

Special Meeting – August 11, 2026

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Tuesday, August 11, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. in the Graham County Community Building located at 196 Knight Street Robbinsville NC for a special meeting to discuss the proposed Justice Center with Cope Architecture. Board presents: Lynn Cody, Jacob Nelms, Natasha Williams. Board present by phone: Meggan Smith and Connie Orr. Also present Representative Karl Gillespie, Clerk of Superior Court Tammy Holloway, Manager Brady Cody, Finance Director Stacy Carpenter, Project Manager Caleb Turpin, Magistrate Carissa Cable, Chief Jailor Scharlene Wesley-Hardrick, and Clerk Kim Crisp.

1. Vice-Chair Cody called the meeting to order.
2. Vice-Chair Cody asks for a motion to approve the agenda. Commissioner Williams made the motion to approve. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
3. Vice-Chair Cody thanked Cope Architecture for coming and asked them to introduce themselves. Cayce Petko, President, thanked the board for their time and introduced Grant Tharp, COPE Consultant. Ms. Petko asks for confirmation that Moseley Architecture had been contacted and their agreement was cancelled. Manager Cody stated that yes, they did end the agreement with Moseley Architecture. Ms. Petko asks if the county has a back up file of the work that was previously done, property data, topo, if geotechnical had been completed. Manager Cody stated that they do not. Ms. Petko asks if the board had a contract with a General Manager at Risk (CMAR). Manager Cody stated no. Manager Cody stated that it was the intent of the board to use a CMAR on this project. Ms. Petko asks, what is the amount that can be spent on this project after permitting. Mr. Tharp stated that we are at the state's mercy, but they can get those numbers by a certain date. Mr. Tharp asks for the timeline, and he did recommend the CMAR due to the timeline, the CMAR will engage with the contractors and have pre-construction fee services that they provide. Mr. Tharp stated that this will move the process along quicker. Manager Cody stated that the county intent is to use the CMAR. Ms. Petko asks if the board wanted the language for the jail or just the courts facility at this time. Ms. Petko stated that she would draft the language for the RFP's. Commissioner Nelms asks how quickly an RFP can be put out. Ms. Petko stated that they can get this out within four weeks depending on the scope or magnitude of the property. Ms. Petko asks if the board wanted nice but basic or something else. The board discussed the CMAR with Commissioner Williams making the motion to use CMAR on this Justice Center Project. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
4. Chair Smith stated that this board spent time and money on the previous design, but it did not fit the counties budget or timeline, and the board wanted the building to be designed in phases. Chair Smith stated that they did not want a jail at this time, we cannot afford a jail at this time. Ms. Petko stated that they can speak more on the phasing after the courthouse is built if that is pleasing with the board due to the timeline and asks what the actual budget is. Manager Cody stated that we have \$7Million in SCIF Funds; Director Carpenter stated that we have \$2Million from the ¼ cent tax for a total of \$9Million. Director Carpenter stated that some funds have been spent to date for the prior architectural work. Manager Cody stated that the board would like to keep the cost around \$9Million or as close as you can get. Mr. Tharp stated that from his understanding the board wanted the project to be completed in phases. Commissioner Williams stated that we need the courthouse

only at this time and the other projects could be added in the future; it could be included in the planning if it does not slow the project down. Mr. Tharp stated that he would add the jail concept in the future drawings. Mr. Tharp asks if we have a preliminary design for the courthouse, three courtrooms, rooms for staff, public defender, etc. Chair Smith stated that the preliminary design is three larger courtrooms and one small courtroom, a jury room separate from the public defender, etc., and asks that they reach out to Tammy Holloway, Clerk of Court. Commissioner Williams stated that the board needed to limit the number of bathrooms instead of having one per pod, consider having a court facility restroom and public restrooms. Mr. Tharp said that this information will speed up things. Mr. Tharp asks if the Detention Staff will function in the building. The board agreed that would be in Phase 3, it did need to be under the court umbrella but not housed in that building. Mr. Tharp asks if the smaller courtroom is for juveniles. Manager Cody stated that is correct. Ms. Petko asks if the board decides in the future for a jail, what is the maximum beds they are looking for. Manager Cody stated that 40-48 beds would be sufficient. Manager Cody did have some preliminary drawings and some information for the firm. Mr. Tharp stated that some of the property is in the floodplain and asks, is it a historical site. Manager Cody stated that no, it was not on a historical site. Ms. Petko asks if the geotechnical testing had been done on the site. Manager Cody stated that he did not think so. Commissioner Nelms asks if we can get the test done within the time frame. Ms. Petko stated yes, they could and will include the testing.

5. Mr. Thorpe stated that they need to do a program study and define what the state needs, they do not want to miss anything, and they need the geo-testing as soon as possible. Mr. Thorpe stated that they will formulate the RFQ for the CMAR and ask how long do we normally publish. Clerk Crisp stated that they normally run the ads for two weeks. Mr. Thorpe spoke on the preliminary design. Commissioner Cody stated that this board was not given a choice on the design. Ms. Petko stated that they need to get the overall operation for the cost of the offices; get the courts feedback and then they will design a very attractive, very cost efficient court facility. Mr. Thorpe stated that they have inherited projects before and some people like to mimic but it depends on the contracts rights of ownership. Chair Smith stated that this board wanted a clean slate, they wanted a simple metal building with an attractive front. Commissioner Cody agreed with Chair Smith. Mr. Thorpe stated that they will present a couple of options upfront and they are doing a project in Jefferson County somewhat similar, they will present different options and work with the board from that point.
6. Commissioner Cody stated that they did not want a lot of change orders. Mr. Thorpe stated that a CMAR will help eliminate or lessen change orders.
7. Commissioner Cody asks when Manager Cody will be meeting with the Local Government Commission. Manager Cody stated that the auditors should be completed late September on the 24/25 Audit and they will present in October, after this the 25/26 Audit will begin, and they hope to be finished by March 2027 and then the county will be completely caught up on the audits. Manager Cody stated that he and Finance Director Stacy Carpenter will be meeting with the LGC next week and begin conversations regarding the Justice Center. Commissioner Cody stated that the LGC must verify that Graham County has spent county funds responsibly.
8. Chair Smith asks the timeline. Mr. Thorpe stated that they can get the contract to the board next week. Mr. Thorpe stated that he is excited with the information and once the contracts have been received, he will reach out to the county manager to schedule meetings. The board all agreed to allow COPE to work with our Manager

Brady Cody to move the project quicker. Commissioner Cody stated that Clerk Crisp can poll the board if something comes up or they can always call a special or an emergency meeting. Mr. Thorpe stated that he will sit down with the users at some point to make sure that they capture their needs regarding courtrooms, office space, etc. Commissioner Cody stated that our timeline is critical. Commissioner Williams stated that they are very excited and looking forward to working with COPE.

- 9. Chair Smith asks if there is a need for closed sessions to discuss the contract. Mr. Thorpe stated that the contract will be standard and he will send to Manager Cody to prepare for review with the county attorney and the board.
- 10. Chair Smith asks for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Nelms 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