

Budget Meeting – May 13, 2024

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Monday, May 13, 2024, at 10:00 a.m. in the Graham County Community Building located at 196 Knight Street Robbinsville NC for a budget meeting. All board was present. Also, present Interim County Manager/Clerk to the Board Kim Crisp.

1. Chairman Nelms called the meeting to order.
2. Chairman Nelms asks for approval of the agenda. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
3. Chairman Nelms stated that the board would be meeting with the following department heads:
 - a. Transit Director Juanita Colvard
 - b. Tax Collector Tajuana Ledwell
 - c. Tax Assessor Brandy Cook
 - d. Register of Deeds Kimberly Lequire
 - e. EM Director Brian Stevens
4. Chairman Nelms asks Director Colvard to speak. Director Colvard stated that the rates for Transit have changed from last year and she is projecting \$4.19 per mile reimbursement. Director Colvard stated that she will expend all ARPA funds this upcoming year. Director Colvard stated that they did need new software due to the state modules not being correct and have added that cost to the budget. Director Colvard stated that she is planning to retire and requests that the county allow Tracy Jenkins to be the Transit Director and Michael Collins be named as the Assistant Transit Director. Director Colvard stated that she is not requesting Michael's current position be back filled at this time. Director Colvard stated that Tracy Jenkins did the budget this year while she has been taking care of Urgent Care and her staff is cross training at this time. Director Colvard stated that her reserves are still healthy, and she is requesting zero dollars from taxpayers for her budget request. The board thanked Director Colvard for her work as the Transit Director, the Urgent Care Project Manager and for going above and beyond for our county.
5. Chairman Nelms asks Tajuana Ledwell, Tax Collector to speak. Collector Ledwell stated that her budget came in flat except for new desks. Collector Ledwell stated that her office flooded, and her desks are coming apart as well as the Tax Assessor's desks. Collector Ledwell stated that she will be doing her billing advertisement a little differently and this should cut the advertising fees down. Chairman Nelms asks how many times it is required by law. Collector Ledwell stated that zero times is required but they have always done two as a courtesy for the taxpayer. Collector Ledwell stated that her office takes care of EMS Billing/Debt Set-off and she will meet Director Stevens to see about the tribal billing. Collector Ledwell stated that they do not have access to the actual bills, only to the billing. Collector Ledwell stated that if the Tribe did not pay timely, she would do garnishment on tribal residents that have an outstanding ambulance bill.
6. Chairman Nelms asks Brandy Cook, Tax Assessor to speak. Assessor Cook stated that her budget was coming in flat except for a request to hire a part time/full time employee. Assessor Cook stated that she would like to hire someone to go out and pick up the personal property, houseboats, equipment, campers, boats, etc. Assessor Cook stated that the county has a lot of income that is not accounted for, but she does not have time to pick up real and personal property. Assessor Cook stated that she has discovered over \$1.9 million in assets since she has been the assessor. Commissioner Orr asks if this employee would need training. Assessor Cook stated that they would be required to take the state mandated courses.
7. Chairman Nelms asks Kimberly Lequire, Register of Deeds to speak. Ms. Lequire thanked the board for allowing her time to speak with them and explain how her budget is aligned. Ms. Lequire stated that she only requires 14.1% of revenue from the county. Ms. Lequire stated that her office is the hub for personal lives from land boundaries, birth certificates, death certificates, marriage certificates, notary commissions, records of affidavits and genealogy. Ms. Lequire stated that she has the heart of a public servant and wants to serve in this capacity. Ms. Lequire stated that her office is regulated by statute, and she has made some changes. Ms. Lequire stated that she must make sure of which items are for public record and which are not, for example, Veteran records are not public. Ms. Lequire stated that she has been preserving our old books starting with the first minute book of the county and has used zero county dollars in doing so. Director Lequire asks that the board adjust her salary and the salary of her Deputy Register of Deeds to be more in line with the other comparable counties.

8. Chairman Nelms asks EM Director Brian Stevens to speak. Director Stevens stated that his budget is close to last year's and he saved \$100k on ambulances by going with the other company. Director Stevens stated that he will be speaking with the Tribe on some ambulance bills, some have fallen through the cracks. Finance Director Carpenter stated that EMS has two banking accounts: 1) Basic Business Checking with \$392,206.75 and Premium Money Marketing for \$491,841.04. Director Carpenter recommends moving the money into the premium account to gain more interest. The board all agreed. The board discussed EMS billing with the current billing company as well as tribal billing and agreed debt set-off needed to be applied. The board discussed the paramedicine program and how much the community loves this program. Director Stevens stated that EM is about the same in funding, he is receiving a grant this year for equipment. The board was pleased with this information.
9. Chairman Nelms asks for further business. No further business.
10. Chairman Nelms asks for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Orr made the motion to adjourn. Commissioner Eller seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

Jacob Nelms, Chairman, Graham County Commissioner

Natasha Williams, Vice-Chair, Graham County Commissioner

Lynn Cody, Member, Graham County Commissioner

Connie Orr, Member, Graham County Commissioner

Keith Eller Member, Graham County Commissioner

ATTEST:

Kim Crisp, Clerk to the Board