

Regular Meeting – November 17, 2020

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Tuesday, November 17, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. for their regular meeting in the Graham County Community Building located at 196 Knight Street Robbinsville NC. Board present Dale Wiggins, Lynn Cody, Connie Orr, and Keith Eller. Board absent Jacob Nelms. Also, present Manager Becky Garland, Attorney J.K. Coward and Clerk Kim Crisp.

1. Chairman Wiggins called the meeting to order.
2. Chairman Wiggins asks Commissioner Cody to give the Invocation.
3. Chairman Wiggins asks Commissioner Orr to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.
4. Chairman Wiggins asks for approval of the agenda. Manager Garland asks that Item 8 be removed. Commissioner Eller made the motion to approve the agenda with the stated change. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
5. Chairman Wiggins asks for approval of the minutes for the Continued Meetings 10/6, 10/8, 10/23; Workshop and Regular Meeting 10/20; and Emergency Meetings 11/4, 11/9. Commissioner Eller made the motion to approve the minutes as stated. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
6. Chairman Wiggins asks Commissioner Cody to speak. Commissioner Cody thanked the board for the opportunity to speak. Commissioner Cody stated that he would like to go over a few things that he would like to see in the future to understand exactly what is going on in our departments. Commissioner Cody stated that a person had asked him the question, “do you really know what is going on in these departments, who works in those departments” and he could not answer those questions. Chairman Cody stated that he can give an outline of who is over them, but he did not know who works in each individual department. Commissioner Cody stated that he would like to have a monthly meeting or a quarterly meeting on safety leadership organizational meeting. Commissioner Cody stated that safety consists of learning how to improve safety in each individual department and how to improve one’s health. Commissioner Cody stated that we could implement a check off sheet of things that could help improve their safety and overall health. Commissioner Cody asks what we can do to help people that need to quit smoking or lose weight. Commissioner Cody stated that the other issue would be the need to help the employee understand being healthy is good for them. Commissioner Cody stated that he had a comment from a Doctor that the healthier you are the less chance you have of contracting COVID. Commissioner Cody stated a new movement is being done called “Move It” which means get off your hind end and get to moving around. Commissioner Cody stated that a lot of people spend eight hours a day if not longer in offices and they do not understand what this does to the lower extremities and can cause congestive heart failure over the years. Commissioner Cody stated that Move It means to get up and walk around, go to other departments, and see if you can be a help to do things. Commissioner Cody stated being able to move around will help the person in the long run. Commissioner Cody stated leadership is what is being planned for the future and asks what have these departments put in place to plan for the next five years and where do they see that this department needs to be. Commissioner Cody stated that the department needs to be able to know what needs to be accomplished within that time, processes and improvements, what monies can be saved and what monies can be allocated to other projects. Commissioner Cody asks about organizational, issues with staff, such as staffing needs and what is needed for the future. Commissioner Cody asks what type of work that the staff member does and he received a comment about one department, a particular staff member was vacated and moved another staff member in that place and many times it was discussed that they didn’t need that person because they were not there part of the time. Commissioner Cody stated that all sudden this is an issue, and they cannot get things done because this other person had to take their place and he did not understand that comment. Commissioner Cody stated he could not understand what the motive was when they complained because they basically done without them but when they left it has become an issue. Commissioner Cody stated that he would like to see one or two departments do a presentation not at a commissioner meeting but another meeting to allow them to describe to the board what is going on in their departments. Commissioner Cody stated this will involve all departments, not just one, all department heads need to be present. Commissioner Cody stated the department heads can be involved in the presentation. Commissioner Cody stated that the board members would have an opportunity to ask questions, so that they will know what is

