

Regular Meeting – June 17, 2025

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Tuesday, June 17, 2025, at 5:30 p.m. in the Graham County Community Building located at 196 Knight Street Robbinsville, NC for their regular monthly meeting. All board was present. Also, present Manager Brady Cody, Attorney JK Coward, Finance Director Stacy Carpenter, Project Manager (PM) Jason Marino and Clerk Kim Crisp.

1. Chair Smith called the meeting to order.
2. Chair Smith asks Commissioner Cody to give the Invocation.
3. Chair Smith asks Commissioner Orr to give the Pledge of Allegiance.
4. Chair Smith asks for changes and/or approval of the agenda. Manager Cody asks to add under Item #20: Tri-County Community College; Sheriff and Jail Budget; NC Forest Service Contract. Chair Smith made the motion to approve the agenda with the stated changes. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
5. Chair Smith asks for approval of the May 20, 2025, Workshop and Regular Meeting Minutes. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
6. Chair Smith asks for a motion to close the regular meeting and open the public hearing for Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget Presentation. Commissioner Williams made the motion as stated. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
7. Chair Smith asks Manager Cody and Finance Director Carpenter to present the FY 25/26 Budget. Manager Cody stated that he would allow Director Carpenter to give the budget details. Director Carpenter stated that 2025-2026 Budget is balanced and in accordance with the Local Government Budget and Fiscal Control Act with total revenue and expenditures of \$25,491,490.00. Director Carpenter stated that the ad valorem tax rate is \$0.59 per \$100.00 at full valuation and the revenue neutral rate of \$0.4570 per \$100.00 at full valuation and are based on the total valuation of \$1,529,581,326.00 at 97.19% collection rate and the full \$0.59 per \$100.00 tax rate will be used to fund general funds. Director Carpenter stated that the total of General Fund – Fund 10 is \$23,724,909.00 which makes up 93% of the budget and the total Special Revenue Funds of \$7,766,581.00 makes up the remaining 7% giving us a total operating budget of \$25,491,490.00. Director Carpenter asks for any questions. No questions. Chair Smith asks if there are any public comments. No public comments.
8. Chair Smith asks for a motion to close the public hearing and reopen the regular meeting. Commissioner Orr made the motion as stated. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
9. Chair Smith stated that the board would delay the adoption of the budget and continue this meeting until June 23, 2025. Chair Smith asks for a motion to table the decision on the budget. Commissioner Williams made the motion to table the budget decision at this time. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
10. Chair Smith asks for a motion to close the regular meeting and open the Public Hearing for CDBG Coronavirus; CDBG #20-V-3514 Annual Debarment Certification. Commissioner Orr made the motion to close the regular meeting and open the public hearing as stated. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
11. Chair Smith asks Jason Marino, Project Manager, to speak. PM Marino stated that we are here tonight to close out the CDBG Coronavirus: CDBG #20-V-3514. PM Marino stated that the purpose of this hearing is to discuss the program performance, allowing Graham County Citizens to make any comments on the closeout of the CDBG project. PM Marino stated in December 2020 the county received \$900,000.00 in US Department of Housing and Urban Development HUD-CDBG funding from the North Carolina Department of Commerce for Grant #20-V-3514. PM Marino stated that there were five activities, and the proposed activities were 51% benefit to LMI (low to moderate income) people and the funds were given to the following subrecipient programs. Those are:
 - a. Graham County Senior Center expanded the commercial kitchen to better accommodate meals on wheels for our seniors.
 - b. Grace Place expanded its commercial kitchen and purchased some equipment to better accommodate safe storage, handling and preparation of community meals.
 - c. Graham County Schools purchased needed equipment and supplies needed for remote learning.

- d. Imagine HUB provided coffee machines, working space, and internet services to those in the community that needed a space to work and/or for remote learning.
- e. Graham County EMS provided training and new equipment for EMS Workers to adequately train and prepare.

