and are currently at 97% capacity which is great news. Mr. Deacy stated that some people that had prior reservations with the prior tenants and did not get their money back that they put down on rooms and wedding venues, but TVA honored those reservations. Mr. Deacy stated that they have opened the grill, marina, and are refurbishing the Bistro. Mr. Deacy stated that they are investing in local contractors for repairs as well as major landscaping in the Village including repairs and clean-up of the trails. Mr. Deacy stated that they plan to close in January and February for repairs and maintenance and reopen fully in March. Mr. Deacy stated that they are replacing the powerlines from the Dam to the Village which is a very large investment by TVA for an upgrade that will cost millions but will allow uninterrupted service to the Village. Mr. Deacy stated that the smaller lines into the Village will be the responsibility of the Town. Mr. Deacy stated that this will create jobs for people, and they are doing the clearing at this time. Mr. Deacy stated that the Graham County Travel and Tourism had provided a grant to the Town of Fontana Dam for upgrades to their billboards for advertising. Mr. Deacy stated that the work and keeping the Village open will benefit Graham County not TVA, but a part of TVA is the environmental and economic piece which they take strongly. Mr. Deacy stated that they will also be assisting in the Fontana Lake cleanup and thanked the County for the free dumpster pickup and disposal fee. Chairman Wiggins stated that it sounds like TVA has a good plan of action in place. Mr. Deacy stated that Baker Construction are running the Village at this time and the employees do receive benefits and health care. Mr. Deacy stated that their goal is to find a long term lessee to operate the Village for a long time and TVA plans to be very selective to make sure that the company has the wherewithal to run a business regardless of capacity and who has experience with hospitality. Mr. Deacy stated that it was tough to run the resort with such a unique group and hope that they receive a lot of interested parties. Mr. Deacy stated that TVA has a lot of work to do, the resort is not in the best of shape and requires a great degree of maintenance. Mr. Deacy stated that the previous lessee backed off from doing any maintenance, but TVA intends to be fully involved and will engage in getting the resort back up and running. Mr. Deacy invited the board to come have lunch or spend the weekend and see the progress that is being made. Chairman Wiggins asks what parts of the powerline's TVA will replace. Mr. Deacy stated that they will replace the primary feed from the Dam to the Village and work with the Town of Fontana Dam on the subsidiary lines into the Village. Mr. Deacy stated that the Town is cash poor and TVA will work with them as they have done in the past. Mr. Deacy stated that the Town had needed a second operator for the water plant and TVA funded this position with grant funding. Chairman

Wiggins stated that this is great for the people and for the Town to have the assistance of TVA and hiring seventy (70) employees is great for our county, providing many jobs and the board appreciated everything that TVA is doing and has done for this county. Commissioner Orr thanked TVA for specifically speaking with every employee and used their feedback to make the decision to keep the Village open. Commissioner Orr stated that she has been told how well that TVA has been treating the employees. Mr. Deacy stated that Jeff Williams, an employee, is one of the employees that helped keep the Village open. Mr. Deacy stated that Jeff began his work with Fontana when he was (15) years old and the Village has been a part of his life for many years. Mr. Deacy stated that the folks in Graham County helped make the decision in keeping the Village open. Commissioner Eller thanked TVA very much for their decision to keep the Village open. Commissioner Orr stated that this board will help in anyway that they can and will keep a positive working relationship with TVA. Commissioner Orr thanked Mr. Deacy and Mr. Robinson for the Veteran Flag donation, the shipping costs and the letters that will be installed at the flag. Mr. Deacy stated that he and Mr. Robinson will keep the board informed on the Village. The board thanked Mr. Deacy and Mr. Robinson for their commitment, their time and for allowing the Village to remain open.