happening within the departments as well as the county itself. Commissioner Cody stated as elected officials and taxpayers who elects the board needs to know the answers to the questions that are being asked and we need to know where and how to get the information that is being requested. Commissioner Cody stated his understanding is that there are around 180 employees and he has not idea who those 180 are. Commissioner Cody asks what do we do for those employees, what benefits do we give to them, do we compensate, do we give rewards to the employees for the time that they are here, do we recognize when they have achieved a certain goal, recognize those things and motivate your people to do more and do better work. Commissioner Cody stated that the better we can recognize our personnel the better the board will be able to answer the questions that the public asks. Commissioner Cody stated that some are aware and some are not aware that he meets people every Wednesday night at the Stecoah Fire and Rescue Building and it is open policy if anyone wants to come and speak with him about a subject matter then they do that. Commissioner Cody stated that he tries to be as honest as he possibly can but one of the things that was asked of him was can you tell me what each department has done in the last month for a taxpayer in this county. Commissioner Cody stated that the county spends the taxpayer's money, and they would like to know where it went to, does it better me, my neighbor, my community, my county. Commissioner Cody stated that he understands that we have people in different positions that he basically does not know who they are and you can go to our website and get names but who are these people. Commissioner Cody stated that the taxpayer says that reading the newspaper is vague but does not tell who these people really are, it only gives a title but doesn't say who they are or who they are related to. Commissioner Cody stated that we owe this to our taxpayers in giving them the correct information and give the information while being honest about it. Commissioner Cody stated that we need to know that our departments are growing, that they are going to prosper, take and make our county better not just for us but our kids, our grandkids and our great grandkids. Commissioner Cody stated that in respect to our public we need to be aware what is taking place and if we have issues, we need to know about them. Commissioner Cody stated one complaint was job postings and what are we doing to be make sure that all people see them and do we have the necessary resources to go and find and fill those positions. Commissioner Cody asks if there is an issue as to why people do not come to work with Graham County, are there problems, were there problems in the past and he could not answer those questions. Commissioner Cody stated he could answer some questions and some he could not, so the taxpayer turned around and asked me questions such as do you know the department, do you know how they are run, do you know how they are structured, do you have a contingency plan in place in case something happens to one of those department heads, do you have a system put in place to where if something happens are there shoes to fill them, and further stated that these are the type of questions that he is receiving and wanted to bring this out to the board on things that are being asked. Commissioner Cody stated that he has a Safety Leadership Organization (SLO) where he works and meet monthly and have multiple departments come in with presentations on how they are doing. Commissioner Cody stated this is what he would like to see, he is one commissioner but he would like to see the information and review it so that he can try and answer the questions that the people are asking. Commissioner Eller stated that Manager Garland can answer a lot of those questions. Manager Garland stated that we have a safety committee that meet every month after the department head meeting and will be having the next one on Thursday, November 19. Manager Garland stated that all commissioners are welcome to attend and she has the department heads give their own department reporting. Manager Garland stated that we spent the better part of last year with leadership seminars and the staff were very helpful and participated. Manager Garland stated that there is always room for improvement, and we do put safety first. Manager Garland stated that all department heads are charged to hold safety first trainings in their departments, and she gives each department the tools to have the safety meetings each month with their staff. Manager Garland stated that we work our salary plan religiously and is very thankful to the board in helping us get a coherent salary plan put in place in the past five years. Manager Garland stated we follow that salary plan based on qualifications and job performance. Manager Garland stated that we have more job turnover than she would like but we have made great strides in what we pay folks it is still hard to be competitive with private industry and other local governments but at the same time we are more competitive with our pay plan than we ever have been. Manager Garland stated that we do have a wellness plan and it is a struggle to get employees motivated towards jumping on the wellness plan as we have previously discussed in budget on how do we motivate people to

