

## Continued Emergency Meeting – April 29, 2020

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Wednesday, April 29, 2020 at noon by teleconference to discuss the issues related to the COVID19 pandemic. All board was present. Also present Manager Garland; EM Director Larry Hembree; 911 Director Misty Hembree; Health Director Beth Booth; Town of Robbinsville Mayor Steve Hooper; NCDOT Commissioner Dirk Cody; Project Manager Jason Marino; Town of Lake Santeetlah Administrator Kim Matheson; Town of Fontana Dam Administrator Zelerie Rogers; Health Nursing Supervisor Lorita Eller; Preparedness Coordinator Emily Collins; School Superintendent Angela Knight; USFS Ranger Andy Gaston; DSS Director Cris Weatherford, Appalachian Tallulah Administrator Tina Lee, Lt. Jimmy Hyde and Resident Susan Kirkpatrick.

1. Chairman Wiggins called the meeting to order.
2. Chairman Wiggins stated that the county needed to start thinking ahead and open Graham County up. Chairman Wiggins stated that it looks that Governor Cooper will begin Phase 1 of his plan May 8, 2020 on the State. Chairman Wiggins stated that most of our businesses have stayed closed that are in Phase II of his plan and is projecting these to reopen around the third week in May. Chairman Wiggins stated that we need to formulate a plan to get back open, continue to meet the social distancing required by the Governor and watch the other States that are allowing these businesses to reopen now. Chairman Wiggins stated that this would be a good decisive test for us.
3. Chairman Wiggins asks Manager Garland to speak. Manager Garland stated that we are beginning to see a lot of calls from the accommodation owners wanting to know the opening dates and they are willing to create plans on how they will be social distancing, using PPE's and cleaning. Manager Garland stated that some of the accommodation owners and part time residents have (6) acre tracks with private porches and they can check in and out by phone. Manager Garland stated that most of the accommodation owners, nail salon orders and hair salon owners have not been able to sign-up or obtain loans and/or stimulus money and they are having difficulty navigating their businesses.
4. Chairman Wiggins asks Health Director Beth Booth to give her reporting. Director Booth stated that North Carolina has 9,948 cases and 354 deaths. Director Booth stated that Graham County has done 154 tests with 1 positive; 127 negative and 26 pending and these numbers will increase due to close contacts with people positive. Director Booth stated that our first positive has went smoothly with the assistance of EBCI and they are jointly doing a press release. Director Booth stated that testing is free at the health department for the non-insured and Appalachian-Tallulah uses a sliding scale based on income; Medicaid and Medicare are waiving their co-pay and most major insurances are waiving their co-pay as well. Director Booth stated that the first positive was asymptomatic showing no symptoms and they recommended isolation but it is not enforceable when you don't exhibit symptoms such as fever, chills, cough, etc. Director Booth stated that in two to four weeks a positive can retest for positive again so there is no timeline on shedding this virus. Director Booth stated that the virus is still carrying a high death rate but persons who are only asymptomatic are not dying which is a win for us at this time. Director Booth stated that these numbers will go up and we will be seeing statistics on persons carrying the virus versus active cases but she will continue to update as information is received.
5. Chairman Wiggins asks Mayor Hooper to speak. Mayor Hooper asks if the nursing home has seen any cases because he heard two or three was having symptoms. Director Booth stated that all the tests have been negative so far at the nursing home and they are regularly monitoring and keeping a close eye on the residents.
6. Chairman Wiggins asks Misty Hembree to speak. Director Hembree stated that she would like to have a FAQ sheet to give to persons that are calling 911 on COVID19. Director Booth stated that most information is posted on the health department website. Director Hembree stated that she would tell her staff to send people to their website. Lorita Eller stated that it is on their Facebook page as well and public health will encourage everyone to isolate but they cannot enforce it until the test comes back positive. Supervisor Eller stated that DHHS encourages everyone under investigation to self-monitor and isolate and that is our stance as well if you are in close contact with someone that has tested positive and again stated that there is no legal guidance to make anyone stay home. Supervisor Eller stated that her main concern was the mass gatherings when someone could be asymptomatic then a large number of people will be subjected to the virus. Director Hembree stated that she will instruct her staff to filter the calls

to the Health Department during the day and after hours direct them to the website and Facebook. Director Booth stated that there is a COVID19 hotline after hours and you can contact poison control as well. Director Hembree asks if an employer is allowed to know if a person has tested positive. Supervisor Eller stated that the health department where the individual lives is required to contact everyone that has been in close contact with a positive but they cannot provide the name. Director Booth stated that persons needing to speak with someone after hours could call 211 or 1-888-892-1162.