7. Chairman Wiggins asks Jack Gross to speak. Mr. Gross thanked the board for allowing his time to speak and stated that Jim Hagar with the Town of Lake Santeetlah stated at their council meeting that Graham County and the Town of Lake Santeetlah entered into an amended and restated interlocal cooperation agreement and asks if the County board had done so. Chairman Wiggins stated that they received the agreement today and this board has not reviewed it to date and sent it to the County Attorney for review. Chairman Wiggins stated that the board has no intention of acting on this agreement tonight. Mr. Gross asks that the board take a very close look at the agreement, hold a workshop to review and take questions from residents regarding the agreement prior to any decision. Mr. Gross stated that he did not realize that you could attend the meeting in person, but he wanted his opinion noted that this agreement is a mess. Chairman Wiggins stated that it would not make a difference if Mr. Gross were at the meeting or joined by phone, the board would not act on this agreement without direction from the county attorney. Chairman Wiggins thanked Mr. Gross for his comments and stated that once the county attorney reviews then a decision could be made. Mr. Gross thanked the board for their time.
8. Chairman Wiggins asks for the finance and managers report. Manager Garland stated that the county ended the month with a \$8,152,411.61 cash balance which is ahead \$614,439.83 from this time last year. Manager Garland asks permission to transfer \$125,000.00 of sales tax monies to our capital project fund. Commissioner Orr made the motion to transfer the funds as stated. Commissioner Eller seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
9. Manager Garland stated that she has \$115,000.00 from the 524 Sales Tax and would like permission to move this money to a School Building Capital Fund. Manager Garland stated that she would like to keep a separate account for the School Capital Fund. Commissioner Orr made the motion to open a separate account for the School Capital Fund and transfer \$115,000.00 from the 524 Sales Tax to this account. Commissioner Eller seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
10. Manager Garland stated that our current year tax collections for the month was \$263,926.80 and our prior year collections was \$22,170.39 for a total of \$286,097.28. Manager Garland stated that our DMV collections was \$52,631.17 and we are ahead \$22,000.00 on DMV and thanked the citizens for paying their taxes. Manager Garland stated that our tax collection rate is 20.22%.
11. Manager Garland stated that our revenues for the month was \$1,107,548.40 and our expenditures was \$1,311,785.15 for a deficit of \$240,236.75 but our year to date revenues was \$3,635,324.86 and our expenditures was \$3,239,412.32 for a surplus of \$395,915.51.
12. Manager Garland stated that our back-tax collections to date is \$629,034.56.
13. Manager Garland stated that ideal percentage for our budget is 75% and we are holding at 79%.
14. Manager Garland stated that she did have budget amendments for the board's approval.
 - a. Budget Amendment #6 to amend to recognize additional DPH funding for infection prevention activities for \$29,479.00. Commissioner Eller made the motion to approve Budget Amendment #6 as stated. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion.
 - b. Budget Amendment #7 to amend to reallocate CARES ACT monies from this fiscal year and held over from last fiscal year to salaries and supplies for front line departments in the pandemic for an increase of \$208,000.00 and a decrease of \$74,890.00 for a net

increase of \$133,110.00. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve Budget Amendment #7 as stated. Commissioner Eller seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

15. Manager Garland stated that the county must expend all the CARES ACT monies by December 30, and they are doing so. Manager Garland stated that DSS was awarded at total of \$22,000.00 (\$10,000.00 from CARES Act and \$12,000.00 grant from Dogwood Trust) to assist with telecommuting costs. Manager Garland stated that they have ordered Surface Pros with docking stations which will enable staff to work remotely, as well as out in the field. Manager Garland stated that the Health Department has received an additional \$29,000.00 allocation of CARES money for infection prevention and control. Manager Garland stated that the budget amendment recognized this money and Health Director Beth Booth is working diligently to decide how best to allocate the funding which include:
 - a. Jackets and scrubs to be used at testing sites only,
 - b. Laptops/tablets for testing sites and outdoor vaccination sites,
 - c. Carport to be placed at exterior entrance closest to lab for testing and vaccination (COVID, flu, other) outside for suspected positive cases and immunocompromised patients,
 - d. PPE,
 - e. Washer and Dryer at both DHHS building and Dental Clinic...this poses biggest challenge due to the location of the washer and dryer at the DHHS building. Manager Garland stated that further discussion can be done at the Health Board Meeting November 2nd and asks that the board visit the proposed site.
16. Manager Garland stated that she had a call with Mandy Cohen and Kevin Leonard regarding the rapid spread of the virus in our community and we were one of (33) counties with the fastest spread over the past few weeks. Manager Garland stated that she is sad to report that while our cases appear to be lower than our neighbors in terms of raw numbers, we have one of the highest per capita case counts in the State. Dr. Cohen has urged us to redouble our efforts with urging our residents to take this virus seriously and to remember there are tangible things we can do to slow the spread. Manager Garland stated that the main way is to wear our masks when we are encountering others and practice social distancing...at work, at the grocery store, church, and other gatherings. Manager Garland stated that our residents need to continue the three W's - Wear, Wait, Wash and urges all the people in Graham County to do these things.
17. Manager Garland stated that she did a board poll last week to engage Sansoucy and Associates on the Brookfield appeal and their estimated fees are between \$100,000.00 to \$150,000.00 to be paid over a two-year period out of the Revaluation Funds. Manager Garland stated that if Brookfield were to prevail in their appeal, Graham County would lose over \$500,000.00 per year in property taxes collected, which is about five cents on the mil rate. Manager Garland asks for approval of the poll. Commissioner Eller made the motion to approve the poll to engage with Sansoucy and Associates for the Brookfield appeal. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
18. Manager Garland stated that last meeting the board approved the purchase of a front loader garbage truck which has been ordered and received approval from USDA to order a walking floor trailer under the grant/loan program. Manager Garland stated that under federal regulations, since the anticipated expenditure is under \$150,000.00, the county did not have to use formal bids. Manager Garland stated that she reached out to several vendors and the quotes are:
 - a. CRTS INC. – Statesville, NC (MAC Trailer) \$74,518.00 including tarp and install
 - b. Fitzgerald Trailer Sales – Crossville TN (MAC) \$76,963.34 tarp not included
 - c. Shealy's Truck Center – Asheville, NC (J&J) \$87,050.00 with tarpManager Garland asks that the board approve the lowest quote, most responsible quote, pending final approval by Commissioner Eller and final approval from USDA for the purchase of the trailer using USDA funding. Commissioner Orr made the motion to go with the lowest quote CRTS INC for \$74,518.00. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
19. Manager Garland stated that the CDBG-V funding application was submitted Friday, October 9th.
20. Manager Garland stated that Project Manager Marino had his pre-bid conference last Tuesday for the Recreation and Cemetery buildings and we had three contractors attend and others have requested plans and specs. PM Marino has done an outstanding and professional job of working up these projects and it is exciting to see them moving forward. Manager Garland stated that the bids are due October 29th and she will present to the board after this date.