participate. Manager Garland stated that we are always looking for ways to improve and be better. Manager Garland stated that we are part way there, but we do have a better level of communication between departments than in the past. Manager Garland stated that department heads are beginning to understand what it means to think strategically and to look out into the horizon instead of day to day decisions to make sure that they are thinking forward. Manager Garland stated that this is one thing in budget process that she asks department heads to think about where you want to be in a year and 5-years and let us plan through that. Manager Garland stated that she is open to take all suggestions and we do have a lot of room to improve but we are farther along than we have ever been. Commissioner Cody stated that a lot of the information is not shared with the board and this is the reason that he is proposing the SLO Meeting to get two departments to come in and work together and gives them an opportunity to share with the board what their accomplishments have been and we need the public to hear this as well. Commissioner Cody stated that for years we put band-aids on many things and in his prior years they decided to stop that and we are not going to put band aids on things again but over the years we have tended to migrate back to that situation and we are in a better situation now where we are actually in planning modes to be able to get things done. Commissioner Cody stated we needed to get people in better working conditions and a lot of the public does not know these details. Commissioner Cody stated that another thing that was mentioned is the advertisement of a new recreation building and was asked why do we need a new building for recreation and that goes along with this building, the walls here are paper thin and its not fair to clients or the workers to work where there is no confidentiality. Commissioner Cody stated that he tried to explain that if the public went to the building that the recreation is in now, they would see why there was a need for a new building and he personally knows because he was in the building for three years as well as the staff here and it was horrible. Commissioner Cody stated that we finally started to take the steps to correct the safety issues in the buildings but it would be good to put a plan in place where we can take information back to the public and give them better knowledge of what is taking place in the county. Commissioner Cody stated that we need to be told that they are having safety meetings, they are doing these things in their departments. Chairman Wiggins stated that the department heads that we have are qualified and can prepare a quarterly newsletter with what is going on in their departments and who works in those departments which would be public record because not everyone has social media such as Facebook and have extra copies at the county manager's office that share with us what is going on in their departments. Chairman Wiggins stated that department heads could come to the meeting and let the board know what is going on in their departments. Chairman Wiggins stated that there are some things that we do not know about and we should know these things and thanked Commissioner Cody for his comments and further stated that these are things that we need to start looking at.

7. Chairman Wiggins asks Pastor Eric Reece to speak. Pastor Reece stated that he was here to discuss the Old Mother Church and thanked Pastor Teddy Silvers for allowing him to share this issue with the board. Pastor Reece stated that he contacted Partners for Sacred Places to apply for a grant to help with restoration of the Old Mother Church. Pastor Reece stated that the church needs work done and further stated that Pastor Silvers did not want to do this to upset people but there are repairs that need to be done such as painting the eaves, installing insulation and this will save them money while preserving the building. Pastor Reece stated that he wanted to restore the original pulpit as well and stated that the church was built when Graham County was formed from Cherokee County in 1872 and he shared that in his application so over 100 years ago the Centennial Celebration was a big thing in Graham County and its hard to believe in two years that we will celebrate 150 years. Pastor Reece stated that the congregation and Pastor Silvers did not want anyone thinking they are complaining. Pastor Reece stated that he approached Pastor Silvers to see if they would be interested. Pastor Reece stated he was hoping that the Old Mother Church could have someone to claim ownership of the building and if repairs are needed it could be done and the community could come together to help take care of those needs and preserve for the future. Pastor Reece stated that the Church and the Cemetery together are eligible to be on the Historical Registry and he talked to folks in Raleigh and the Church itself could not be registered but with the cemetery it could be. Chairman Wiggins stated that we do have a few historical places throughout the county, and we do need to find out who owns the property. Chairman Wiggins stated that Commissioner Orr was reaching out to Bernice Lloyd to see what information she has and we can apply by sending in the application to see if we can get the help to restore the Church and then we will go from

there. Chairman Wiggins asks that Pastor Reece keep the board posted on any updates and thanked him for his work. Commissioner Orr stated that she would follow-up once she has spoken with Ms. Lloyd.