7. Chairman Wiggins asks EM Director Hembree to speak. Director Hembree stated that they put up the signage with the information to quarantine for 14 days upon arrival to the county and listed the health department's phone number for questions. Director Hembree stated that five signs cost \$650.00 and they have them at the entrances coming into the county. Director Hembree stated that they would need to do an amendment to the ordinance on accommodations and curfew if that is what the board is looking to do as well as address campgrounds, playgrounds, pools, etc. Chairman Wiggins stated that group campgrounds needed to stay closed but the primitive campgrounds could be opened. Ranger Gaston stated that this would be fine, they do not have the staff to enforce non-camping in the primitive sites. Commissioner Eller stated that they needed to make sure that the campers did not stay over the 14-day limit. Chairman Wiggins stated that some people would go to the campsites and be isolated from other people. Director Booth stated that the State did not set a stay at home for lodging but she can permit and tell them to reopen May 9<sup>th</sup> and asks about the hair and nail salons. Chairman Wiggins stated that we needed to get the word out through Travel and Tourism and let people know the food situation here and they need to bring their own food and get started on this May 6<sup>th</sup> because these people are hurting and our economy is hurting and he will get with Daniel Allison to get this worked out.
8. Chairman Wiggins asks EM Director Hembree and Manager Garland to do the amendments needed. EM Director Hembree stated that the Governor's Orders still stands, the amendments pertains to our ordinance and amendments.
9. Zelerie Rogers asks the timeline for the campsites and Chairman Wiggins stated today. Ms. Rogers asks if some type of plan will be put in place to keep people safe by letting them know to social distance and bring their own supplies. Jimmy Hyde asks about the lodging and the food service because you cannot go into the restaurants at this time by Governor Cooper's order. Manager Garland stated that carryout only would still apply.
10. Ranger Gaston stated that the forest service had the same thoughts and are making plans to open the recreation programs across the nationally owned land and some have actually started. Ranger Gaston stated that they are daily working with issues on cleaning up the recreation facilities, obtaining PPE's because they are not a lot on hand. Ranger Gaston stated that when the federal government lifts the orders to reopen them in May or early June they will open but their main concern is keeping employees and the public safe. Ranger Gaston stated that they needed to get their hosts in place at the controlled campgrounds. Ranger Gaston stated that they will instruct people to quarantine for 14 days and bring their own supplies when they arrive at the sites and be in guidance with the PPE's, take temps if symptomatic and continue social distancing until we are informed otherwise by executive order. Ranger Gaston stated that Joyce Kilmer road would remain closed due to danger trees but people can walk in on foot to the trail if they desire. Ranger Gaston stated that he is working on the Wachacha Tower contacts for the new tower and they will move forward with the NEPA process as soon as the contract is returned. Chairman Wiggins stated that they did want the 14 days at the campsites enforced and Ranger Gaston stated that he agreed. Ranger Gaston stated that there are no restrictions around Santeetlah Lake. Chairman Wiggins asks that Law Enforcement be notified if persons are trying to stay longer than 14-days in the campsites.
11. Manager Garland asks about the swimming pool. The board wanted to go ahead, run the advertisement for pool employees, and begin working to get the pool open. Manager Garland stated that we have to get the employees trained and vetted prior to the opening. Commissioner Orr stated that we needed to get the pool opened with the weather getting warmer and rely on the parents to do the right thing while at the pool. Director Booth asks that Manager Garland contact Health Specialist Alli Hooper on the date for open so that she can get the inspection done.
12. Commissioner Eller asks if the county is set up for places that people can go if they need to quarantine themselves. Manager Garland stated that she is working on a hotline within the county and they will be having another meeting at the Senior Center to discuss this possibility.

13. Chairman Wiggins thanked everyone for their time and stated that the next commissioner meeting being held on May 19<sup>th</sup> will be held at the community building with social distancing in place.
14. Chairman Wiggins asks for a motion to continue this meeting to Wednesday, May 6, 2020 at noon. Commissioner Cody made the motion to continue this meeting as stated. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

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Dale Wiggins, Chairman

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Lynn Cody, Vice-Chairman

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Keith Eller, Member

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Jacob Nelms, Member

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Connie Orr, Member

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
Kim Crisp, Clerk to the Board