

## Regular Meeting – March 16, 2021

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Tuesday, March 16, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. in the Graham County Community Building located at 196 Knight Street Robbinsville, NC for their regular monthly meeting. Board present Keith Eller, Lynn Cody, Jacob Nelms, Dale Wiggins. Board absent Connie Orr. Also, present Manager Becky Garland, Senior Center Director Wanda Hill, Project Manager Jason Marino, 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 approval of the agenda. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to approve the agenda. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
5. Vice-Chairman Eller asks for approval of the minutes for the February 16<sup>th</sup> Workshop and Regular Meeting; February 19<sup>th</sup> Special Meeting; February 26<sup>th</sup> Special Meeting and March 2<sup>nd</sup> Special Meeting. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to approve the minutes as stated. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
6. Vice-Chairman Eller asks Senior Center Director Wanda Hill to speak. Director Hill stated that she was here to present the HCCBG Grant for Fiscal Year 2021-2022. Director Hill stated that she is asking for \$125,423.00 with an in-kind county match of \$13,935.00 for a total of \$152,633.00. Director Hill stated that this includes taking the department to a 40-hour week which is the hours worked by most of the county and a wage increase for her department with a 3% match from the county and asks permission to apply for the funding as stated. Commissioner Cody made the motion to approve the request from Director Hill. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous. Manager Garland stated that Director Hill is also receiving \$10,000.00 of SHIP funds which will allow for a part time Senior Center SHIP Coordinator/substitute Meals on Wheels Driver that will provide support services to seniors through the Senior Health Insurance Information Program (SHIP) and assist with the operations in the center and asks approval from the board to add this position to the Graham County Pay Plan. Vice-Chairman Eller asks if this position will end if the funding ends. Manager Garland stated that it would if the funding stream no longer exists. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to add a Senior Center SHIP Coordinator/substitute Meals on Wheels Driver. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
7. Vice-Chairman Eller asks Commissioner Cody to speak. Commissioner Cody stated that he felt the need to present a slide presentation to the public on the services given by the Graham County Fire Departments which are Graham County; Stecoah; Snowbird; Santeetlah and Meadow Branch. Commissioner Cody stated that our county has a lot to offer including having the most popular roads to ride if you are a motorcyclist enthusiast. Commissioner Cody stated that our county is beautiful not only with our roads but with our views; our multiple lakes; our fishing streams and more and he has heard it said many times that this is the most beautiful place to come and visit. Commissioner Cody stated that their job is to respond to the not so beautiful things such as house fires, motorcycle wrecks, trees in the road, Whitewater Rescue and more. Commissioner Cody stated that he has been a volunteer for EMS, Fire and Rescue Services for many years and they pride themselves in providing the best care. Commissioner Cody stated that he is available to the public every Wednesday evening at the Stecoah Fire and Rescue Building to listen to members of the public on their concerns and it has been mentioned numerous times of their appreciation to our EMS, Fire, Rescue and 911 Dispatch. Commissioner Cody stated that there are some complaints regarding the questions that our dispatchers are required to ask but he stresses that they are doing what they are trained to do. Commissioner Cody stated that our county has many "Volunteers" that donate their time to these emergency efforts and applauds our volunteers for their work. Commissioner Cody stated that many spend hours in training without pay to deliver the proper standard of care. Commissioner Cody stated that the cost to outfit one firefighter is between \$3500.00 to \$5000.00 which the departments must pay up front and then get reimbursed through a FEMA Grant. Commissioner Cody stated that they can apply for more grants, but you must pay a match up to 10% up front and this is a lot of money for our small departments. Commissioner Cody stated that the departments do their own maintenance of the equipment due to the cost. Commissioner Cody stated that he is proud of Graham County and their Volunteers and felt that the public needed to know that when they see persons responding to emergency calls, most are volunteers.

