

Regular meeting - April 19, 2022

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Tuesday April the 19th 2022 in the Graham County Community Building located at 196 Knight Street Robbinsville, North Carolina. All board was present. Also, present Manager Jason Marino, Finance Director Becky Garland, and Clerk to the board Kim Crisp.

1. Chair Orr called the meeting to order.
2. Chair Orr asks Commissioner Wiggins to give the invocation.
3. Chair Orr lead the Pledge of Allegiance.
4. Chair Orr asks for changes or approval of the agenda. Manager Marino asks that we add #5A Mark VanOuse and #6A Gary Icenhower. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to approve as stated. Commissioner Eller seconded the motion. Vote unanimous.
5. Chair Orr asks for approval of the minutes for the Workshop and Regular Meetings of March 15th; Emergency Meeting February the 18th and 22nd; and Special Meeting March 8th. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to approve as stated. Commissioner Eller seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
6. Mr. VanOuse with Zito media thanked the Board for their time and stated he was here regarding broadband services and the opportunity to be included in the GREAT Grant Funding. Mr. VanOuse stated that the grant deadline is May 4<sup>th</sup>, however, the State extended the deadline to encourage partnerships in the grant application which is the main reason to ask that Graham County join them in partnership to support their application and exciting broadband in Graham County. Mr. VanOuse stated that they have identified (499) locations in the county, mostly contiguous to their current system to deploy new Fiber to The Home (FTTH) service. Mr. VanOuse stated that this will involve construction of (35.18) miles of new fiber network, costing approximately \$1.99 million to reach (499) locations (residential and business). Mr. VanOuse stated that his company is planning on contributing their own private capital up to 50%, if necessary, so Zito Media will have "some skin in the game". Mr. VanOuse stated that Swain County has supported them and will be honoring a partnership agreement and asks that Graham County partner with them to bring in more state money to support the project. Mr. VanOuse stated that the main intent is to bring broadband to so many in need in this county. Commissioner Wiggins asks that he define "partnership" with Graham County. Mr. VanOuse stated that traditionally it is a financial commitment that can be funded through ARPA funds which is very favorable at this time. Chair Orr asks the timeframe. Mr. VanOuse stated that it would be around two years once the grant is awarded. Mr. VanOuse stated that all GREAT guidelines will be followed, and they are focusing on areas that are not served at this time. Mr. VanOuse stated that North Carolina is ahead of the game when it comes to broadband. Commissioner Cody stated that some entities have received grant funding but did not follow through so there is a lot at stake here when we partner with private companies. Chair Orr asks for questions or concerns. No more questions. Mr. VanOuse thanked the board for their time and consideration.
7. Chair Orr asks David Garrett, Southwestern Workforce Director to speak. Mr. Garrett thanked the board for their time and wanted to update the board. Mr. Garrett stated that they serve the seven western counties of North Carolina (Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Jackson, Macon, and Swain). Mr. Garrett stated that it was time to approve the updated Articles of Association and Agreement for the Southwestern Workforce Development Consortium. Mr. Garrett stated that the agreement did have a couple of changes including the board appointments. Commissioner Eller made the motion to accept the updated agreement and continue working with Southwest Commission. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous. Chair Orr stated that this is an excellent program.
8. Chair Orr asks Gary Icenhower to speak. Mr. Icenhower stated that he was here on behalf of the kids that ride horses asking that the board allow them use of the old riding stable located at the old Stanley Plant. Mr. Icenhower stated that the kids must travel to Blairsville Georgia to ride. Mr. Icenhower stated that they would do all the work to clear the arena and the only cost is the liability insurance that the county would pay. Commissioner Eller stated that HG Holdings is the property owner, but the county could request the use of the property for the riding club. Commissioner Eller stated that they will have to speak with the county attorney on the liability insurance. Mr. Icenhower thanked the board for their time and gave his contract information.
9. Chair Orr asks Manager Marino for the manager's and project manager's report. Manager Marino stated that the county did send in an objection to the forest service plan, and he will be meeting this coming Friday on the Crossover Project with Commissioner Wiggins and the Forest Service.
10. Manager Marino stated that we are currently in procurement on the CDBG-NR grant, and we did receive proposals from a second solicitation for Surveying, Environmental, and Legal Services.

