

Regular Meeting – November 20, 2018

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Tuesday, November 20, 2018 at 5:30 p.m. in the Graham County Community Building located at 196 Knight Street Robbinsville, NC for their regular monthly meeting. All board was present.

1. Chairman Eller called the meeting to order.
2. Chairman Eller asks Commissioner Williams to give the Invocation.
3. Chairman Eller asks Commissioner Orr to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.
4. Chairman Eller asks for additions to the agenda. Manager Garland stated that we needed to move Item 6: Ron McCarthy to closed session and add Brandy Cook and Nikki Stewart to closed session. Manager Garland stated that we needed to remove Juanita Colvard from closed session. Chairman Eller asks for approval to the agenda. Commissioner Williams made the motion to approve the agenda. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
5. Chairman Eller stated that no minutes were available at this time for approval.
6. Chairman Eller asks Beth Fields to speak. Ms. Fields thanked the board for their time and stated that she was here to request an additional \$10,000.00 for the Stecoah Valley Center. Ms. Fields presented the board their 990 Tax Forms and presented pictures of the repairs to the windows at the center. Ms. Fields stated that in August the board had requested the 990 Tax Forms and after receiving these they would consider more funding. Ms. Fields asks that the board reconsider their request and allow them to have the remaining requested amount. Ms. Fields gave the board a financial report on how the funds are spent at the center. Commissioner Orr stated that she would need more time to look through the information before she could make a decision. Commissioner Wiggins stated that the grounds look great and the center takes effort in keeping the buildings beautiful and he stated his appreciation to the center for their work. Ms. Fields stated that in (8) years the building will be 100 years old and it is worth preserving. Commissioner Williams stated that the board would revisit the request since they have given the 990 reporting. The board thanked Ms. Fields for the information.
7. Chairman Eller asks Beth Booth, Health Director to speak. Director Booth stated that she is here to present a budget amendment. Director Booth stated that she has restructured some positions inside the department to be more cost effective. Director Booth stated that this restructuring of these positions will save the county money and the budget will come down from \$91,000.00 to \$66,000.00. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve the budget amendment and staff restructuring as presented by Director Booth. Commissioner Wiggins seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
8. Chairman Eller asks Sophia Paulos, EDC Director for the EDC Monthly Report. Ms. Paulos stated that they have been hard at work to secure funding and resources necessary to bring the dream of the Stanley Park to life. Ms. Paulos presented a proposal from WR Martin for grant writing services regarding the EPA assessment grant required to move forward with the project. Ms. Paulos stated that Freddie Harrell led the county to WR Martin to better serve the region through a partnership with Withers-Ravenel, a long standing engineering firm based out of Charlotte. Ms. Paulos stated that they are very eager to help our County on this project. Ms. Paulos stated that they charge a flat fee of \$5,000.00 instead of a 5% to 15% administration fee and with this grant it is likely to come in well over \$100,000.00.
9. Ms. Paulos stated that the NFPF continues the hard work of a new forest plan and have been hard at work building our relationship with the new forest service director, Andy Gaston. Mr. Gaston sent in a number of updates on all of the work that is being done.
  - a. The new Cheoah River Access Point is now under construction at river mile 5.1 and this project was awarded to a local contractor which means jobs and revenue created from this project stay here in the county.
  - b. The Atoah Shooting Range is slated for some impressive improvements in the coming year with new reconstructed firing lanes, a renovated roof, new benches and new vault toilets.
  - c. The Maple Springs Overlook repair has been funded and approved and it will be done in January or February of next year to be open in time for our busy season.
  - d. A White Pine timber stand measuring 150-200 acres has been identified for harvest in Graham County and this is a restoration project which means the environmental

assessment will be much less complicated and as such this project will come to bear in the next 18 to 24 months.