8. Vice-Chairman Eller asks Manager Garland to give the finance and managers report. Manager Garland stated that the county ended the month with a \$10,935,281.43 cash balance which is \$593,218.94 ahead from this time last year. Manager Garland stated that we have \$2,181,089.43 in our Capital Projects Account and \$114,168.28 in our School Project Account.
9. Manager Garland stated that we have collected \$191,243.72 in real property taxes and \$22,350.21 in prior year taxes and \$49,201.00 in DMV. Manager Garland stated that our year-to-date collections is \$6,925,505.08 and our DMV is \$397,782.36. Manager Garland stated that tax collection rate is 94.42%.
10. Manager Garland stated that our revenues for the month were \$1,250,451.99 and our expenditures were \$1,361,900.77 for a deficit of \$111,448.78. Manager Garland stated that our year-to-date revenues is \$13,312,687.96 and our expenditures is \$10,245,577.17 for a year-to-date surplus of \$3,067,110.79.
11. Manager Garland stated that the sales tax collections for the month was \$237,281.98 and we are up \$160,984.99 from this time last year.
12. Manager Garland stated that our back taxes collected since we began foreclosures is \$631,220.14.
13. Manager Garland stated that our budget should be at 34% and we are holding at 37%.
14. Manager Garland stated that she did have two budget amendments for the board's approval.
  - a. Budget Amendment #18 – to amend to recognize additional Senior Center grant funding for \$20,544.00.
  - b. Budget Amendment #19 – to amend to recognize ARC Recovery to Work program for \$27,383.00.
15. Manager Garland stated that the American Rescue Act was passed last Thursday which is less restrictive than before and it is geared to help boost the economy. Manager Garland stated that we will also receive additional PILT and SRS Funding which will also be unrestricted funding.
16. Manager Garland asks that Project Manager Jason Marino to give the board an update on the capital projects. PM Marino stated that he has been receiving numbers on the costs for the new buildings for the board to review. PM Marino stated that he would like to start moving forward on the Election Board renovations and plans to use staff and our inmate work program to begin the demolition. Commissioner Wiggins asks if the cost for materials have decreased. PM Marino stated that he did not have any new estimates for comparison at this time.
17. PM Marino stated that our recreation and cemetery buildings have the same layout using metal buildings and received the quote to purchase and install the building which is around \$107,270.00 for a 30 x 64 Recreation Building and \$82,770.00 for a 30 x 50 Cemetery Building. PM Marino stated that the county will complete the interior of each building to save on costs. PM Marino stated that the delivery time is 30 to 36 weeks due to COVID19 delays. PM Marino stated that he would like to keep pressing forward on the projects. PM Marino stated that the new school addition has a pre-construction date of March 29<sup>th</sup> and they will be installing a metal building next week to store their materials during the addition / renovation.
18. PM Marino stated that the school system had a lighting study performed at the Big Oaks Stadium in which he participated, and the existing lighting is woefully inadequate. PM Marino had pictures for the board to review, stated that it is unsafe and asks how the board wanted to proceed. Commissioner Wiggins stated that it is bad and seemed worse when he attended the game than two years ago. Commissioner Nelms stated that he felt \$320,000.00 would be an adequate number to put aside for the replacement of the lights. Manager Garland stated that we have an increase in sales tax and we have an excess in the ½ cent sales tax which she feels will more than cover that amount. Commissioner Wiggins stated that with the county doing the finish work on the metal buildings in house we will be able to save a large amount of revenue. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to set aside \$320,000.00 and replace the stadium lights. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous. Manager Garland stated that she would need to do a budget amendment for this expense and asks that the board approve the budget amendment tonight and the board can ratify at the April regular meeting. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to approve a budget amendment for the cost of the stadium lights. Commissioner Nelms stated that in the event the cost went higher he wanted the project to be approved. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous. Manager Garland stated that this will include a Capital Project Ordinance as well. The board agreed.
19. Manager Garland stated that budget meetings are beginning this week and our departments have worked very hard over the past years to stay within budget, so she has asked that they

look at their salaries against the pay plan and include any needs for the board's consideration. Manager Garland stated that last year we did a wage freeze and then 5% across the board cuts.

