

Regular Meeting – January 20, 2026

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Tuesday, January 20, 2026, at 5:30 p.m. in the Graham County Community Building located at 196 Knight Street for their regular monthly meeting. All board was present. Also, present Manager Brady Cody, Project Manager Jason Marino, Finance Director Stacy Carpenter and Clerk Kim Crisp. Present by teleconference Attorney JK Coward.

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 changes to the agenda. Manager Cody asks that we add Item 9J. Eco King Update and Item 9K. Sanitation Grant. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve the agenda with the stated changes. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
5. Chair Smith asks for approval of the 12/16 Workshop and Regular Meeting Minutes and the 1/6/2026 Special Meeting. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve the minutes as stated. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
6. Chair Smith stated that the board would now take public comment and asks Chase Lancaster to speak. Mr. Lancaster stated that he has something to say and it may upset some of you, but he did not care, he commended Commissioner Cody for standing up for what is right regarding EMS, and he is doing the same thing for the sheriff's department. Mr. Lancaster stated that it was time to stop, the deputies here are making the lowest salary in every county and hiring officers at \$14.00 per hour when Swain and Cherokee starting pay is \$18-\$19.00 per hour is not right. Mr. Lancaster stated that he was thankful for the officers that we do have but they have to feed their families and pay their bills and they cannot do that at \$14.00 per hour. Mr. Lancaster stated that he knows that we cannot compete with the Tribe. Mr. Lancaster stated that the jail is another department that starts out at \$14.00 per hour and all the other counties start at \$21.00 per hour and if the county thinks they can reopen the jail they are going to have to pay more. Mr. Lancaster stated that there are two deputies at night and he will protect his family and stand his ground; people are getting shot intentionally and if the board increases the pay people will stay. Mr. Lancaster stated that now people are getting trained and then leaving and Meggan, you stated at the last meeting the need to raise sales tax, how do you expect to raise taxes. Chair Smith stated that sales tax and property tax are two different taxes. Mr. Lancaster stated that the board needed to do something about the groceries and gas prices, they are cheaper in Andrews and Murphy, you can't afford it here. Commissioner Williams stated that those counties get more sales tax and more property taxes and Ingles is a private owned company so the commissioners cannot control the cost of groceries. Chair Smith stated that the sales tax approach would affect locals and tourists whereas property taxes affect only locals, and her goal is to save our locals from having to increase property taxes because our elderly cannot afford more increases. Commissioner Williams stated that Cherokee and Swain Counties have a much larger tax base and the per hour wages do not include the insurance, retirement, taxes and more and this extra amount equates to an additional four to five dollars on the hour. Mr. Lancaster stated that the county needed to stop spending money on luxury items. Chair Smith stated that she agreed with that statement. Mr. Lancaster stated that he wasn't talking about the boat and he is sick and tired of hearing about the boat and you all that have a personal grievance against the sheriff's department need to stop and your personal feelings should not interfere with them doing their job, think about that, and you should treat his department the same as you treat the other departments and ya'll treat the sheriff department not good. Commissioner Williams stated that they are entrusted to be fiscally responsible and save money which comes from the taxpayers pockets. Mr. Lancaster asks Sheriff Hoxit how much his budget was cut, Sheriff Hoxit stated that he did not have the numbers in front of him, but this board gave him permission to purchase the boat, some public disagree and ask Chair Smith if she and the other board signed off on the purchase. Chair Smith stated that they could not dictate what the sheriff spends his money on, he is able to spend his budget. Sheriff Hoxit stated that he presented the grant to this board before the federal government would release the funds. Commissioner Williams stated that this board was informed by way of, "for your information", a boat is coming in a few days. Sheriff Hoxit stated that he, Commissioner Cody and Commissioner Orr both knew the boat was coming and wanted the minutes found when there was discussion two or three years ago. Jimmy Hyde, a member of the sheriff's department, stated that they knew we were getting the money for the boat, the minutes are online where Brookfield gave money as well and the finance officer needed permission to get a special bank account. Commissioner Orr stated that she believed this was two years ago and it was discussed in budget. Sheriff Hoxit stated that it was because the Congressman secured the funding and the board had to sign off on the paperwork and thanked Ms. Connie for the information. Mr. Lancaster stated that all he knows he is running for county commissioner and he wants to know where

all the money is and where all the money is going. Commissioner Orr asks Mr. Lancaster if he could read a real budget because it is available at any time. Mr. Lancaster stated that you took money from feeding the inmates out of the sheriff's budget. Chair Smith stated that this is budgeting because the expenditure for inmate meals is a revenue for the senior center, so the budget has to match at all times. Mr. Lancaster stated that starting detention officers at \$14.00 per hour is pathetic and this board needs to fund these departments and fund EMS too. Mr. Lancaster stated that he supports the sheriff's department and this board needed to get their minds right and help them out and keep these officers, these officers love our county, but they struggle with the low pay. Mr. Lancaster stated that Josh Reap came back home because this county needed help and he is coming to work for the sheriffs department taking a \$7.00 pay cut to help the jail out, so the board needs to get their minds right and serve the citizens of this county.