21. Manager Garland stated that MANNA held a food insecurity call with our local partners and gave the following report. The Graham County Emergency Food Pantry distributed the following quantities under the TEFAP program, which is a USDA program between July 2019 and August 2020: 90,451 TEFAP lbs.; 162,009 TOT food lbs., TOT wholesale value of TOT lbs. \$281,895.00; served approximately 135,007 meals and the monthly average fed 484 households and 1,282 individuals. MANNA distributed the following to our food distribution partners:
- a. Graham County Emergency Food Pantry 188,585 lbs.
 - b. Graham Fellowship 67,094 lbs.
 - c. Grace Place 37,000 lbs.
 - d. Stecoah Valley Center 42,016 lbs.
- Manager Garland stated that we have approximately 1890 food insecure individuals in our County, which is up from 1410 last year – a 34% increase in need and it also represents 22% of our population. Manager Garland stated that our childhood insecurity rate is 38.8% and this is a very disturbing number.
22. Manager Garland stated that Election Day is November 3rd and the Election Board requested that the Administrative Offices be closed to the public and that the staff telecommute that day. The board agreed to this request.
23. Manager Garland stated that she will be very busy over the next few weeks with grant reporting, audit review and continued prep work, 911 reporting, CARES Act reporting, the EMS Cost Report and the Debt modeling for School Debt and revision of forecasts for the courthouse and asks that the board give her grace if she is unavailable at this time.
24. Manager Garland stated that the tax assessor office needs to order Surface Pro's as part of the revaluation process, and we will need to add the BI-TEK mobile app which will cost \$5,500.00 from the revaluation fund. Commissioner Nelms made the motion to approve this expenditure. Commissioner Eller seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
25. Commissioner Orr invited everyone to the Veteran Standdown October 31st at the Andrews Airport to promote the Welcome Home event to celebrate our veterans. Commissioner Orr stated that there will be a parade lead by the Combat Veterans Motorcycle Association, along with free food, a chili cook-off, two flyover shows, a US Air Force and a vintage aircraft flyover, a resource fair including flu shots for veterans and Representative Kevin Corbin along with the congressional candidate Madison Cawthorn are expected. Commissioner Orr stated that the event is free and encouraged everyone to attend.
26. Chairman Wiggins asks for public comment. Jack Gross asks to speak to the board. Mr. Gross stated that he requests that the commission board study the proposed agreement with the Town of Lake Santeetlah regarding the permitting process. Mr. Gross stated that it was said at their Council meeting that the county held up permitting on a project due to this agreement not being signed. Commissioner Nelms stated that the Health Department held the permitting process up due to septic issues and nothing was held up on the building permitting side but they received approval yesterday from the health department and the project can move forward. Mr. Gross stated that it has alleged to seem that the permitting was being held up for the agreement to go into effect. Mr. Gross stated that the agreement was quicksand and asks that the commissioner board review carefully.
27. Chairman Wiggins asks for approval of the Releases for \$196.62. Commissioner Eller made the motion to approve the releases as stated. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
28. Chairman Wiggins asks for new or old business. Manager Garland stated that there was a disabled veteran who applied for the old age exemption but due to the COVID pandemic his application was received late and asks that the board approve the exemption due to the reasons stated. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve the exemption as stated. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
29. 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 Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
30. Commissioner Orr made the motion to go back into open session. Commissioner Eller seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
31. Chairman Wiggins asks for a motion to grant unpaid leave to Nancy Baldwin. Commissioner Orr made the motion to grant unpaid leave to Nancy Baldwin. Commissioner Eller seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

32. Chairman Wiggins asks for a motion to approve the contract with C.B. Ferris, Inc. to assist in the 2023 Revaluation. Commissioner Eller made the motion to approve the contract with CB Ferris, Inc. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
33. Chairman Wiggins asks for a motion to continue this meeting to Friday, October 23, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. by teleconference. Commissioner Orr made the motion to continue. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

Dale Wiggins, Chairman

Lynn Cody, Vice-Chairman

Keith Eller, Member

Jacob Nelms, Member

Connie Orr, Member

ATTEST: _____
Kim Crisp, Clerk to the Board