PM Marino stated that the programs are complete, and the grant funds were approximately 99% expended. PM Marino stated \$413,572.00 of the funds were spent toward neighborhood facilities; \$393,667.88 of the funds were spent for public services and \$90,000.00 were spent for Administration. The final submission of funds of \$7,200.00 will be submitted to REDD with the close-out documents following this public hearing. PM Marino stated \$2,760.12 of the funds will be de-obligated and will be returned to rural development because the process to submit and get approval for a budget revision is lengthy and uncertain and the project team would like to officially close out the project. PM Marino stated that we awaited over one year for the additional funds on the Senior Center Generator. PM Marino stated that the \$2,760.12 unused funds were a result of the Graham County Senior Center, the Graham County EMS and Graham County Schools projects coming in slightly under budget. PM Marino stated that this has been a successful project and remained in compliance with the federal requirements and regulations associated with funding. PM Marino thanked everyone in the community for all their help in the completion of these projects, Graham County Schools, Michelle Shippet at Grace Place, and others and stated that it was very helpful and went smoothly. PM Marino commended the Senior Center and EMS for the work that has been done as a result of these funds.

12. PM Marino asks if anyone has any questions or comments. Michelle Shippet gave a thank you and stated that she understood the long and arduous tasks from 2020 to 2025 and for the funds that were given to Grace Place she gave these reports. Ms. Shippet stated that the kitchen feeds half the population of Robbinsville every week; they feed between 300-350 people every week and if they add up all the time since the new kitchen, they have fed every person in Graham County two- and one-half meals for the year. Ms. Shippet stated that this has made a huge difference in our community, and she stated thank you, thank you, thank you! Commissioner Orr thanked Michelle Shippet for her work in our community. Ms. Shippet invited everyone to come by and see the kitchen and volunteer anytime. PM Marino asks for further comment. No further comment.
13. PM Marino stated that in order to finish the closeout the commissioners will have to pass a resolution. PM Marino read the resolution:

A Resolution authorizing the Closeout of the Graham County Response and Preparedness Needs Project under the North Carolina Department of Commerce Rural Economic Development Division Community Development Block Grant-Coronavirus Program Grant #20-V-3514

Whereas, Graham County is participating in the Community Development Block Grant Coronavirus Program with assistance provided under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (the “CARES” Act) Public Law 116-136 and awarded to DOC under Title 1 of the United States Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, and administered by the North Carolina Department of Commerce; and,

Whereas, Graham County has completed the scheduled activities identified in the grant as approved by the Rural Economic Development Division; and,

Whereas, Graham County has conducted the required public hearing for the closeout of CDBG-Grant #20-V-3514.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Graham County Board of Commissioners in Robbinsville, North Carolina that:

The Graham County Board of Commissioners hereby formally takes this action to close out the aforementioned Community Development Block Grant Project.

The Closeout Performance Report will be reviewed and executed by the Board Chair on behalf of the County.

The Resolution shall become effective upon its adoption and approval.

Adopted and approved this on the 17th day of June 2025, in Robbinsville, North Carolina.

14. Chair Smith made the motion to close the public hearing and reopen the regular meeting. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
15. Chair Smith made the motion to approve the Closeout of the Graham County Response and Preparedness Needs Project under the North Carolina Department of Commerce Rural

Economic Development Division Community Development Block Grant-Coronavirus Program Grant #20-V-3514 Resolution. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

16. Chair Smith asks Shelly Foreman to speak. Clerk Crisp stated that Ms. Foreman was not present.

17. Chair Smith asks Bethany Leonard to speak. Ms. Leonard stated that she was here to present the Opioid Funding Annual Reporting and thanked the board for their time. Ms. Leonard presented a resolution for the board's review and approval. Ms. Leonard stated that the first resolution is specifically for the CLC/PORT program at the Health Department to ensure both her salary and M. Turpin's salaries will be paid without interruption. The resolution reads as follows:

**A RESOLUTION BY THE COUNTY OF GRAHAM
TO DIRECT THE EXPENDITURE OF OPIOID SETTLEMENT FUNDS**

WHEREAS Graham County has joined national settlement agreements with companies engaged in the manufacturing, distribution, and dispensing of opioids.

WHEREAS the allocation, use, and reporting of funds stemming from these national settlement agreements and bankruptcy resolutions ("Opioid Settlement Funds") are governed by the Memorandum of Agreement Between the State of North Carolina and Local Governments on Proceeds Relating to the Settlement of Opioid Litigation ("MOA") and the Supplemental Agreement for Additional Funds from Additional Settlements of Opioid Litigation ("SAAF").

WHEREAS Graham County has received Opioid Settlement Funds pursuant to these national settlement agreements and deposited the Opioid Settlement Funds in a separate special revenue fund as required by section D of the MOA.

