

Special Meeting – January 6, 2026

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Tuesday, January 6, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. in the Graham County Community Building located at 196 Knight Street Robbinsville, NC for a special meeting to discuss budget. All board was present. Also present, Manager Brady Cody, Finance Director Stacy Carpenter and Clerk Kim Crisp.

1. Chair Smith called the meeting to order.
2. Chair Smith asks for approval of the agenda. Commissioner Nelms made the motion to approve. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
3. Chair Smith asks for budget discussion from Manager Cody. Manager Cody stated that we are now at the six-month mark of our fiscal year and they have looked at all departmental budgets prompting this meeting with some department heads. Manager Cody stated that the goal is to discover the budgets that are projected to go over and be proactive. Manager Cody stated that no one budget is perfect, but this is a pretty simple issue but needs board attention with possible policy changes to prevent the overage. Manager Cody stated that two departments need discussion, this is not a budget cut, this is merely moving money around in the line items of each individual budget.
4. Manager Cody stated that EMS Overtime is projected to go over. Manager Cody stated that EM Director Brian Stevens is working with him on a solution, they are not always fully staffed, which leads to overtime. Manager Cody stated that he and Director Stevens are working with his budget to offset the overtime costs and he has been very open to the discussions. Manager Cody stated that the EMS Schedule needed to be adopted to fit the payroll cycles because currently it is outside of the normal working hours. Manager Cody stated that this adoption will allow for consistency year after year and there will be a policy to follow. Manager Cody stated that Director Stevens is working on a part-time substitution list.
5. Chair Smith stated that she has been researching sales tax increases as a way to bring more revenue to public safety. Chair Smith stated that this must be done by resolution to the state. Chair Smith stated that these discussions are not attacks by the commissioners but to be used as tools to become sustainable and to be fiscally responsible.
6. Commissioner Cody stated that EMS is hard to project, there are days when zero calls come in and then the next day, they are back-to-back requiring a third and fourth ambulance. Commissioner Cody stated that there are not enough staff to cover it and this is where overtime comes in. Commissioner Cody stated that we run two EMS crews twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week and the captains can run the third ambulance when needed, but someone has to come in to make that extra run. Commissioner Cody stated that Stecoah Fire and Rescue serve as backup as well, but overtime is hard to project. Commissioner Cody stated that this is one thing that the public demands and EMS have to take and step up and serve the public. Commissioner Cody stated that he is very proud of the EMS, he was here when it first began in 1983 and they had only one ambulance. Commissioner Cody stated that they had one worker that lived in town and he could respond to all third calls, which generated a lot of overtime for him, but they have to run the calls. Commissioner Cody stated that running the calls hard is hard and the staff are in some difficult situations, but they have to do it. Commissioner Cody stated that his elderly mother received a collections bill from the tax collector's office for a past due ambulance call. She sent a check for the payment, the tax collector refused to take the payment, but they can serve the notices, that is not right. Commissioner Cody stated that this will result in people not paying their bill. Commissioner Cody stated that some of these people are elderly and they do not have access to computer, etc., they need a place to pay their bill, and he understands that you have to pay a fee, but this is still a loss in revenue. Commissioner Cody stated that this needed to be fixed. Commissioner Cody stated that he will help EMS in every way that he can and sometimes he is working calls when help is needed and volunteers are becoming fewer and fewer volunteers. Commissioner Cody stated that EMS began with volunteers who went to school, got their training and continued their training year after year. Commissioner Cody stated that our society is changing and he gives thanks to the EMS System.
7. Director Stacy Carpenter stated that the Colleton Contract does charge fees, if our staff collects the money, we still pay a fee. Director Carpenter stated that the contract needs to be looked at but every payer can write a check, pay by phone or go online to pay the bill. Director Carpenter stated that she has and will help them make their payments and she understands why people are frustrated but she is responsible for taxpayer money and double paying for these transactions was not a fiscally responsible thing to do. Director Carpenter stated that the Colleton Contract predates her and it does need to be rebid.

but if the board directs that we take payments they certainly will but keep in mind when we take the payment, the payment goes to Colleton and then they charge us for taking the payment. Commissioner Williams stated that we definitely needed to renegotiate and try for a reduced rate. Commissioner Orr stated that this should be a simple fix. Manager Cody stated that he will review the contract and contact Colleton for discussion. Manager Cody stated that Colleton needs to provide a breakdown of the charges. Commissioner Orr stated that she did not want the county to pay twice for anything but if they can work with the county for a remedy, she would appreciate it. Commissioner Orr thanked Commissioner Cody with Stecoah Fire and Rescue for serving as backup for many years because EMS is life or death.

