

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Tuesday, January 20, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. for their regular workshop session in the Graham County Community Building located at 196 Knight Street Robbinsville, NC. All board was present. Also, present Manager Brady Cody, Finance Director Stacy Carpenter, Project Manager Jason Marino and Clerk Kim Crisp.

1. Chair Smith called the workshop session to order.
2. Chair Smith asks Daniel Allison, Director, Travel and Tourism Authority, to speak. Director Allison thanked the board for their time and stated that he was here to give the board and the public an update on who they are and what they do. Director Allison stated that they would like to give updates on a regular basis because they are a component of local government. Director Allison stated that their mission is to inspire visitors to Graham County; increase visitor volume, diversity, and economic impact; promote responsible and sustainable tourism and support visitor needs. Director Allison stated that they receive their funding through occupancy tax which is separate and apart from property taxes.
3. Director Allison gave a list of the board members stating that Commissioner Orr is the Chair of their board. Director Allison stated that the staff consists of himself, Amber Benton, Assistant Director and Jeanette Nichols, Host and Board Clerk.
4. Director Allison stated that they currently have a memorandum of understanding with Stecoah Valley Center to offset what they do with tourism in the Stecoah Community. Director Allison stated that all board members are volunteers and they do a lot with a few people. Director Allison stated that all county departments help as well and they are honored to work for Graham County. Director Allison stated that he appreciated the manager and the administration employees for the work that they do for our county. Director Allison stated that they partner with the finance office, the admin staff, 911, recreation, sheriff, transit, extension office and tax collector and assessor and everyone is a very good partner.
5. Director Allison stated that he wanted to introduce some major projects that were created with a strategic planning session. Director Allison stated that they will be utilizing the strategic plan that was developed through GREAT and the Magellan Group, to work out the process that has been envisioned. Director Allison stated that one vision was not achievable, but they were able to hit fifteen goals and will continue to use the guide as a roadmap for the next two to three years.
6. Director Allison stated that he would let Assistant Director Benton present the projects. Director Allison stated that he hopes to meet with the board more often and will be glad to answer any questions or concerns that the board may have regarding Travel and Tourism.
7. Assistant Director Benton presented their welcome packet along with a thank you to Stacy Carpenter and Ashton Nichols for their assistance with the occupancy tax. Assistant Director Benton stated that they are trying to have the process of registering and filing occupancy tax online.
8. Assistant Director Benton stated that they are currently having strategy meetings with Brady Cody and Stacy Carpenter and will meet soon with the tax office in streamlining the occupancy tax collections.
9. Assistant Director Benton stated that their motto “Natural Destination” has been successful in promoting and marketing Graham County along with publications in Visit NC. Assistant Director Benton stated that almost 75% of the lands in Graham County is reserved and we are the third smallest county in the state, being surrounded by places with upscale things that we cannot provide. Assistant Director Benton stated that our brand is Natural Destination and we are one of the last frontiers with untouched lands. Assistant Director Benton stated that we are small and remote, but we offer big things such as Fontana Dam, Joyce Kilmer, Lake Santeetlah, which is listed as one of the top ten lakes to visit, we have Class 5 Cheoah River Rafting and now we will have the only land bridge in the state. Assistant Director Benton stated that we have Snowbird-Cherokee which is very important and this is the 40th year for Fading Voices. Assistant Director Benton stated that we have the Native Azaleas of America, our music at Stecoah Valley Center which will be celebrating the 100th year of the school anniversary which is full of local Graham County Artists. Assistant Director Benton stated that we have BJ Welch’s hand carved masks which was featured in the Smithsonian Magazine, Wehrloom Honey is a product made here in Graham County and more, so we are really not that small but in fact we have a lot to offer our visitors.
10. Assistant Director Benton stated that Visit NC is putting our message out around the state with a selection of advertisements.

11. Assistant Director Benton stated that our Ronnie Milsap project is ongoing and items will be delivered to Ronnie Milsap personally.
12. Assistant Director Benton stated that there is another project that involves a major federal government agency and we will receive national recognition with an economic impact of three to five years with no cost for local investment. Assistant Director Benton stated that the Town of Robbinsville TDA has ideas on how to get things done and they have accomplished several things already such as the Christmas decorations, preservation of the existing murals and more. Assistant Director Benton stated that Tsali Trail is gaining recognition as well being featured in several videos and they are redoing their website design. Assistant Director Benton asks for questions or comments. The board thanked the staff for their work and for the information.
13. Chair Smith asks for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Williams made the motion to adjourn. Commissioner Cody 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