- e. The Crossover Project, a timber, conservation and restoration project, will touch both Graham and Cherokee Counties and there are 36,000 acres in the scope of the project and there will be plenty of timber harvest and restoration for species like brook trout that help our outdoor recreation and timber economies thrive.
  - f. The Partners of Joyce Kilmer have been granted a very prestigious national award from the USDA and the USFS. The award was created in the name of Bob Marshall, an American Forester, writer, and wilderness advocate who founded the Wilderness Society in 1935. This prestigious honor was bestowed upon our neighbors for their countless volunteer hours, dedication to our youth and unique contributions to the optimistic outlook for the function and health of the forests in Graham County.
10. Ms. Paulos stated that the strategic tourism implementation plan is well underway with the assistance of Ann Bass and a team of our citizens we have been able to launch this plan in a GREAT way. Samples of the way finding signs and buy local campaign logos that our team decided on and purchased in the coming months was presented to the board.
  11. Ms. Paulos stated that health care has been a prime focus for us in this county. We are a nationally recognized Health Professional Shortage Area and yet we are making great strides. ARC in DC is awaiting the finalization of our lease for the diagnostic facility and a hard copy of the CON and the 3D Mammogram machine will be on the way. Our Community Para-medicine Program is moving forward with launch meetings scheduled in the coming weeks. This past month Maggie Sauer, Secretary of the Office of Rural Health came to our county with staff from MAHEC to evaluate our circumstances and help us come up with even more innovative ways to see to it that our people have the health care they deserve. While at the Rural Assembly hosted by the Rural Center in Raleigh last week, Ms. Paulos was informed by a colleague and fellow REDI Graduate that there is building reuse grant money for rural health care facilities. This grant could potentially offset the cost of building out our new diagnostic center and help incentivize private practices to invest in Graham County. Ms. Paulos will be learning much more about this in the coming weeks.
  12. Ms. Paulos stated that the American Timber Group is nearly up and running and millions of dollars in equipment has been or is being installed. The Oak Valley / American Timber building now looks like a modern manufacturing facility inside and you will be seeing more in the paper as they push for a December/January hiring push. Mr. Lee is looking to hire (3) dozen people first and will hire more as needed. Ms. Paulos stated that we have had historically high unemployment and hopes that we will be successful in obtaining workers to ensure the success of this modernized and powerful industry in our county.
  13. Chairman Eller asks for the Finance and Manager's Report. Manager Garland stated that we ended the month with a \$7,442,483.08 cash balance which is up \$830,468.58 and when we receive our 911 monies of \$228,278.00 we will be ahead \$1,058,746.58 from this time last year. Manager Garland stated that our current year tax collections are \$359,095.06 and DMV \$38,685.19 for a year to date total of Real \$1,683,440.87 and DMV \$173,528.36. Manager Garland stated that we are ahead in collections for real property of \$18,000.00 and DMV of \$8,324.92 from this time last year and our tax collection rate is 25.84%. Manager Garland stated that our collection rate at this time last year was 25.72%.
  14. Manager Garland stated that our revenues for the month was \$1,242,036.80 and our expenditures was \$1,089,961.06 for a surplus of \$152,075.74 and our surplus to date is \$287,867.45. Manager Garland stated that our sales tax collection was less this month at \$151,862.07 and last year at this time it was \$193,873.21 and felt that the weather contributed to this loss. Manager Garland stated that our occupancy tax collections is behind around \$33,000.00.
  15. Manager Garland stated that the budget should be at 67% and we are holding at 72% and she commended the department heads for their hard work.
  16. Manager Garland stated that she did have a budget amendment for consideration and would present this in the manager's reporting.
  17. Manager Garland stated that the new 911 Call Center successfully went live last Wednesday with little to no problems and all of the technology vendors were on hand to deal with issues.
  18. Manager Garland stated that she has an appointment next week with the architect and electrical engineer on the DHHS (P&J) Building to go over the issues we have with the building against the plans.

