

Regular Meeting – October 21, 2025

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Tuesday, October 21, 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 County Manager Brady Cody, Project Manager Jason Marino, Finance Director Stacy Carpenter, Attorney JK Coward, 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 lead the Pledge of Allegiance.
4. Chair Smith asks for approval of the agenda. Manager Cody asks that we add (11)(i) CDBG Discussion with Attorney Coward and change (15) to continued instead of adjourn. Commissioner Williams 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 Workshop and Regular Minutes for September 16, 2025. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve the minutes as stated. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
6. Chair Smith asks for public comment. No public comment.
7. Chair Smith asks Shelly Foreman, Community Relations Regional Director with Vaya Health to speak. Ms. Foreman thanked the board for their time and stated that she was here to give an update to the board. Ms. Foreman stated that Vaya Health is a public managed care organization (MCO) that prioritizes whole-person health and they manage Medicaid, federal, state, and local funding to connect people they serve to health care services and supports. Ms. Foreman stated that those services are: Vaya Total Care; Medicaid Direct and Tailored Plan. Ms. Foreman stated that North Carolina is preparing for the Rural Health Transformation Program and their goal is federal funding to increase access to care and improve health outcomes for North Carolina's three plus million rural residents. Ms. Foreman stated that the strategic goals are to make Rural America Healthy Again with Prevention and Chronic Disease and Behavioral Health; Sustainable Access to Care to Appropriate Care Availability and Provider Payments; Workforce Development; Innovative Care and Tech Innovation-Consumer Tech Solutions, IT Advancements and T&T Assistance. Ms. Foreman stated that North Carolina's application will outline plans to improve access to rural hospitals and providers; strengthen the rural health care workforce; foster provider partnerships and improve outcomes for rural residents. Ms. Foreman stated that NCDHHS will collect provider and community feedback and will input the submissions. Ms. Foreman stated that the NC General Assembly passed Mini Budget and is still in process of finalizing and hopes that the biennium budget will be passed now that the General Assembly is now in session. Ms. Foreman stated that the key areas of concern are Mini Budget, Medicaid funding of \$600,000 million falls below NCDHHS projections; projections of Medicaid shortfall; proposed changes to Medicaid budget; NCDHHS implemented rate reductions on October 1<sup>st</sup> with Medicaid services being cut b3% and targeted services cut by either 8-10%; administration and General Assembly are still negotiating the final funding for biennium budget; Vaya will wait until November 1<sup>st</sup> to implement these reductions, with hopes that a final budget will mitigate these reductions. Ms. Foreman stated that Vaya's Single Stream (Indigent) Funding reduced by approximately \$6M based on Mini Budget and NCDHHS announces December 1<sup>st</sup> as the go-live date for the state-wide BCBS Child and Family Specialty Plan Waiver. Ms. Foreman gave an update on the Regional/County Projects and those are: Analenesgi Inpatient Unit taking Vaya Total Care members who are not enrolled, voluntary adult admissions; Behavioral Health Urgent Care at Balsam Center serving adolescents and adults experiencing a behavioral health crisis, as diversion from Emergency Departments; Appalachian Mountain Health Center has expanded behavioral health and Substance Abuse Intensive Outpatient Treatment Program at Peachtree, Tallulah and Jackson Clinics and Working to identify an Addiction Medicine/MOUD provider in County. Ms. Foreman thanked Commissioner Orr and Commissioner Cody for being sitting board members for Vaya Health Advisory. Commissioner Orr thanked Ms. Foreman for the update.
8. Chair Smith asks Kristen Nespoli, Partnership Specialist with Field Division, Atlanta Regional Office U. S. Census Bureau to speak. Ms. Nespoli thanked the board for their time and stated that she was here to speak on the Census. Ms. Nespoli stated that Graham County is one of the counties chosen for a 2026 Census Test along with Western North Carolina including Cherokee, Jackson, Swain and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. Ms. Nespoli stated that she needed the board's help to find workers for this area, they are paying \$29.75 per hour but no one has reached out from this area. Chair Smith asks the

administration staff to post this on Facebook because she did not think that people know this information. Ms. Nespoli thanked the board and stated that she would be back in the county November 5<sup>th</sup>.

9. Chair Smith asks Jason Marino, Project Manager to give his monthly reporting. PM Marino stated that the board has selected the Knight Street property as the site for the new Graham County Justice Center and the property is currently being surveyed. PM Marino stated that he needed a bed count for the jail as a design starting point. The board discussed the average number of inmates and agreeing to a (40) bed jail because the average number is (31). PM Marino stated that this the census for this area is predicting a decrease in the coming years so he agrees to the suggested number. Commissioner Williams stated that if the board uses the pods then they can add in the future if needed. Chair Smith stated that in her research holding federal inmates will not generate revenue. Commissioner Cody stated that the staffing may be an issue but he would agree to the (40) bed recommendation. The board all agreed.
10. PM Marino gave an update on the Jail Abatement and stated that the LBP abatement Contractor, DARI, INC. has given a tentative schedule of either the week of October 27<sup>th</sup> or the first week in November and the architectural finishes contractor, WNC Contracting INC will complete finishes after the abatement contractor is done and the area has received HAZMAT clearance.
11. PM Marino stated that they received permission from Southwestern Commission on an additional \$19,020.00 bringing the total grant allocation for the Sanitation Project to \$139,561.47. PM Marino stated that the pre-engineered metal building is scheduled to be delivered on November 6<sup>th</sup> and they are moving forward with the approved estimate for the project. PM Marino stated that they started surveying the site and anticipate a structural engineering proposal and will work with the civil engineer upon completion of the survey.
12. PM Marino stated that our Dogwood Health Trust Homes are coming along and gave an update to the homes at 243 Orr Branch Road and 66 Atoah Road.
13. PM Marino stated that the Graham County Rural Development Authority is teaming with the Graham County Board of Education on the construction of a new home at Azalea Hills and an updated MOA between both are under review with the attorneys.
14. PM Marino stated that the pre-bid conference was conducted on October 15<sup>th</sup> for the design and construction for installation of new permanent seating at the Big Oaks/Modeal Wash Memorial Stadium.
15. PM Marino stated that the grant funding for the EMS Base Asphalt has been moved to the sanitation project and he will continue to seek funding for the asphalt project.
16. PM Marino stated that the maintenance staff continues to restrip the regular and handicap parking and they are doing an great job.
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