

Special Meeting – July 25, 2025

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Friday, July 25, 2025, at 11:00 a.m. to continue discussions on the Graham County Detention Center with Sheriff Brad Hoxit in the Graham County Community Building located at 196 Knight Street Robbinsville, NC. All board was present. Also, present Manager Brady Cody, Project Manager Jason Marino, Finance Director Stacy Carpenter and Clerk Kim Crisp. Also present by telephone Sheriff Brad Hoxit.

1. Chair Smith called the meeting to order.
2. Chair Smith asks for approval of the agenda. Commissioner Williams made the motion to approve. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
3. Chair Smith stated that the board is here to discuss the Graham County Jail, and they too have concerns regarding the jail employees. Chair Smith stated that they listened to the concerns made by the staff, and they wanted to have discussion with the Sheriff as a team. Chair Smith stated that she had asked Sheriff Hoxit what his opinion was on the safety of the employees and the inmates. Sheriff Hoxit stated that there have been issues for several years, serious issues that need to be addressed and if the board wants to close the jail, they will have to move all the inmates. Chair Smith stated that she did hear from the employees and believed their concerns and if they say they feel sick by working in the jail then they have to believe them but without x-ray, CT or a medical examination she would not say. Chair Smith stated that she did tour the facility, and it did not look good, but the staff is not subjected to lead paint with the plaster, the lead paint is in the door frames, the 9x9 layered tile and they did receive an OSHA Inspection who did not find cause for great concern. Manager Cody stated that in the preliminary inspection nothing was found that was overly concerning, they took samples and will issue a report, but he did not observe a concerning issue. Commissioner Orr asks for a report either way. Manager Cody stated that he will call and confirm. Chair Smith stated that she was told that employees that work at the jail get sick a lot and ask PM Marino to discuss the steps that have been taken. PM Marino stated that they have put out preliminary bids and they have not turned a blind eye, they are working on a plan. Chair Smith stated that with the new Justice Center that the county is being required to build the county is trying to minimize the repairs as much as possible to keep from throwing money away, but they will make sure that the inmates and the employees are kept safe while working in the current facility. Chair Smith asks if they can temporarily close or move the booking office while the repairs are being done. Sheriff Hoxit stated that they could move the booking office to a different location while the repairs are being made. Manager Cody stated that Clerk of Court Tammy Holloway agreed to allow the use of the Jury Room during this renovation/repair. Sheriff Hoxit stated that he did speak with Tammy Holloway as well and they would make this happen. Manager Cody stated that he will have staff to begin the necessary work in order to move the staff. Commissioner Williams stated that there is some lead in the drunk tank which is in a separate location than the inmate quarters, stating that the inmates should be considered safe while the repairs are being done. Commissioner Williams stated that the main office is where the lead is located, the drunk tank contains a small amount in the doorway and a spot on the floor. Commissioner Williams stated that they may need to relocate the prisoners for a short period of time. Chair Smith stated that bars would have to be added to the Jury Room windows and this can be accomplished quickly along with IT confirming that the computers and fingerprint machine will be accommodated. Sheriff Hoxit stated that the windows must be secured and asked how long the repairs would take. PM Marino stated that he plans for no more than two weeks with the intention of moving the booking room to an alternate location.
4. Commissioner Orr stated that she agreed with what has been said and she does care about the people and their safety, but she also cares about the taxpayers who have to foot the bills, but she has heard the Sheriff and believes the best option is to do minor repairs to the jail.
5. Manager Cody stated that if we close the jail what does that do to the budget. Sheriff Hoxit stated that an extra \$15K will be required to transport the inmates to other counties. Commissioner Orr stated that the cost should be lessened if the courts is closed so do you plan to lay off some employees. Sheriff Hoxit stated that he will keep all the employees because the inmates will have to be transported to and from the other jails for court. Commissioner Orr asks how many part time employees we have. Sheriff Hoxit stated he did not have any other employees.

6. Commissioner Williams stated that logistically the inmates need to be within closer distances to Graham County and asks if Swain and Cherokee County can hold more of the inmates. Sheriff Hoxit stated that Swain County is full, and Cherokee County has some space but not much. Sheriff Hoxit stated in the future the board needed to consider housing juveniles and federal inmates to bring money into the budget because you get paid for housing federal inmates.
7. Commissioner Cody stated that the county has band aided the jail for a while because of the new Justice Center costs and he is aware that we need a new facility as quickly as possible and asks about the possibility of renting pods for temporary purposes.
8. PM Marino stated that the work should not take more than two weeks in total, and he could not justify renting pods for that time period but that is a great idea to explore to see if it would be feasible in the future.
9. Attorney Coward thanked Sheriff Hoxit for speaking with the board and stated that the board has been working on this problem for a long period of time and understands that the first round of quotes came in at around \$200k and that is a lot to consider.
10. Chair Smith asks if the metal bars will be removed and rewelded in the jury room and then put back. Manager Cody stated that would be the most cost effective.
11. Chair Smith asks if you can access the jail without going through the contaminated room. Commissioner Williams stated that it was all open where the booking room is located. Commissioner Williams stated that if we seal off that area, the inmates should be safe, OSHA did not see red flags, so no news is good news. Commissioner Williams stated that she wanted to see the jail kept open and move the booking room temporarily. Sheriff Hoxit stated that he would work with the commissioners. Chair Smith stated that she feels comfortable that they can seal off the booking room from the inmates and relocate the booking room until such time that the repairs are complete. Chair Smith made the motion as stated. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
12. Commissioner Williams stated that we need to move forward with the remediation as soon as possible and seal off the booking room. PM Marino stated that he would work on this. The board gave a directive to Manager Cody and PM Marino to start the process and assist with the booking room move which would save our budget tremendously. Commissioner Orr stated that they could contract laundry out temporarily if that area needed to be closed. Dusti Cox stated that if they arrest a female, they cannot walk her through the main cells for a strip search. Commissioner Williams stated that there are no immediate safety issues in the laundry room so they should pass through safely during the abatement.
13. Chair Smith stated that they would ensure the safety of the employees and the inmates and asks for further comments from Sheriff Hoxit. No further comments.
14. Chair Smith asks for closed session. No closed session.
15. Chair Smith asks for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Orr made the motion to adjourn. Commissioner Williams 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