WHEREAS section E.6 of the MOA states that, before spending opioid settlement funds, the local government's governing body must adopt a resolution that:

- (i) indicates that it is an authorization for expenditure of opioid settlement funds; and,
- (ii) states the specific strategy or strategies the county or municipality intends to fund pursuant to Option A or Option B, using the item letter and/or number in Exhibit A or Exhibit B to identify each funded strategy; and,
- (iii) states the amount dedicated to each strategy for a specific period of time.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, in alignment with the NC MOA and SAAF, Graham County authorizes the expenditure of opioid settlement funds as follows:

First authorized strategy

- i. Name of strategy: Post-Overdose Response Team
- ii. Strategy is included in Exhibit A
- iii. Item letter and/or number in Exhibit A or Exhibit B to the MOA: 8
- iv. Amount authorized for this strategy: \$63,101.04
- v. Period of time during which expenditure may take place:
Start date June 18th, 2025, through End date June 30, 2026

Description of the program, project, or activity: An existing Community Linkage to Care and Post-Overdose Response program currently based at the Graham County Public Health Department that supports people who use drugs and/or with a history of drug use, and people seeking treatment and recovery, to healthcare, social services, harm reduction, and treatment; support (2) full-time staff navigators and program expenses. Coordinate referral-based outreach to overdose survivors.

Provider: Graham County Department of Public Health

The total dollar amount of Opioid Settlement Funds appropriated across the above named and authorized strategies is \$63,101.04

Adopted this the 17th day of June 2025.

18. Director Leonard stated that the second resolution is a broader spending authorization resolution that includes both unspent funds from the current year (which will effectively roll over) and new funds allocated for FY 2025-2026 and she will give both the county commissioners and the public an opportunity to provide input. Director Leonard stated that the second resolution reads as follows:

**A RESOLUTION BY THE COUNTY OF GRAHAM
TO DIRECT THE EXPENDITURE OF OPIOID SETTLEMENT FUNDS**

WHEREAS Graham County has joined national settlement agreements with companies engaged in the manufacturing, distribution, and dispensing of opioids.

WHEREAS the allocation, use, and reporting of funds stemming from these national settlement agreements and bankruptcy resolutions (“Opioid Settlement Funds”) are governed by the Memorandum of Agreement Between the State of North Carolina and Local Governments on Proceeds Relating to the Settlement of Opioid Litigation (“MOA”) and the Supplemental Agreement for Additional Funds from Additional Settlements of Opioid Litigation (“SAAF”).

WHEREAS Graham County has received Opioid Settlement Funds pursuant to these national settlement agreements and deposited the Opioid Settlement Funds in a separate special revenue fund as required by section D of the MOA.

WHEREAS section E.6 of the MOA states that, before spending opioid settlement funds, the local government’s governing body must adopt a resolution that:

- a. indicates that it is an authorization for expenditure of opioid settlement funds; and,
- b. states the specific strategy or strategies the county or municipality intends to fund pursuant to Option A or Option B, using the item letter and/or number in Exhibit A or Exhibit B to identify each funded strategy; and,
- c. states the amount dedicated to each strategy for a specific period of time.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, in alignment with the NC MOA and SAAF, Graham County authorizes the expenditure of opioid settlement funds as follows:

2. First strategy authorized
 - a. Name of strategy: Early Interventions
 - b. Strategy is included in Exhibit A
 - c. Item letter and/or number in Exhibit A or Exhibit B to the MOA: 6
 - d. Amount authorized for this strategy: \$34,200
 - e. Period of time during which expenditure may take place:
Start date June 18, 2025, through End date June 30, 2026
 - f. Description of the program, project, or activity: funds to cover the cost of two school-based .5 FTE youth support counselors contracted through HIGHTS to support youth at-risk for substance use or affected by family members’ substance use disorders
 - g. Provider: HIGHTS, Inc.
3. Second authorized strategy
 - a. Name of strategy: Post-Overdose Response Team
 - b. Strategy is included in Exhibit A
 - c. Item letter and/or number in Exhibit A or Exhibit B to the MOA: 8
 - d. Amount authorized for this strategy: \$165,201.04
 - e. Period of time during which expenditure may take place:
Start date June 18th, 2025, through End date June 30, 2026
 - f. Description of the program, project, or activity: An existing Community Linkage to Care and Post-Overdose Response program currently based at the Graham County Public Health Department that supports people who use drugs and/or with a history of drug use, and people seeking treatment and recovery, to healthcare, social services, harm reduction, and treatment; support (2) full-time staff navigators and program expenses. Coordinate referral-based outreach to overdose survivors.
 - g. Provider: Graham County Department of Public Health
4. Third authorized strategy
 - a. Name of strategy: Recovery Support Services
 - b. Strategy is included in Exhibit A
 - c. Item letter and/or number in Exhibit A or Exhibit B to the MOA: 3
 - d. Amount authorized for this strategy: \$42,460
 - e. Period of time during which expenditure may take place:
Start date June 18, 2025, through End date June 30, 2026
 - f. Description of the program, project, or activity: Support WNCAP to maintain and expand harm reduction services in Graham County including providing resources for staff time and travel and to aid in the purchase and distribution of naloxone and other supplies; in order to overall provide support to leverage efforts already contributed to the county by this agency.
 - g. Provider: Western North Carolina AIDS Project (WNCAP)
5. Fourth authorized strategy
 - a. Name of strategy: Recovery Support Services
 - b. Strategy is included in Exhibit A
 - c. Item letter and/or number in Exhibit A or Exhibit B to the MOA: 3
 - d. Amount authorized for this strategy: \$28,800.00
 - e. Period of time during which expenditure may take place:
Start date June 18, 2025, through End date June 30, 2026