19. Manager Garland stated that we have successfully passed the sales tax referendum and we need to have another phone consultation with the consultants of Heery on the courthouse study. Manager Garland asks for the board to have a date so that they can meet with them. Manager Garland stated that she did have the final invoice for payment of \$22,239.45 and would need board approval to pay this bill. Commissioner Orr made the motion to pay the final payment to Heery. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous. Manager Garland stated that Shaun Garrison, Mapping Director has been looking for properties available and we need a little over (5) acres according to Heery. Manager Garland stated that we could put the Justice Center on Fort Hill.
20. Manager Garland stated that the board would need to pass a resolution to accept the decision of the referendum on the sales tax increase at the next meeting in order for us to put into effect April 1<sup>st</sup>. Manager Garland read the resolution to the public and the board.
21. Manager Garland stated that she had a productive meeting with Sheriff Elect Joseph Jones regarding his budget as it currently stands and ways to engender a positive working relationship that will result in better services of the county. Manager Garland stated that they discussed possible ordinance enforcement for sanitation and animal control. Manager Garland stated that he is here tonight and would like to speak to the board. Mr. Jones thanked the board and thanked Manager Garland for her time and encouragement. Mr. Jones stated that he would like to combine the two part time positions to a full time position to use as a DARE School Safety Officer that would be on the campus every day and work ballgames and fill in for the SRO Officer at the school. Mr. Jones stated that the school was in 100% agreement to this proposal. Mr. Jones stated that he would like to hire a Victim Witness Coordinator who will work directly with the Sheriff, DA and the Clerk of Court to better prepare court cases and be the point of contact for the cases. Mr. Jones stated that he has spoken with the DA's Office and they will provide training for free. Mr. Jones stated that he has spoken with Health Director Beth Booth on taking over the animal ordinance enforcement and they provide training for this in Franklin so that we can have someone registered and willing to take on the animal control. The board all stated that they look forward to working with Mr. Jones and congratulated him on becoming the Sheriff Elect. Mr. Jones stated that he looked forward to working with the county and looks forward to a positive relationship with the commissioners and the administration.
22. Manager Garland gave an update on Hometown Strong. Manager Garland stated that on November 9<sup>th</sup> several representatives from the Office of Rural Health came to Graham County including Maggie Sauer, who is the Director of the Division of Rural Health and we discussed para-medicine, Medicaid transformation, and funding through community health grants. Ms. Sauer is working to coordinate a regional meeting on Medicaid Transformation in the coming weeks and we are working to coordinate with either/or WCU and the Southwest Commission.
23. Manager Garland stated that she met with SERCAP about the Brownfield and it was a very productive meeting. Manager Garland stated that they clarified the services they can provide to us at no cost. Manager Garland stated that they do not have as much experience with Brownfields assessment grants but we got word that the EPA will be opening the grant cycle within the next few days. Manager Garland stated that they may be able to help us get better terms for funding and possibly some grant funding through USDA for a justice center and also help with administration funding due to the environmental issues at the Sheriff's office and also problems with erosion, settling and mold at the current administration office. Manager Garland stated that we will be meeting more with them to explore the ideas further and they can help us with the RFQ's for the project as we move forward. Manager Garland stated that they also want to give technical guidance and support and offer some alternatives to our current sanitation model. Manager Garland stated that they left with a list of projects to begin working on with us and she feels that they will be valuable partners.
24. Manager Garland stated that there will be an Opioid Training at Hinton Center December 10<sup>th</sup> for two days and they would like to have representatives from the Tri-County area to attend in an effort to create a multidisciplinary team to help combat the crisis in our area.
25. Manager Garland stated that Carolyn Stewart, our Register of Deeds, is needing to replace a copier and add a wide format plat printer to her office. She has a little over \$51,000.00 in her AE&P fund balance. The copier is \$4,595.00 and the wide format machine is \$5,495.00 and needs approval for the purchase of the machines from the board. Manager Garland stated that she would also need approval of the budget amendment in the amount of \$2,733.00 to make up the difference in what we have left in her budget. Commissioner Orr made the motion to

approve the expenditures as stated and approve Budget Amendment #2 for the Register of Deeds. Commissioner Wiggins seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