8. Chairman Wiggins asks Project Manager (PM) Jason Marino to speak. PM Marino stated that we are moving along with our capital projects and presented the last document that he received from Heery/SLAM. PM Marino stated that they are at the end of their contract and need to move to the next plan which is art design. PM Marino asks the board if they are still going with Option C and presented them with more information including a new façade to the front of the building. PM Marino stated that he has been working with Mitch Brigulio on the cost of the project and further stated that with the COVID issues the cost of materials have increased. Chairman Wiggins stated that the paperwork calls for a (15) bed jail but that is what we hold now so what does the county truly need for the newly proposed jail. PM Marino stated that we have designed for a (40) bed jail, (30) for male and (10) for female. Chairman Wiggins stated that we needed to make decisions. Commissioner Orr asks how many people are incarcerated in Graham County now. Manager Garland stated that the last count is around (12-15) at our jail now and another (15-20) at the other counties. PM Marino stated that he would get updated information for the board. Commissioner Orr asks what we need to do in moving forward. Chairman Wiggins stated that Commissioner Nelms needs time to review the documents prior to any decision. Chairman Wiggins stated that we will be having a special meeting on December 1 and if needed can have discussion on this date. PM Marino stated that Duke Energy did agree to move their line back which gave us an additional .6 acres, and this is very good news. PM Marino stated that a new survey from Duke Energy was sent to Attorney Coward for his response. The board all agreed that we needed to send a thank you to Duke Energy.
9. PM Marino stated that the assessment was completed at the DHHS building concerning their HVAC system and found several issues. PM Marino stated he requested to MBI and to Elliott's to add the new findings to their quotes. PM Marino stated that there will be some cost to cover the findings more than anticipated. PM Marino stated that the findings include not all air handling units had return ducts, thermostats are not located in the proper areas, outside air ducts require a damper prior to joining with the return duct of each handler, undersized systems and purchase of a temperature/humidity data logging device due to the number of occupants that occupy the building. Chairman Wiggins asks how many more units have not been replaced to date. Manager Garland stated that four systems were replaced last year, and we have four more that are undersized. Manager Garland stated that each system purchased last year cost around \$8200.00 and we did put money into contingency for this building. Chairman Wiggins stated that he recommended doing all the work necessary which should increase longevity of the systems because currently they are being overworked by running twenty-four hours per day.
10. PM Manager stated that he had four contractors show for the pre-bid on the Cemetery and Recreation Buildings and received one bid from Aldridge Brothers. PM Marino stated that the same happened with both buildings and he has been told the same thing from every contractor, they do not have the time to do this work. PM Marino stated that he would rebid on a broader range and see if we find interest in the projects. PM Marino stated that the problem is the time frame for completion and the materials are taking much longer to be received. PM Marino stated that some time frames for materials have been six months or longer which is all related to COVID. PM Marino stated that these buildings are needed, and this would be a good winter project. PM Marino stated that he plans to extend the bid to Asheville, Cherokee County and further. Commissioner Eller suggests that we start the time to fulfill the contract on the date that they start the building and not on the contract date.
11. PM Marino stated that the Welcome Sign rock base at Topton is completed and they are waiting on steel brackets for the new sign to installed so currently the old sign is at the location at this time.
12. PM Marino stated that he will be attending the pre-bid at the Middle School on Thursday.
13. Chairman Wiggins thanked PM Marino for his work and stated that he has a lot going on at this time, but these are things that will benefit the people of this county.
14. Chairman Wiggins asks Manager Garland to give the finance report. Manager Garland stated that we ended the month with a \$7,773,511.97 cash balance after the deduction of the sales tax money into our capital projects account and was very excited to see this number. Manager Garland stated that we are over \$300,567.98 from this time last year.
15. Manager Garland stated that our current year tax collection is \$360,975.43 and our prior year as \$19,525.08 for a total of \$380,500.51. Manager Garland stated that DMV collections was

\$53,504.53. Manager Garland stated that our year to date tax collection is \$1,891,874.20 and our DMV is \$216,438.66 and our tax collection rate is 25.26%. Manager Garland commended the tax office for their hard work.