20. Manager Garland stated that Sanitation received a complaint of what appears to be a scrap tire dump which is not permitted by the State. Manager Garland stated that the State Inspector came out and advised that the county is responsible to see that the site is cleaned up if indeed the property owner did not have appropriate permits and according to the inspector there are (600 to 1000) tires at this site. Manager Garland stated that the owner can either use our facility at their expense or we can charge the owner our cost of processing the tires to the tire recycling center or they can choose to haul them to the center themselves and they are liable for all costs of disposal.
21. Manager Garland stated that we now have new rules regarding a transfer station assessment, and we are required to hire a professional engineering firm to assess our site against our approved plans and against new regulations regarding our buildings, parking, access roads and leachate system. Manager Garland stated that if we are found out of compliance, we will have one year to complete a corrective action plan and three years to make any capital improvements. Manager Garland obtained quotes from three firms which were:
  - a. MESCO - \$4,000.00
  - b. Withers Ravenel - \$4000.00
  - c. Draper Aden Associates - \$4,300.00

Commissioner Wiggins stated that we have used MESCO for many years and they have always done excellent work and he wanted to stay with MESCO. The board all agreed.

22. Manager Garland stated that the sanitation shed continues to deteriorate and loose boards are beginning to fall from the building. Manager Garland stated that Director Colvard and PM Marino went and inspected and spoke with Dirk Cody who co-owns the shed and he is willing to pay for a new shed that would be joined, or we could both demolish the old shed and rebuild our own. Manager Garland stated that PM Marino is working toward a solution for a metal roof structure. Vice-Chairman Eller stated that if the Cody family would donate us the land that was promised we would not need the shed.
23. Manager Garland stated that the pool building has a significant leak in the roof and Director Colvard had called Cox & Son Roofing for an estimate and they proposed to remove 14-feet of shingles for replacement and install a new roofing guard and ridge caps for a total cost of \$1,123.50. Manager Garland asks direction from the board. Commissioner Wiggins stated that our staff should be capable of repairing the roof in house.
24. Manager Garland stated that Chris Ferris and the Tax Assessor's office has begun the revaluation and it has been discussed that we hire a temporary worker so that he and Assessor Cook can concentrate her time on learning to build the schedule of values and continue to clean up the scroll and property records. Manager Garland stated that with benefits this employee would cost the county \$35,000.00 but if we contract through Chris Harris the cost would be \$28,000.00 because he is not required to pay benefits. Commissioner Wiggins stated that we needed run the worker through his company with it being temporary. Commissioner Cody made the motion to give Chris Ferris an additional \$28,000.00 for a part time temporary worker during revaluation. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
25. Manager Garland stated that the question did arise concerning our Ortho Imagery for mapping. Manager Garland stated that the latest photos taken were in 2019 by the State free of charge but they are done on the State's timetable. Manager Garland stated that cost range for Eagle View is \$48,000.00 to \$108,720.00 and asks if the board would like to pursue this request. Commissioner Wiggins asks that the USFS be contacted to see if they would be interested in a cost share before we commit. The board agreed. Manager Garland stated that Eagle View would like to give the board a presentation and the board agreed for a workshop session.
26. Manager Garland stated that the Soil and Water MOA has been delivered with no changes but would need the board chair or vice-chair to sign so that it can be returned to the State office.
27. Manager Garland stated that the procurement for the technical assistance part of the creek bank mitigation projects has been finalized and those bids will be opened later in the meeting. Manager Garland stated that she and PM Marino are working on the procurement for the stream clearing and snagging which will also require professional engineering services.
28. Manager Garland stated that the Cemetery Commission met last week and determined to begin the process of construction of new steps with handrails at the Old Mother Church Cemetery and she does have \$10,000.00 earmarked for this project. Manager Garland asks how the board wanted to proceed with bids or are we treating it as a county project whereby PM Mario works

with local contractors and our workforce due to the original bids coming in at \$25,000.00 to \$35,000.00. The board all agreed to allow PM Marino to work on the project in house.