26. Manager Garland stated that we have been approached by the Graham County Animal Advocates regarding a donation of \$5,000.00 to \$7,000.00 to be restricted to be used toward payment of an animal control enforcement officer. Manager Garland stated that under the Internal Revenue Code the board can accept the donation with the restrictions, not accept it or accept it but refuse the restrictions. If the board accepts it with refusal of the restrictions, the organization can elect to withdraw the donation. Commissioner Orr made the motion to accept the donation with the restrictions. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
27. Manager Garland stated that we received funding for the NC Commerce Grant of \$25,000.00 that Representative Corbin helped us get for the Snider building project and we have gotten word that we have been approved for a \$14,500.00 grant from ARC which has a \$4,000.00 match for the project. Manager Garland stated that she has advised Edd Satterfield that the grants are now available so they can proceed with the planning portion of the project.
28. Manager Garland stated that she has been reviewing our personnel policy over grievance and discipline and some from other counties and asks that we be allowed to adjust the policy that was written by the two lawyers to be more user friendly. Manager Garland stated that she would like to model Jackson County's policy and presented a draft to the board for their review. Manager Garland stated that she did integrate some things from the Cherokee County policy as well. The board will review the policy as written.
29. Manager Garland stated that our COOP and Safety Plan was provided to the board at the last meeting and asks if the board would like to approve the plan tonight. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve the COOP and Safety Plan as presented by Manager Garland. Commissioner Wiggins seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
30. Manager Garland stated that she will be setting up a cell phone policy to tighten controls over county assets and would like to pass a policy that states that cell phones be issued only to department managers, employees who are required to be "on-call" for after hours and public safety personnel and others if there is a compelling reason for the assignment. Manager Garland stated that she would also like to clarify procedure where any cell phone issued that costs more than the minimum fee provided by Verizon that the employee will bear the cost of additional costs. Manager Garland stated that we have this in place in an informal form but we need it in a formal policy.
31. Manager Garland stated that she has been talking with WR Martin about the grant process for our Brownfield Assessment Grant and they have a flat fee of \$5,000.00. Manager Garland stated that we have to show progress on working toward getting the grant as stated by DEQ and she is recommending WR Martin for this process.
32. Manager Garland stated that our CDBG grant application was timely submitted by Joan Stillwell and she is cautiously optimistic but worries that because of the flooding in the east there will be a high need for replacement housing.
33. Manager Garland stated that she received a repayment schedule for the PARTF Grant with quarterly payments of \$11,162.00 and the first payment is due December 1<sup>st</sup>. Manager Garland stated that there will be two payments this fiscal year and two payments next year. Manager Garland stated that she needed approval to pay the first payment. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve the payback to the PARTIF Grant. Commissioner Wiggins seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
34. Manager Garland stated that she will be finishing her continuing professional education and may be less available during those webinars.
35. Manager Garland stated that she has been very blessed with a good board and she has appreciated the support given to her and wished Commissioner Williams the best and told him that it has been a blessing to serve with him.
36. Manager Garland gave the board dates to remember of upcoming meetings.
37. Chairman Eller asks for public comment. Clerk Crisp stated that Sheriff-Elect Joseph Jones needed to speak with the board again. Mr. Jones stated that the Victim Witness Coordinator is not a new position and he would roll one of the full time positions from the jail. Mr. Jones stated that he will be restructuring the employees in the jail and will not require as many employees. Mr. Jones stated that we will now be required to transport 18 year olds to Buncombe and back for court and he will use jail personnel for these trips.

38. Chairman Eller asks for the discussion items. Manager Garland stated that she had Releases in the amount \$3,429.52. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to approve the Releases. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
39. Manager Garland stated that the insurance company had offered the county \$9,783.33 for the Meals on Wheels vehicle that was totaled and would need board approval to accept the money. Clerk Crisp stated that the original offer was \$10,000.00 but they deducted \$1,000.00 for the deductible. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to accept the offer from the insurance for \$9,783.33. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
40. Chairman Eller asks for new or old business. No new or old business was discussed.
41. Chairman Eller asks for 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 Wiggins made the motion to go into closed session as stated. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
42. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to go back into open session. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
43. Chairman Eller asks for a motion to approve leave without pay for Myles Webster. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to approve the leave without pay. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
44. Chairman Eller asks for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to adjourn. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

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Keith Eller, Chairman, Graham County Board of Commissioners

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Connie Orr, Vice-Chairman, Graham County Board of Commissioners

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Jacob Nelms, Member, Graham County Board of Commissioners

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Dale Wiggins, Member, Graham County Board of Commissioners

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Raymond Williams, Member, Graham County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:

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Kim Crisp, Clerk to the Board