- f. Description of the program, project, or activity: Support Cheoah Recovery Community Center, a program currently based at Five Point Center that supports people who use drugs and/or with a history of opioid use, and people seeking treatment and recovery, to healthcare, social services, harm reduction, and treatment; support (1) .5 FTE peer support specialist and program expenses. Coordinate referral-based outreach and stigma reduction efforts.

- g. Provider: Five Point Center

The total dollar amount of Opioid Settlement Funds appropriated across the above named and authorized strategies is \$270,661.04 Adopted this the 17th day of June.

19. Chair Smith made the motion to approve the resolutions as presented by Bethany Leonard. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
20. Chair Smith asks PM Marino to give the Project Manager's Report. PM Marino stated there are no updates for the Justice Center; no changes to the jail asbestos project and they are holding on the EMS paving for funding. PM Marino gave a slide presentation of the two Neighborhood Revitalization Home Demolition and Reconstruction for 243 Orr Branch Rd and 66 Atoah Rd. PM Marino stated that the homes are on schedule and he will continue to give updates to the board.
21. PM Marino stated that the Moose Branch Subdivision Azalea Hills Lot 7 is teaming up with Robbinsville High School to build the house and an updated MOA between Graham County RDA and Graham County Board of Education is under review with the attorneys.
22. PM Marino stated that Graham County Staff will be doing the parking lot striping and will begin at the health department.
23. Chair Smith asks Stacy Carpenter, Finance Director, for finance reporting. Director Carpenter stated that she has a budget amendment for the board's review and approval. Budget Amendment #16 which includes Sheriff's Department intradepartmental changes of \$65,803.74; a new NCDMVA Grant for our veterans in the amount of \$18,288.97; a new Recreation Youth Sports Grant for \$20,000.00 and DSS needed budget adjustments in the amount of \$15,271.44. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve the budget amendment as stated. Chair Smith seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
24. Director Carpenter stated that she had her follow-up check-ins with Tim Greene with LGC and the draft budget was submitted, reviewed and approved by LGC.
25. Director Carpenter stated that the FY 2022/2023 Audit was filed with LGC on June 10, 2025, and it is pending LGC review and approval. Director Carpenter stated that once that one is approved the board will receive an engagement letter from RH Accounting for the FY 2023/2024 Audit and she has been doing work for this audit in preparation for submittal.
26. Director Carpenter stated that our revenues for May were \$1,066,895.35 with a year to date of \$19,807,152.05. Director Carpenter stated that the expenditure for May was \$1,923,137.42 with a year to date of \$20,219,883.32.
27. Director Carpenter stated that our property tax collections for May are \$36,208.03 and prior years \$12,961.29 for a total year-to-date of \$8,955,025.90 collection. Director Carpenter stated the balance to be collected is \$310,969.61 and our tax rate at this time is 96.64%.
28. Director Carpenter stated that our Sales Tax Collection for April is \$319,249.76 for a total year to date collection of \$2,968,936.38. Director Carpenter stated that the Schools Allocation of Sales Tax is \$60,065.09 for March and \$609,604.58 year to date with an available balance of \$163,194.63.
29. Director Carpenter stated that the ¼ Cent Allocation for Public Safety is \$28,367.57 with a total to date of \$1,674,560.34.
30. Director Carpenter stated that our Vehicle Tax Collections were \$68,481.31 with a year-to-date collection of \$662,778.14.
31. Chair Smith asks for the Manager's Reporting. Manager Cody stated that the Graham County Fire and Rescue received a bid for the 1987 Ford Fire Truck from Ace Contracting for \$4000.00. Commissioner Orr made the motion to accept the bid as stated. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
32. Manager Cody discussed a meeting he had with the Town of Robbinsville regarding commercial dumping fees, and they have a proposal for the board to consider. Manager Cody explained the proposal and the offer to pay \$14,630.40 by the end of this fiscal year to get the Town back in good standing. Commissioner Orr made the motion to accept the proposal going forward and accept the \$14,630.40 by the end of this fiscal year June 30, 2025. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

