

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Monday, November 18, 2013 at 4:00 p.m. in the Graham County Community Building located at 196 Knight Street for their regular monthly workshop session. Commissioners present were: Robert M. Edwards, Billy Holder, Keith Eller and Raymond Williams. Commissioner Connie Orr was absent due to illness.

1. Commissioner Edwards called the workshop session to order and read the agenda notifying that public comment is for regular session. Commissioner Edwards stated that the board would allow comment from the public if time allowed but only after the scheduled speakers have had their chance to speak. Commissioner Edwards made one correction to the agenda on item #2 to the spelling of Ms. Judy Covert's name. Ms. Covert's name was spelled as Culvert. Commissioner Edwards also stated that if a large group is represented he asks that one speaker be appointed to speak for that group.
2. Commissioner Edwards asks Dr. David Ackerman and Jeri Ruth Roberts to speak. Mr. Ackerman stated that he was here on behalf of the Valley River Humane Society and first would like to apologize for Jeri Ruth Roberts's absence due to illness she was unable to attend but Jan Davis; another board member is here to address any questions the board may have. Dr. Ackerman thanked the board for allowing them to speak and wanted to extend a hand to assist in the issues with abandoned animals. Dr. Ackerman read their mission statement to the board: The mission of the Valley River Humane Society is to foster a healthy relationship between humans and all living creatures, prevent animal cruelty and suffering, find quality homes for abandoned pets, and educate all ages about animal needs and the value of responsible pet ownership. Dr. Ackerman stated that they are not animal control but they will take in strays from the public with a donation of \$50.00 and try to adopt these strays out before putting the animals to sleep. Dr. Ackerman stated that Clay and Cherokee Counties do have a financial arrangement with them at this time so the residents of these counties can bring animals to the society at no charge. Dr. Ackerman stated that he would be glad to sit down with Graham County by the next budget year and discuss financial arrangements if that is something that Graham County would like to do but are willing to take strays from Graham County with a donation from the person bringing the animal in. Dr. Ackerman stated that they also run a thrift store as a way to generate revenue and are always looking for volunteers. Dr. Ackerman stated that there are new board members and it is their goal to adopt out all of the strays as possible taken into their shelter. Dr. Ackerman stated that they are expanding their services to promote spay and neutering, doing outreach programs at the schools and offering crematory services as ways to produce revenue. Dr. Ackerman stated that he would be glad to sit down and discuss these services with the county and try to figure out what would be best for Graham County and he understood the budget issues that the county faced. Commissioner Edwards stated that Dr. Ackerman had been speaking with Manager Cable on this issue. Dr. Ackerman stated that was correct. Commissioner Edwards stated that the county had been faced with the government shutdowns and the choice came between keeping daycare open for children and keeping up strays and the board chose daycare and he appreciates everyone opinion but he would not vote for an ordinance to cause more tax to be placed upon the taxpayer's of this county. Commissioner Edwards thanked Dr. Ackerman for his information and for opening the door for our citizens to bring their animals to them. Commissioner Edwards stated that he has been badmouthed on this issue but he will stand upon this board's decision and go with our existing law. Commissioner Williams stated that in the past his dog was stolen and taken to the Humane Society and he had to pay to get it out and he can't support the humane society if this will take place. Commissioner Williams also stated that every dog that is seen walking the road is not a stray and he has been watching and people should note that if you take a hunter's dog it is a felony. Dr. Ackerman stated that this will not happen and this is not how they do business and he will not answer for what has taken place in the past. Commissioner Eller asks if a record is taken of the person who brings in the strays with a photo ID. Dr. Ackerman stated that they get a driver's license or some type of ID. Commissioner Holder stated that if you quit feeding the strays then they will go home where they belong. Commissioner Edwards asks Ms. Jan Davis if she had anything she would like to say. Ms. Davis thanked the board for having them.
3. Commissioner Edwards asks Judy Covert to speak. Ms. Covert stated that she had nothing to say and with attitudes that the county commissioners have there would be no use to say anything.
4. Commissioner Edwards asks for any comment from the public. Roma Gail Collins asks to speak. Ms. Collins stated that this town used to be full of strays but she did not see the problem now. Ms. Collins stated that her own dog roams the neighborhood and everyone feeds him and she wished they didn't but they all love him and further stated that he is not human and it's a shame that it is a felony to kill an animal but it is not a felony to kill a baby. Ms. Collins stated that she doesn't like problems but she is not willing for her taxes to be raised for animal control and she believes if you will leave the animals alone they will go back home.