29. Manager Garland stated that the NC Forest Service Truck is being surplus and asks if the board would like to purchase the truck for \$2,500.00. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to purchase the NC Forest Service Truck for \$2,500.00 Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous. Vice-Chairman Eller stated that this truck would need to go to building maintenance. The board agreed.
30. Manager Garland stated that A-0009 will be hosting a Concurrence Meeting via GOTOMEETING on March 17, 2021.
31. Manager Garland stated that this will be her last official report as County Manager and what a privilege it has been to serve the board and the people of the County. Manager Garland stated that she is enthusiastically looking forward to continuing her work as finance director and looking forward to working side by side with a new manager to help them be successful in their new role. Commissioner Wiggins stated that she appreciated everything that Ms. Garland has done and does for our County and we are financially sound and that is a good feeling to have as a commissioner. Vice-Chairman Eller agreed. Manager Garland stated that we have the best staff and everyone of them takes a lot of pride in what they do for our County.
32. Vice-Chairman Eller asks for public comment. No public comment.
33. Vice-Chairman Eller asks for approval of the Releases \$622.30 and the Discoveries \$4,981.05. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to approve the releases and discoveries as stated. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
34. Vice-Chairman Eller asks about the schedule for the Board of Equalization and Review meetings. Clerk Crisp presented the proposed schedule to the board of every Tuesday in April. The board agreed to meet every Tuesday in April from 4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. in the Graham County Community Room.
35. Vice-Chairman Eller opened the bids for the engineering on the Little Snowbird Project. Those bids were:
  - a. LDSI, Inc. - \$12,500.00
  - b. Charlie Deep - \$21,200.00Manager Garland asks that the bids be tabled for them to be scored. Commissioner Cody made the motion to table the bids as requested. Commissioner Wiggins seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
36. Vice-Chairman Eller opened the bids for the CDBG-CV Administrator. Those bids were:
  - a. L&J Services, Inc. - \$90,000.00 grant administration; \$10,000.00 service delivery not to exceed.
  - b. Withers Ravenel - \$90,000.00Manager Garland asks that the bids be tabled for them to be scored. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to table the bids as requested. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous. Manager Garland requests that the board name a Scoring Committee. Commissioner Cody made the motion to appoint Commissioner Wiggins, Manager Garland and PM Marino as the scoring committee. Commissioner Wiggins seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
37. Vice-Chairman Eller asks for the reappointment of Rick Davis (1 year term) and Robin Turner (3-year term) to the Travel & Tourism Board and for the appointment of Patricia Cable (1 year term) to the Travel & Tourism Board. Commissioner Nelms made the motion to approve the reappointments and the appointment as stated. Commissioner Wiggins seconded this motion. Vote called. Commissioners Cody, Nelms and Wiggins voted yes to all. Vice-Chairman Eller voted no to the reappointment of Rick Davis. Motion carried.
38. Vice-Chairman Eller asks for the reappointment of Angela Knight, Connie Orr, and Cris Weatherford to the SW Child Development Board. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to approve the reappointments as stated. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
39. Vice-Chairman Eller asks for a replacement to be named to the Board of Equalization & Review Board. Commissioner Wiggins asks that the board eliminate this seat. Commissioner Nelms made the motion to eliminate this seat on the Board of E&R. Commissioner Wiggins seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
40. Vice-Chairman Eller asks for the approval of the following Road names as presented by the Road Naming Board. Those names are:
  - a. South Woodland Heights

- b. ETM Cove Road
- c. Heathers Landing
- d. Gorge Overlook Drive

Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to approve the road names as presented.

Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

- 41. Vice-Chairman Eller asks for new or old business. No new or old business.
- 42. 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, personnel, and contracts. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to go into closed session as stated. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
- 43. Vice-Chairman Eller asks for a motion to go back into open session. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to go back into open session. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
- 44. Vice-Chairman asks for a motion to approve leave without pay for Janet Orr. Commissioner Nelms made the motion to grant the leave. Commissioner Wiggins seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
- 45. Vice-Chairman asks for a motion to allow for the pay request changes from the Cemetery Commission for Danny Hedrick and Johnathan Jones. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to grant the request. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
- 46. Vice-Chairman Eller asks for a motion to leave Tax Account #155898604 at \$393.24. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion as stated. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
- 47. Vice-Chairman Eller asks for approval of the schedule change request for Shawn Garrison in Mapping. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to allow the change during Baseball season. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
- 48. Vice-Chairman Eller asks for a motion to appoint Jason Marino as the Interim County Manager / Project Manager effective March 17, 2021. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion as stated. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
- 49. Vice-Chairman Eller asks for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Cody made the motion to adjourn. Commissioner Wiggins seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

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Connie Orr, Chair

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Keith Eller, Vice-Chairman

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Lynn Cody, Member

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Jacob Nelms, Member

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Dale Wiggins, Member

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
Kim Crisp, Clerk to the Board