16. Manager Garland stated that our revenues for the month as \$1,278,072.36 and our expenditures was \$1,426,649.99 giving us a deficit of \$148,577.63 but our year to date revenues is \$4,888,283.97, our expenditures \$4,661,643.21 for a year to date surplus of \$226,640.76 and we are ahead from this time last year.
17. Manager Garland stated that our sales tax was \$214,287.88 which was up again and commended the taxpayers of Graham County for buying local. Manager Garland stated that we are \$82,000.00 ahead on our year to date.
18. Manager Garland stated that our prior years taxes collected from 2013 is \$629,427.87.
19. Manager Garland stated that our ideal percentage for the budget at this time is 67% and we are holding at 69% and thanked the department heads for their work.
20. Manager Garland stated that the Register of Deeds budget is fluctuating due to the number of real estate transactions in the county and our building inspections has been issuing a lot more permits. Manager Garland stated that the department heads are working well within the budget even with the five percent cut and they take their budgets very seriously.
21. Manager Garland stated that she did have two budget amendments for the board review.
 - a. Budget Amendment #8 -to amend to recognize COVID grant funds for the election board for \$28,000.00
 - b. Budget Amendment #9 – to amend to recognize additional permits being issued and projection of funding based on trends for \$20,000.00. Manager Garland stated that Chief Deputy Crisp had reported that handgun permits have skyrocketed and after the analysis of last years revenue to this years we are ahead so this money will be added to the sheriff budget to help cover the expenses.

Commissioner Eller made the motion to approve Budget Amendment #8 and #9 as stated.

Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

22. Manager Garland stated that she would need approval on the HVAC system at the DHHS building and asks if the board wants to proceed now or hold off. Commissioner Orr made the motion to proceed based on the facts presented by PM Marino. Commissioner Eller stated that we needed to do the whole cost now and not just a part. Commissioner Orr made the motion to accept the costs for the HVAC system as stated and to proceed with the repairs and replacements. Commissioner Eller seconded this motion. Vote unanimous. Commissioner Cody asks if some of this will be reimbursed through DSS reimbursement and Manager Garland stated that a percentage of it would. Chairman Wiggins asks that a report of this building be kept in a location when whoever is in the positions in the future will have a guide to use on making sure that the proper upgrades are installed.
23. Manager Garland stated that she would now go to the manager's report. Manager Garland stated that the final deadline for expending the CARES Act funds remains on December 30, 2020 and the balance to date is \$84,473.00. Manager Garland stated that \$7,500.00 needed to be allocated to equipment, supplies and PPE necessary for having jury selection at the elementary gym and we can stockpile this inventory. Manager Garland stated that there are approximately \$20,000.00 in health department COVID activity that was unreimbursed with HD CARES funding which leaves about \$57,000.00 to expend. Manager Garland stated that she plans to use those funds for the additional staff and overtime necessary for coverage for court that was scheduled in December, however, this was rescheduled for March which will fall outside of the time frame to expend those funds. Manager Garland stated that there will be EMS and Health Department wages that can be covered, however, there could be other priorities that the commissioners may want to pursue. Manager Garland stated that some of the priorities could do additional support for home delivered meals above the allocations provided for the Senior Center and we can look for additional equipment to further enhance disinfection of public areas. Manager Garland asks the board for suggestions. Commissioner Orr stated that we needed to see if our school kids need further assistance and Chairman Wiggins stated that the Manna Food Bank, the Community Table, our Rescue Squad and Fire Departments may need assistance as well. Commissioner Eller stated that MANNA Food Bank may close due to the staff aging out and no one is stepping up to help. Commissioner Eller stated that some churches such as Panther Creek give food as well. Manager Garland stated that she would check to see if we can assist with food delivery with the monies. Commissioner Orr stated that we have several elderlies who cannot go to the grocery store and asks if we can offer curb service to them as well as kids and could we

add more to the Meals on Wheels program. Manager Garland stated that she will do the research to see the ways to expend the funds. Chairman Wiggins stated that we need to form a committee to reach out to Michelle Shippet and Jerry Ledbetter on food distribution. Manager Garland stated that the Senior Center can use their funds for a vehicle to deliver meals since their vehicles are aging out and after speaking with Commissioner Eller, they do need another vehicle. Commissioner Eller asks about the vehicles used to make pizza deliveries as one option and further asks if we can work with Fleet Enterprises and Manager Garland stated that we could, and she will reach out to them.