5. Commissioner Edwards asks Roy Stiles to speak. Mr. Stiles stated that he has owned dogs all his life and has taken the best of care of them. He has given them all their shots, wormed them, fed, watered and housed them and has shipped them all over the world because he is a plot breeder. He appreciates the county commissioners for their stand on not passing another ordinance to tell us how to take care of our dogs. Mr. Stiles stated that he deals with people who are opposed to hunting, stealing his dogs, dog collars and taking them to the humane society and is grateful to Dr. Ackerman for offering his services to the county. Mr. Stiles stated that he rides these county roads a lot and he doesn't see this so called stray animal problem that these people are talking about. Mr. Stiles stated that we don't need more laws telling us how to raise our pups or when to spay and neuter and he actually resented anyone suggesting that.
6. Walter Hooper, a member in the audience, told people to save your \$50.00 and use a bullet and the county doesn't need to change anything and leave our laws alone.
7. Commissioner Edwards asks Patricia Orr to speak. Ms. Orr stated that she did not want an ordinance but she did want something done to persons leaving animals at the dumpsters. Ms. Orr stated that a puppy was found in a cardboard box with no water or blanket and this is just not right. Ms. Orr stated that hunters love their animals and we should support and work out a deal with the humane society and paying a fee to get animals adopted is not too much to ask and she hoped that the board would consider an agreement with them. Ms. Orr stated that we all have individual liberty and hope that we all can work together for the good of the county.
8. Commissioner Edwards asks Brenda Keenan to speak. Ms. Keenan stated that she has quite a few dogs and her concern was the cost of spay and neutering and she missed the service that was offered. Ms. Keenan stated that she didn't have anything against the hunters; she just missed the service that the humane society provided in the past.
9. Commissioner Edwards asks Glen Meuhlhausen to speak. Mr. Meuhlhausen stated that our community needs to hold the people responsible for dumping these animals out and he stated that he did not have anything against hunters but if a dog shows up at his house without a collar that is aggressive towards his family he will take care of it but putting new laws on the books is not the answer when the laws that are already on the books are never enforced. Mr. Meuhlhausen stated that people should come forward and hold the people responsible for a lot more other issues as well.
10. Commissioner Edwards asks Nancy Hoch to speak. Ms. Hoch stated that there is a problem with people dumping animals at the dumpster sites and this did happen at the first day of hunting season and asks if the camera's were operational at the sites and could they be viewed to see who is doing this. Manager Cable stated that yes the cameras work and they can be viewed. Ms. Hoch stated that it might help if people knew they were being seen abusing these animals.
11. Commissioner Edwards asks Jim Mize to speak. Mr. Mize asks if the county knows the actual number of strays in the county and suggested that a few from each group come together in a civil manner and try to come up with a true count and then work toward a possible solution. Donna Mize stated that the county did have an option with Logan's Run on the Spay and Neutering for a \$20.00 fee. Commissioner Williams stated that he thought an organization used to come to Snowbird on Saturday's to rescue abandoned dogs. Ms. Keenan stated that this organization came once a year. Ms. Hoch stated that we have a local vet that we needed to support. Ms. Robin Mason asks that the commissioners post signs at the dumpsters with the law's in hopes to deter people from dumping the animals at these sites. Commissioner Holder stated that Mother Nature would take care of a lot a strays due to the large growing number of coyotes in our area.
12. Commissioner Edwards adjourned the workshop session.

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Robert M. (Mike) Edwards, Chairman, Graham County Commissioner

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Billy Holder, Vice-Chairman, Graham County Commissioner

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Keith Eller, Member, Graham County Commissioner

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Connie Orr, Member, Graham County Commissioner

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Raymond Williams, Member, Graham County Commissioner

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_

Kim Crisp, Clerk