

Regular Meeting – August 17, 2021

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Tuesday, August 17, 2021, at 5:30 p.m. for their regular monthly meeting in the Graham County Community Building located at 196 Knight Street Robbinsville, NC. Board present Keith Eller, Lynn Cody, Jacob Nelms and Dale Wiggins. Board absent Connie Orr. Also, present Manager Jason Marino, Finance Director Becky Garland, Attorney JK Coward and Clerk Kim Crisp.

1. Vice-Chairman Eller called the meeting to order.
2. Vice-Chairman Eller asks Commissioner Nelms to give the Invocation.
3. Vice-Chairman Eller asks Commissioner Wiggins to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.
4. Vice-Chairman Eller asks for changes or additions to the agenda. Manager Marino stated that we needed to add Beth Booth, Health Director as Item 5a for an update on COVID. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to approve the agenda with the added change as stated. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
5. Vice-Chairman Eller asks for a motion to approve the Workshop and Regular Meeting July 20, 2021, minutes. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to approve the minutes as stated. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
6. Vice-Chairman Eller asks Health Director Beth Booth to speak. Director Booth stated that the county is seeing a significant increase in positive cases with (112) new cases in the last thirty days and (45) of those were under 18 years of age. Director Booth stated that we have seen a 30% increase in children, and she did attend the Board of Education meeting urging them to mandate masks in our schools. Director Booth stated that the status is optional which is concerning due to 100 students are now at home under quarantine. Director Booth stated that they still outsource contact tracing and they have been contacting all individuals who have had contact with positive cases. Director Booth stated that only a quarter of the teachers are vaccinated and the adult to child transmission is extremely high. Director Booth stated that we will not return to normal until everyone has the vaccinations and/or wears their masks. Director Booth stated that she will update the commissioners but the current stance for the health department is to be vaccinated and to wear your masks. Commissioner Wiggins stated that everyone needed to be vaccinated. Director Booth stated that the numbers are getting higher every day on positive cases, and they have seen more people coming in for the vaccination in the last week. Director Booth stated that there is door to door testing and vaccinations available by appointment and they will vaccinate at Walgreens every day. Director Booth stated that the health department will do vaccinations every day and will do testing everyday if they are symptomatic. Commissioner Cody asks if the booster shot is available. Director Booth stated not yet but the State is looking at a third dose which is coming but has not been approved at this time. Commissioner Cody asks what the side effects are with the booster. Director Booth stated that it shows the same side effects but there is no medical documentation to support the findings.
7. Vice-Chairman Eller asks for the Manager's Report. Manager Marino stated that the Graham County Schools are preparing an RFP (Request for Proposals) to check the existing brick walls for the presence of steel reinforcement and the soil around the perimeter of the building to attempt to detect any evidence of voids or sinkholes. Manager Marino stated that Kloesel Engineering reporting stated that they have discovered the probable cause of the issues related to the brick veneer and wood floor and issued a report and repair details for the brick walls. Manager Marino stated that the walls to be repaired are exterior and non-load bearing walls; and the building structure for the adjacent preschool will not be affected by the distress related to the gymnasium and may be used while the repairs to the gym are being completed. Manager Marino stated that this is a better outcome than was expected and metal brackets along with some welding to fasten to the wall will give stabilization.
8. Manager Marino stated that the football lights have been installed without issues and is excited to see the difference the new lights will make at the ballgame Friday night. Manager Marino stated that the lights benefit the school and the fans and will allow us to host the games later in the season.
9. Manager Marino stated that we are still awaiting the parts for the new Mack Garbage Truck that was struck by lightning and the last update was received August 13th. Commissioner Wiggins asks that Attorney Coward write a letter to the company because the county paid over

\$273,000.00 for a truck we cannot use and if they need the part, they can take it from a truck sitting on their lot.

10. Manager Marino stated that we received an additional \$47,000.00 to be used at Sanitation and the board needed to list their priorities for this funding after they get guidance from USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) on the allocation.
11. Manager Marino stated that he has been working with MESCO on validating additional monitoring wells requirement with the NCDEQ and DWM and they are requesting that we consider signing the United States Forest Service Application as it is just for approving access to the site and does not obligate or approve us to proceed with any work at this time. Manager Marino is asking permission to start the application. The board was fine with the request.
12. Manager Marino stated that he received a letter from the US Army E Co 91st Affairs Battalion to deploy to Graham County to conduct training on crisis response; humanitarian assistance and interagency networking development and further stated that this would be beneficial for our county.
13. Manager Marino stated that he would now go to the Project Manager's Report and stated that all the contracts have been signed for the RDA Moose Branch Project and the project was awarded to DR Phillips. Manager Marino stated that he has had the preconstruction meeting to get the project kicked off but there was some delay due to drainage issues but hopefully this has been worked out and the project is moving forward.
14. Manager Marino stated that the Cemetery and Recreation Buildings erosion control will be done on both sites to make the ground is suitable for construction.
15. Manager Marino stated that he received electrical quotes on the Election Board renovations that are quite different, so he reached out to the vendor with the lowest quote to make sure that he had reviewed all the specifications which he did and left the quote. Manager Marino stated that that the quotes were:

a. Cemetery	SS Electric \$17,795.00	Blevins \$6,000.00
b. Recreation	SS Electric \$21,000.00	Blevins \$7,600.00
c. Board of Elections	SS Electric \$22,500.00	Blevins \$6,728.00

Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to award the projects to Blevins as stated above. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
16. Manager Marino stated the Board of Elections renovations is 16% complete and the project is moving along well.
17. Manager Marino stated that the 6th Grade Wing at the Middle School was 22% complete.
18. Manager Marino stated that the Snowbird Creek Project is 50-55% complete and will be meeting next week with the State.
19. Vice-Chairman Eller asks Finance Director Becky Garland for the finance reporting. Director Garland stated that the county ended the month of July with a \$8,650,300.94 cash balance. Director Garland stated that we currently have a \$205,239.02 surplus. Director Garland stated that the Local Government Commission requires that counties keep 35% of their budgeting expenditures in fund balance and 10% in addition by State Statute so we must maintain \$1.2 Million dollars in our general fund for expenditures or as called "rainy day fund".
20. Director Garland stated that we have \$2,483,518.36 in our capital account, \$114,173.07 in our School Capital Project account and \$819,926.26 of American Rescue Plan Act funds. Director Garland stated that the board is being required to build a new courthouse facility which will cost \$22M or more.
21. Director Garland stated that our current year tax collection is \$855,129.40; our prior year collection was \$23,829.04 and our DMV collection was \$57,468.85. Director Garland stated that that our tax collection rate is 12.65% which is ahead from 11.09% last year at this time.
22. Director Garland stated that our revenues were \$1,304,860.40 and our expenditures were \$944,873.29 for a surplus of \$359,986.81.
23. Director Garland stated that our sales tax collection was \$255,788.00. Director Garland stated that our quarter cent sales tax collection since inception is \$521,633.47 with \$472,273.23 transferred to the Capital Projects account and she will be transferring an additional \$49,360.24. Director Garland stated that we currently have \$2,532,878.60 in our Capital Projects account that will be used for the new Justice/Jail project.
24. Director Garland stated that our budget should be at 92% and we are currently at 95.63%.
25. Director Garland stated that she had two budget amendments for the board's approval.
 - a. Budget Amendment #3 to record grant from Nantahala Trust for First Aid Kits for Patrol Cars for \$9,183.00.

- b. Budget Amendment #4 to amend for additional repairs on wrecked sheriff vehicles covered by insurance for \$13,503.00.

Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to approve the budget amendments as stated.

Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

- 26. Director Garland stated that she did have a payment request from the school for \$291,303.00 which will come from the capital expense appropriation to the schools. Commissioner Nelms made the motion to approve the request as stated. Commissioner Wiggins seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
- 27. Vice-Chairman Eller asks for public comment. No public comment.
- 28. Vice-Chairman Eller asks for the discussion items. Manager Marino stated that the board needed to approve the Releases for \$1,778.78 and the Discoveries for \$4,070.53. Commissioner Nelms made the motion to approve the releases and discoveries as stated. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
- 29. Vice-Chairman Eller asks Clerk Crisp to present the renaming of (3) falls on Santeetlah Creek. Clerk Crisp stated that the board had received recommendations to name three falls on Santeetlah Creek and Vice-Chairman Eller had asked that we contact Marshall McClung for recommendations. Clerk Crisp stated that after review of the proposed names, Mr. McClung and Mr. Gibbs asks that we name the falls as follows:
 - a. For the Falls nominated as Atsadi Falls, the recommended name is Bemis or Bemis Camp falls due to the location being three fourths mile upstream from the old Bemis Camp.
 - b. For the Falls nominated as Lisas Fall, the recommended name is Stewart Falls due to the location being a short distance upstream from the intersection of Wolf Laurel Road and the Stewarts lived along Santeetlah Creek prior to US Forest Service acquisition. Clerk Crisp stated that Stewart Cabin is located half a mile downstream from these falls.
 - c. For the Falls nominated as Little Huckleberry Falls, the recommended name is Santeetlah Bluff Falls, being that these falls are quite some distance from Little Huckleberry Knob and the falls are on a tributary of Santeetlah Creek that flows down through the middle of the area locally known as Santeetlah Bluffs of which most hunters and fishers are familiar with this area. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to accept the recommendation as stated by Marshall McClung and Hugh Gibbs. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
- 30. Vice-Chairman Eller asks for new or old business. Manager Marino asks if the board wanted to discuss the ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) Funds. Director Garland stated that the board will be receiving \$3.4 million, and she is currently vetting which departments will qualify for premium pay so she is requesting that the board hold a meeting possibly next week to go over the final findings. Commissioner Wiggins asks how many full-time employees we had. Director Garland stated that it is especially important to make sure that the employees meet the criteria for the funding and from her discussions thus far it is for the employees that are or were directly exposed to COVID. Vice-Chairman Eller stated that those employees need to be the highest on the list and further stated that EMS hauls COVID positive patients so they are the most at risk.
- 31. Vice-Chairman Eller 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, contracts, and personnel. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to go into closed session as stated. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
- 32. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to go back into open session. Commissioner Cody seconded the motion. Vote unanimous.
- 33. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to adjourn. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

Signature page attached!

Signature page for Regular Meeting August 17, 2021

Connie Orr, Chairman (ABSENT)

Keith Eller, Vice-Chairman

Lynn Cody, Member

Jacob Nelms, Member

Dale Wiggins, Member

ATTEST

Kim Crisp, Clerk to the Board