24. Manager Garland gave an update on the grant in the county. All grant reporting for ARC (Paramedicine and Recovery to Work) and Duke Endowment (Paramedicine) is up to date. Manager Garland stated that the Duke Endowment fell short of the metrics that was proposed due to our Community Paramedic not being allowed to enter homes during the spring and a lot of the summer which prevented doing intakes when the client did not have internet but he is working diligently to gain ground back. Commissioner Orr asks that they speak with Sawyer's Staffing to see if they could support allowing our paramedic to enter their homes for flu shots. Chairman Wiggins stated when the COVID Vaccine becomes available he could administer those as well.
25. Manager Garland stated that the CDBG – Scattered Site is in for review of the environmental assessment and we will be moving forward.
26. Manager Garland stated that the CDBG-V grants are still under review and the Commerce Department announced they are no longer accepting applications and have begun their final review.
27. Manager Garland stated that Wanda Austin with NCDOT has provided a cost estimate for the pedestrian path with a county match requirement of \$9,825.00 and this will need board approval. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve the match for the pedestrian path in the Stecoah Community. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
28. Manager Garland stated that NCDOT Road Naming Board approved the designation of the (5) mile stretch of road on US 129 North that this board formed a resolution to name the Ronnie Milsap Highway. Manager Garland stated that the resolution will officially be adopted on December 3 virtual NCDOT board meeting and they will send a link to the board if they wish to attend. Manager Garland stated that they will also send a link to Mr. Milsap and his family and will take his comment to be read at the meeting.
29. Manager Garland stated that the building/grounds committee met last week and identified several projects that they would like to accomplish this winter including courthouse painting in the tax offices, gutters at the Sheriff's Office, gutters at the P and J building which will create a safety issue for wintertime and the courthouse clock has stopped working. Manager Garland stated that the clock can be repaired or replaced for a price difference of \$700.00. Manager Garland stated that a three-year warranty is given with a new purchase. Commissioner Orr asks if facility fees can be used for the repairs to the courthouse. The board gave a directive to proceed with the projects and to use facility funds to purchase the new clock.
30. Manager Garland stated that staff will be conducting OSHA Safety walk-throughs to every building and they will show up randomly and issue citations to the departments for corrections.
31. Commissioner Eller asks about the issues of paying the power bills for our 911 Center. Manager Garland stated that Duke Energy changed their payment method and Deputy Finance Officer Peggy Hyde is trying to pay the bills, but they keep getting rejected.
32. Chairman Wiggins asks for public comment. No public comment.
33. Chairman Wiggins asks for the reappointment of Pam Shaffer to the RDA Board for a one-year term. Commissioner Eller made the motion to reappoint Pam Shaffer as stated. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
34. Chairman Wiggins asks for the reappointment of Billy Brown to the Travel and Tourism Board for a one-year term. Commissioner Eller made the motion to reappoint Billy Brown as stated. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
35. Chairman Wiggins stated that the county offices will be closed for the Thanksgiving Holiday November 26 and November 27.
36. Chairman Wiggins asks for new or old business. No new or old business.
37. Chairman Wiggins asks for a 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 Eller made the motion to go into closed session as stated. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

38. Chairman Wiggins made the motion to go back into open session. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
39. Chairman Wiggins asks for a motion to reduce the value on the 149 Mill Creek property due to the condition of the house to list the value at the purchase price. Commissioner Orr made the motion to reduce the value of the property by \$62,090.00. Commissioner Eller seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
40. Chairman Wiggins asks for a motion to approve leave without pay for Brian Millsaps. Commissioner Eller made the motion to grant the leave without pay. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
41. Chairman Wiggins asks for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Orr made the motion to adjourn. Commissioner Eller seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

Dale Wiggins, Chairman

Lynn Cody, Vice-Chairman

Keith Eller, Member

Jacob Nelms, Member

Connie Orr, Member

ATTEST: _____
Kim Crisp, Clerk to the Board