33. Manager Cody stated that he had interviewed several candidates for the Deputy Tax Collector's position and hired Trinity Cooper for the position. Manager Cody stated that the board would need to appoint Ms. Cooper for either (4) years or (8) years for the position. Commissioner Williams made the motion to approve Trinity Cooper as the Deputy Tax Collector for (4) years. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
34. Manager Cody asks that the board approve the Order of Collection for the Deputy Tax Collector for the remaining Fiscal Year 2024/2025. Commissioner Williams made the motion to approve the Order of Collection as stated for Trinity Cooper. Chair Smith seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
35. Manager Cody asks that the board approve the Order of Collection for the Tax Collector and Deputy Tax Collector for Fiscal Year 2025/2026 for Tajuana Ledwell and Trinity Cooper. Chair Smith made the motion to approve the Order of Collection for Fiscal Year 2025/2026 for Tajuana Ledwell and Trinity Cooper. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
36. Manager Cody reviewed the propane quote from Suburban Propane and asks that the board change to Suburban Propane at this time. Manager Cody stated that the county will receive propane at a new rate of \$1.42 per gallon and we were paying \$2.52 per gallon. Commissioner Williams made the motion to change propane companies as stated due to the savings. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
37. Manager Cody stated that he did speak with Dean Dr. Donna Tipton-Rogers with Tri-County Community College and did receive five years of their financials and will be meeting with her in July on the college funding.
38. Manager Cody stated that the county did receive a letter from USDA on the Sheriff's Boat Reimbursement and the county paid for the purchase upfront (no county tax dollars were used) and USDA will reimburse the full amount.
39. Manager Cody presented the board with a proposed Letter of Intent to Support Project Goldilocks which the Chair and the Clerk will need to sign. Chair Smith made the motion to approve the letter of intent. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
40. Manager Cody asks for approval of the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 NC Forest Service Contract in the amount of \$67,859.00. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve. Chair Smith seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
41. Chair Smith asks for public comment. Michelle Shiplet stated that she did not want the commissioner's job, but she appreciated the work that goes into running this county and she is extremely appreciative of the board and if she can help them in any way to please let her know.
42. Eric Reese stated that he had a comment on the COVID CDBG-CV. Pastor Reese extended his gratitude to the board and the employees, having this project was very important and he is very proud of all and thanked everyone and the board.
43. Chair Smith 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 Williams made the motion to go into closed session as stated. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
44. Chair Smith asks for a motion to go into open session. Commissioner Williams made the motion as stated. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
45. Chair Smith asks for a motion to grant leave without pay to H. Webster. Commissioner Williams made the motion as stated. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
46. Chair Smith asks for a motion to approve the Closed Session Minutes for May 20, 2025. Commissioner Williams made the motion to approve as stated. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
47. Attorney Coward stated that he is closing Trust Account for the 2020 Lease with EBCI Clinic that was at the P and J Road Facility and the tribe had given a secured deposit of \$10,000.00. Attorney Coward stated that he needs to return the deposit to the Tribe and will send a check to the county who will in turn send the check back to the Tribe. The board all agreed to the closing of the Trust Account and return the security deposit.
48. Chair Smith made the motion to continue this meeting until Monday, June 23, 2025, at 5:00 p.m. in the regular meeting place. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

Meggan Smith, Chair, Graham County Commissioner

Lynn Cody, Vice-Chairman, Graham County Commissioner

Jacob Nelms, Member, Graham County Commissioner

Connie Orr, Member, Graham County Commissioner

Natasha Williams, Member, Graham County Commissioner

ATTEST:

Kim Crisp, Clerk to the Board