8. Manager Cody stated that again this meeting will in no way impact services, this is something they are trying to work on for better budgeting to capture the true salaries, etc. Manager Cody stated that EMS will always have additional overtime, but it can be actively managed through policy. Manager Cody stated that a hiring freeze is in place, but we have to keep emergency services healthy. Chair Smith stated that this discussion is not directed at certain people, cuts have to be made, everyone is team players and she wants to see Graham County grow and see progress, but they must be fiscally responsible. Chair Smith stated that in previous years we have overspent and have relied on fund balance, but we have to turn this back around. Chair Smith stated that these discussions are hard, people want raises, and need more money and she understands everyone's positions, but she wants all the staff to know that this is not an attack on just emergency services, but these cuts are taking place countywide.
9. Manager Cody stated that the next discussion is Sheriff and Jail. Manager Cody stated that there was a medical bill component, which is hard to predict the health of inmates. Manager Cody stated that we received a past due bill which puts the medical line item in the negative and they need assistance. Manager Cody stated that the budget was set at \$84k and they have a \$54k bill that is not paid leaving \$22k in the budget at half the year. Manager Cody stated that the jail is another unique budget, but they need direction on next steps for this particular bill. Commissioner Cody stated that they needed to arrest healthy people. Manager Cody stated that the state passed the burden to the counties for inmate costs. Sheriff Hoxit stated that there is no other way, we cannot arrest just healthy people, most are dependent on drugs, already have medical issues so this is something that you cannot address. Sheriff Hoxit stated that the money has to be moved from somewhere, but he does not have the somewhere budgeted. Sheriff Hoxit stated that \$65k was removed from meals, currently our inmates are out of county, but they still have to be fed if they are arrested here and they still have to get medical if needed.
10. Manager Cody stated that the jail meals are unique, one of our departments feed the jail so this is revenue for them, the budget has to balance at all time, the money was budgeted for jail meals, which now the jail does not need so the revenue had to be withdrawn currently, if the jail reopens and the meals commence then the money will be added back to the budget. Manager Cody stated that the meal money had to be removed from both sides, they did not have additional money to spend just because the meals ceased. Sheriff Hoxit stated that there is nowhere to cut, how much was cut last year, more than the year before.
11. Chair Smith stated that when the jail was to be partially closed, her understanding was that the staffing would be lowered and this would offset some of that. Sheriff Hoxit stated that the state made us keep two jailers at all times, he cannot reduce the staff. Chair Smith asks if the inmates could be booked at the sheriff's department. Sheriff Hoxit stated then you have one deputy that cannot respond and we are at bare minimum now.
12. Director Carpenter stated that the Jail had a decrease of \$89,800.00 and the sheriff had a decrease of \$33,300.00. Sheriff Hoxit asks how much the medical was last year and the year before that was. Director Carpenter stated that 23/24 they were \$115k and 24/25 they were \$96,544K. Chair Smith asks how much was budgeted this fiscal year, Director Carpenter stated \$81k. Sheriff Hoxit asks if we went over budget last year. Director Carpenter stated that they did with a final amount of \$96k. Chair Smith stated that we will have future discussions. Manager Cody asks Sheriff Hoxit his plans for reopening the jail. Sheriff Hoxit stated that he will reopen but they have to employ more people in order to do that but if they move money to maintain the current budget he just doesn't know. Chair Smith asks if Sheriff Hoxit can hold the line. Sheriff Hoxit stated that he did not know he may lose more staff, it is hard to keep people employed. Sheriff Hoxit stated that he needed to make one more purchase, a fingerprint machine for \$21k.
13. Chair Smith asks for a motion to go into closed session under G.S. 143-318.11(a)(1)(6) for privileged or confidential information and personnel. Commissioner Orr made the motion to go into closed session as stated. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

14. Chair Smith asks for a motion to go back into open session. Commissioner Orr made the motion to go back into open session. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
15. Chair Smith asks for a motion to approve Budget Amendment #8. Commissioner Nelms made the motion to approve Budget Amendment #8 as presented. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
16. Manager Cody stated that he received a phone call regarding an extra charge at the local daycare center. Manager Cody stated that the fee was \$20.00 per kid that had to be paid that day which equates to around \$3120.00 for our foster kids.
17. Commissioner Orr asks about the medical bill, does the board need to pay this now. The board had discussion, but no decision was made.
18. Manager Cody stated that he is working on a policy for expenditures. Manager Cody stated that after speaking with NCACC representatives, the county can pay these expenditures up to a certain amount with a poll. Manager Cody stated that the board can limit the expenditure to \$20k, currently it is set at \$5k but if the board approved the expenditure, they do not have to approve the payment.
19. Manager Cody stated that he would like to propose that all special appropriations requests fill out paperwork with their request with a projected budget of what the money will be used for. Manager Cody stated that they will present policy for the board to review at a later date.
20. Chair Smith asks for further business. No further business discussed.
21. Chair Smith asks for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Cody made the motion to adjourn. Commissioner Nelms 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