

Continued Meeting – August 23, 2017

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Wednesday, August 23, 2017 at 8:30 a.m. in the Graham County Community Building located at 196 Knight Street Robbinsville, NC for a continued meeting. Board present was: Chairman Keith Eller, Vice-Chairman Connie Orr, Members Dale Wiggins and Raymond Williams. Commissioner Jacob Nelms was absent. Also present was Manager Becky Garland and Economic Development Director Sophia Paulos.

1. Chairman Eller called the meeting to order.
2. Chairman Eller asks for approval of the agenda. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to approve the agenda. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
3. Chairman Eller asks Manager Garland to proceed. Manager Garland stated that we have Patrick Woodie, President of the NC Rural Center here to speak with the board. Manager Garland stated that the Rural Center has helped us in grant funding in the past and she had met Mr. Woodie previously at a meeting in Marble, NC and asked if Mr. Woodie would like to tour our county. The board thanked Mr. Woodie for his time. Mr. Woodie stated that the goal for the Rural Center was to visit all 80 rural counties in the state and to date they have visited 40 counties. Mr. Woodie stated that they work closely with Southwestern Commission and they have a good working relationship with them. Mr. Woodie stated that the Rural Center works with criteria's for small business and recruitment. Mr. Woodie stated that Sophia Paulos was one of their graduates from the NC Rural Institute which help guide us toward the front lines of rural NC. Mr. Woodie asks the board their concerns.
4. The board all agreed that Broadband was the largest challenge at this time. Mr. Woodie stated that it is a big challenge especially with the broadband infrastructure and further stated that these issues are being discussed in Raleigh. Mr. Woodie stated that he has heard a lot of good things from Becky and Sophia and they are bright spots for the county. Commissioner Orr stated that we are few in number but we work with our neighboring counties to unite as a region. Mr. Woodie stated that this is one advantage that we have in our rural counties and this is the fact that we do work well as a region.
5. Mr. Woodie stated that Tri-County Community College has teamed up with some counties to serve as their Economic Development and this seems to be working well.
6. Manager Garland stated that Graham County is currently working toward Urgent Care and Dialysis and we should have the building ready by February or March of next year. Commissioner Orr stated that this should be almost turn key for the providers.
7. Commissioner Orr also stated that we are currently working on property that was given to us for our PARTIF Grant.
8. The board discussed our sanitation department and the need to reorganize this department to become more cost efficient.
9. Ms. Paulos stated that we face a big challenge from the start due to the USFS owning 70% of our lands.
10. The board discussed broadband width and the way that the service has changed within the last two weeks. The board discussed the long waiting periods that residents face when they need their home phone service repaired. Manager Garland stated that it is as if we have declined back to the 1990's on broadband service. Commissioner Wiggins stated that he personally was left (11) weeks without a phone due to a line being torn into. The board discussed who to contact for this service and Mr. Woodie stated that he suggests that the county contact the Attorney General. The board discussed Frontier's lack of service and attention to our residents.
11. The board discussed Fontana Dam and the power grid that is governed by the old laws of TVA. The board discussed that they have a leak in their water system and are losing thousands of gallons of water. The board discussed the rent payments made by Fontana to TVA and noted that they are our 2nd highest employer in the county even though it is seasonal.
12. The board discussed the Town of Robbinsville sewer and water infrastructure and their successes in obtaining more grant funding.
13. The board discussed NCDOT and their funding formula. The board discussed the fact that Graham County has been awaiting Corridor A-0009 for many years and we are still having meetings concerning this road.

14. The board discussed the Secure Rural Schools (SRS) Funds and this is a great concern for our schools. At present, NACO is lobbying to have this refunded.
15. The board discussed the Call Center at the Credit Union and the fact that we had 50 applicants for these positions.
16. The board thanked Mr. Woodie for his time. Manager Garland and Sophia Paulos will be giving Mr. Woodie a tour of the county.
17. Commissioner Orr made the motion to adjourn. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

Keith Eller, Chairman, Graham County Commissioner

Connie Orr, Vice-Chairman, Graham County Commissioner

Jacob Nelms, Member, Graham County Commissioner

Dale E. Wiggins, Member, Graham County Commissioner

Raymond Williams, Member, Graham County Commissioner

ATTEST:

Kim Crisp, Clerk to the Board