7. Chair Smith asks for the project manager's report. PM Marino presented a plat to the board for their review and approval of the designated Justice Center Site. PM Marino stated that acreage including the property we now have is around (8) acres. The board gave a directive to Manager Cody and PM Marino to get with the school and move forward with the purchase. All the board agreed to this directive. Chair Smith asks if the design of the building can begin. PM Marino stated that they can begin as soon as tomorrow. All the board agreed to proceed.
8. PM Marino stated that the trim work is being done at the jail and they have replaced old wires and are around 55% complete.
9. PM Marino stated that he is working with a civil engineer on the drainage infrastructure at sanitation and is awaiting plans with Manager Cody. PM Marino stated that they are working on demolition plans to get the old building taken down.
10. PM Marino stated that the home on 243 Orr Branch Rd is complete and the home on 66 Atoah is 87% done with completion at the end of next week. Commissioner Orr stated that she encourages everyone to go by and view the homes, the owners are very grateful, and it is a joy to see homes being built that will help our citizens.
11. PM Marino stated that they have the go ahead from the school on the RDA Moose Branch Housing Project and it will take approximately two years for the home to be completed and then it will be sold to low to moderate income families. Commissioner Orr stated that the property is located on Moose Branch, but the sites have rolling hills and mountain views, and the homes can be financed 100% through USDA depending on income.
12. PM Marino stated that he will be meeting with the school on the Big Oaks Stadium bleacher project and will update the board.
13. Chair Smith asks for the finance reporting. Director Stacy Carpenter stated that she did have a budget amendment for the board's review. Budget Amendment #9 has appropriation changes only with no changes to revenues. Commissioner Cody stated that this board is committed to following best practices. Director Carpenter stated that this is correct and she is using guidance from the Local Government Commission and representatives from NCACC on budget issues. Director Carpenter stated that they have encouraged her to use the money in the departments line items and not to touch contingency unless absolutely necessary. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve Budget Amendment #9. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
14. Director Carpenter stated that she did have a Local Government Update and was told that everything looked good and she will continue to have six-month budget reviews.
15. Director Carpenter stated that she received an update from the Auditors and they are prepping and planning to be on site next month.
16. Director Carpenter stated that the revenues to date are \$13,883,317.09 and the expenditures were \$10,770,638.68 with a surplus of \$3,112,678.41.
17. Director Carpenter stated that our property tax collections for December were \$3,880,765.38; prior years collections were \$9,267.70 for total collections of \$7,607,104.70 and a balance to be collected of \$1,791,407.38. Director Carpenter stated that the collection percentage is 80.94%.
18. Director Carpenter stated that the sales tax collections for November that are paid in January were \$326,189.37 for a year to date of \$1,686,389.96.
19. Director Carpenter stated that our schools allocation of sales tax for November is \$56,824.84 with a year to date of \$348,389.61 and their available balance is \$595,032.29. Director Carpenter stated that they did have one request for LBM Industries for dirt to build up the baseball field at the high school campus for \$2882.95. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve the expenditure. Chair Smith seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
20. Director Carpenter stated that the ¼ cent allocation for public safety collection is \$29,991.78 with a year to date of \$1,884,677.89.
21. Director Carpenter stated that the DMV collections for December are \$64,600.30 with a year-to-date collection of \$374,917.62.
22. Director Carpenter stated that she needed approval of the Review of Budget Amendment vs Budget Adjustment policy with a \$20,000.00 limit excluding salary and benefits

adjustments. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve the internal policy as stated. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

