

Workshop Session – September 17, 2024

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Tuesday, September 17, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. for their regular workshop session in the Graham County Community Building located at 196 Knight Street Robbinsville, NC. All board members were present. Also, present Kim Crisp, Interim County Manager/Clerk to the Board.

1. Chairman Nelms called the workshop session to order.
2. Chairman Nelms asks Michelle Shiplet to speak regarding the Five Point Center. Ms. Shiplet thanked the board for their time and support through the years. Ms. Shiplet stated that she wanted to give the board an update on the Five Point Center which now includes a program for digital literacy classes being held at Stecoah Valley Center, Graham County Library and Snowbird. Ms. Shiplet stated that she did partner with Land of Sky for additional funding which will be spread out into the community. Ms. Shiplet stated that she has the Healthy Opportunities Program, which is a new program to offer, and they are working with individuals to provide food, home repairs, etc. Ms. Shiplet stated that it is very frustrating that she must travel outside of our county to purchase these items, and she spends thousands of dollars. Ms. Shiplet asks that the community come together and try to partner with businesses to bring another grocery store to our community. Ms. Shiplet stated that they have the funds to purchase the items locally, but the current grocery store costs are more than 30% higher in this county than in a neighboring county and this is a terrible situation for our county. Misty Shope with Five Point Center discussed the number of meals that they are sending out and the number of households they are helping. Ms. Shope stated that they help (207) households and prepare (1200) meals per month. Ms. Shope stated that they can also assist with individuals on Medicaid that may have harmful molds in their home that is affecting their physical health, people with no transportation getting to and from medical appointments. Ms. Shope stated that they have been doing this since July and have purchased over \$33,000.00 for refrigerators, stoves, dehumidifiers, filters for their HVAC and more. Ms. Shope stated that they have spent \$37,378.00 in transportation and car repairs to local mechanics and this money has an economic impact. Ms. Shope stated that they have spent \$16,900.00 with utility assistance and they are open for referrals. Ms. Shope stated that there are (41) clients that are considered at risk for homelessness and are living in tents and campers and (11) of those received assistance with transportation repairs. Ms. Shope stated that they give mileage reimbursement totaling \$21,916.00 and they gave (150) food boxes to (150) different clients. Ms. Shope stated that they make five trips to Wal-Mart per week and spend around \$8300.00 per week in Cherokee County because our local stores do not do curbside and here our pricing is 25-35% higher than in our neighboring county. Ms. Shope stated that she spends \$431,000.00 in other communities purchasing items. Ms. Shope stated that they spend over \$20,000.00 for meal preparation and they have a lot of spending power to give to the community, but Graham County has no access to the type of foods that are high in nutrition and statistically people who eat healthier foods stand a less chance of getting cancer, diabetes, etc. Michelle Shiplet stated that she has (11) employees with seven of those being fulltime and they offer a full benefit package. Ms. Shiplet stated that when she moved back to Robbinsville after her father retired there was five grocery stores in this town and now, we have one. Ms. Shiplet stated that we needed to have a voice in our county that benefits our community and put the money into our county instead of Cherokee County, we need to help our people with projects with items purchased here in this county but the costs of buying here is out of control. Ms. Shiplet stated that we need to form a board to try and recruit business to this area because we have the capacity to spend in this town. The board all agreed to a board and asks that Manager Crisp meet with key players and get with Josh Carpenter to help us work on a plan to recruit new interest to our community.
3. Chairman Nelms asks Ron Lewis with Charter of Freedom to speak. Mr. Lewis thanked the board for the opportunity to speak. Mr. Lewis apologized to the board for the oversight in finishing the memorial in the county and stated that out of the 100 NC counties they lack (16) counties having the memorials installed. Mr. Lewis stated that the one complaint that the foundation received was the Civil Rights Plaque and he is here to present a copy of the Civil Rights Amendments to be displayed on a wall of the commissioners choosing. Ms. Lewis stated that the civil rights made us all the same regardless of skin color, or gender and all Americans are to be seen and treated the same. Ms. Lewis stated that they will come and seal the monuments and do some extra work to the memorial and thanked the board for allowing their presence in the county.
4. Chairman Nelms asks for further comment. No further comments.

- Chairman Nelms asks for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Williams made the motion to adjourn. Commissioner Orr 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