23. Director Carpenter stated that she needed approval of the Cash Management Policy change that included replacing Petty Cash Policy and Procedures with Cash Drawer Policy and Procedures. Chair Smith made the motion to approve. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
24. Director Carpenter stated that she needed approval of the Review of Rounding Policy for Cash Payments. Commissioner Williams made the motion to approve the policy as stated. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
25. Director Carpenter stated that after Commissioner Cody's comments regarding the debt set off letter the information was not supposed to have contained our information and this is a good time to bid out this contract. The board agreed that this needed to be reviewed.
26. Chair Smith asks for the Manager's Reporting. Manager Cody stated that he needed approval of the Releases in the amount of \$1,008.95 and the Discoveries of \$778.60. Commissioner Williams made the motion to approve. Chair Smith seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
27. Manager Cody asks for approval of the Cable Cove Boat Ramp Renovation Resolution. Commissioner Cody made the motion to approve. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
28. Manager Cody stated that he had looked into a possible sales tax adjustment and we are maxed out at this time, the only available sales tax is for metro transit, so he recommends that we speak with our representatives at the state and work toward a best path forward.
29. Manager Cody stated that there is a vacancy on the Library Board and Librarian Shook had recommended Latresa Phillips. Commissioner Williams made the motion to appoint Latresa Phillips to the Library Board. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
30. Manager Cody stated that he and Director Stacy Carpenter have formed a new Request Form for Special Appropriations and ask for approval. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve the request form as another internal control. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
31. Manager Cody asks for a motion to surplus a 2008 Ford Truck Vin #7507 and set the minimum bid at the scrape price. Commissioner Williams made the motion to surplus the 2008 Ford Truck and set the minimum as suggested. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
32. Manager Cody stated that he needed approval for the EMS Billing and Payments Poll that was taken on December 22nd. Chair Smith made the motion to approve the poll as stated. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
33. Manager Cody asks Clerk Crisp to discuss the recommendation for Health Insurance Renewal. Clerk Crisp stated that they received the renewal prices for the upcoming health insurance which has a 9% increase if we make no changes. Clerk Crisp stated that we are still upside down with claims at 138%. Clerk Crisp stated that her recommendation is to increase the deductible to \$2500.00 from \$1500.00 which will result in a 4.1% increase. Commissioner Williams made the motion to accept the recommendation from Clerk Crisp to increase the deductible and stay with the current carrier. Chair Smith seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
34. Manager Cody gave an ECO KING progress update. Manager Cody stated that they are happy to conduct a tour for the commissioners to see the \$20M Equipment investment that is in the facility. Manager Cody stated that they plan to hire personnel in March 2026 with the first hire of 70 to 100 people. Manager Cody stated that after speaking with NCWORKS there is a waitlist now for potential employees.
35. Manager Cody stated that he is asking permission to apply for a sanitation grant with no county match that will be used for recycling infrastructure in the amount of \$5 million. Manager Cody stated that this grant will allow us to focus on recycling and obtaining our full potential including compactors for each sanitation site. Manager Cody stated that these will be placed on rollbacks and hauled directly to the recycling facility, which will be more efficient, and we will have potential revenues while cutting expenses. Commissioner Williams made the motion to apply for the \$5 million Sanitation Recycling Grant with no match. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
36. JJ Odom, a member in the audience, stated that he had some questions regarding the sheriff's department, he stated that he doesn't come to the commissioner meetings but the public needs to get involved. Mr. Odom stated that Mr. Lancaster stated that this board needed to give raises to the deputies but if we can afford to buy a boat, then raises shouldn't have been an issue. Mr. Odom stated that he wanted to know if the boat was 100% grant funded. Sheriff Hoxit stated that the boat was 100% grant funded and our congressman helped us get the funds for this purchase. Sheriff Hoxit stated that he took this purchase before the commissioners and they received the documentation \$80,000.00 from the Congressman and \$25,000.00 from Brookfield and he and Cody George picked the boat out and purchased it. Chair Smith asks if the check from Brookfield was designated for the

boat. Sheriff Hoxit stated yes. Mr. Odom asks another question; did we pay \$40 thousand dollars on a side by side. Sheriff Hoxit stated that it was \$30 thousand and he used his drug tax money and they will use this in drug busts, find missing persons and use it in places that our vehicles cannot go. Chair Smith asks if the money that was used to purchase the side by side could have been used to buy the fingerprint machine. Sheriff Hoxit stated that it had to be for drug enforcement. Commissioner Williams asks if the fingerprint machine couldn't be tied to drug enforcement. Sheriff Hoxit stated no. Mr. Odom stated that there should have been more ways to use that money than a side by side. Sheriff Hoxit stated that he uses it for drug enforcement and they use county funds to give raises and they were donated the side by side to use for a while for death scenes. Scott Icenhower, a member in the audience, stated that we had a death and the man laid in the woods and you didn't take your side by side to that. Sheriff Hoxit stated that this was handled by Forest Service and Highway Patrol. Mr. Icenhower stated that he has lived here 65 years and highway patrol has never gone on private property regarding deaths and he has never seen law enforcement take a side by side and there have been dead people before, sheriff department is not search and rescue that is the fire department and the rescue squad. Sheriff Hoxit stated that they have used the side by side in searches. Chair Smith asks if the side by side was donated. Sheriff Hoxit stated that it was from a company in Georgia and they allowed us to use it. Attorney Coward stated that this subject is out of order and the board needed to follow the agenda. The board asks that this be added to the next agenda for further discussion.

37. 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, personnel and contracts. Commissioner Orr made the motion to go into closed session as stated. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
38. Chair Smith asks for a motion to go back into open session. Commissioner Williams made the motion as stated. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
39. Chair Smith asks for a motion to accept the Tax Collections Contract for ACH Payments. Commissioner Orr made the motion to accept the contract as stated. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
40. Chair Smith asks for a motion to accept the NCDOT Stecoah Sidewalk Agreement. Commissioner Orr made the motion to accept the agreement as stated. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
41. Chair Smith asks for a motion to accept the ECO KING Building Reuse Grant with a deed of trust on the property. Commissioner Cody made the motion to approve. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
42. Chair Smith asks for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Williams made the motion to adjourn. 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