Manager Marino stated that they are still working with Alice Briggs, with Withers Ravenel on finalizing administration and procurement documents for the CDBG-CV Grant which will help with the community kitchen renovations, workforce training for paramedics, enhancements to the senior center for additional food distribution and expand capacity.

11. Manager Marino stated that the EagleView Imagery Capture is completed on the mapping of the county, and we are working with EagleView regarding software and user recommendations.
12. Manager Marino stated that he coordinated a conference call with local and state officials regarding the Bison EV Proposed Project and NC Commerce will provide Bison EV a list of required documents to qualify for funding incentives so that the State and Local Government can move forward with the application process.
13. Manager Marino stated that the EBCI temporary Jacob Cornsilk Clinic is leased from Rose Office Systems and their asking price is \$191,440.00 if the county wanted to purchase the building. The board all agreed to pass on this proposed purchase.
14. Manager Marino stated that he attended a site visit at Brookfield with San Soucy, the County Attorney and the Tax Assessor and they visited the Cheoah and Santeetlah Dam Powerhouses for the revaluation.
15. Manager Marino stated that the USFS will meet next week to discuss the condition of the road to Wachacha Bald and discuss how the repairs can be paid knowing the importance in keeping it passable.
16. Manager Marino stated that he received a letter asking for participation in the Beaver Management Assistance Program. The board declined with Commissioner Eller making the motion to decline. Commissioner Wiggins seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
17. Manager Marino stated that the Jerry Monroe has been moved to the maintenance department and is doing a great job and that department is functioning very efficiently and as intended and wanted to move forward with moving Scott Hooper as the department head.
18. Manager Marino asks the board for possible dates on an ARPA Workshop. The board agreed to meet Tuesday, May 3, 2022, at 4:30 p.m. for an ARPA Workshop.
19. Manager Marino gave the project manager's report. Manager Marino stated that the RDA Moose Branch Subdivision Project is 85% complete.
20. Manager Marino stated that the Cemetery and Recreation Buildings are up and are at 65% for total project complete.
21. Manager Marino stated that our Board of Elections renovations is 90% and anticipate moving the staff to the new location in July.
22. Manager Marino stated that he would like permission to complete the Community Building bathroom remodel. Commissioner Eller made the motion to allow the remodel. Commissioner Wiggins seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
23. Manager Marino stated that they are working on the RFQ to Solicit for A&E Qualifications on the Justice/Jail Center and the county did receive the \$5M grant to go towards the cost of new construction.
24. Manager Marino stated that the Middle School addition is 62% complete and they are doing a good job.
25. Manager Marino stated that the Little Snowbird Creek Remediation and Clear and Snap project is making progress and we have a completed the design for the project.
26. Chair Orr asks Director Garland for the finance report. Director Garland stated that we ended the month with a cash balance of \$10,157,439.66 which is \$364,661.76 less from this time last year but we have been doing multiple capital projects. Director Garland stated that the Capital Projects account has \$2,265,118.75; our school capital project account \$114,187.17; our ARPA account has \$82,610.05 and our SCIF Grant gained a little interest for a total of \$5,000,333.00.
27. Director Garland stated that our year-to-date tax collections for real is \$7,034,053.96 and DMV was \$465,007.10 and our tax collection rate is 96.36%.
28. Director Garland stated that our revenues for the month was \$1,085,954.52 and our expenditures was \$1,514,385.32 for a deficit of \$428,430.80. Director Garland stated that our year-to-date revenues are \$14,833,366.53 and our expenditures was \$13,087,785.69 for a year-to-date surplus of \$1,745,580.84. Director Garland commended the commissioners for doing good things for our county.
29. Director Garland stated that sales tax collection for the month of April was \$194,092.92 and we are ahead \$155,337.05 from this time last year. Director Garland stated that our Capital Projects balance since the quarter cent sales tax collection is \$2,356,084.05.
30. Director Garland stated that the tax office continues to work the past due taxes and have collected \$484,000.64 for the 2004-20014 tax years and the total past due tax at this time is \$595,649.32. Director Garland stated that the tax office is vigilant in collections and is working the foreclosures and debt setoff.
31. Director Garland stated that the capital projects expenditures to date are:
  - a. Election Board \$147,904.56

- b. Recreation Building      \$73,630.55
  - c. Cemetery Building      \$79,186.38
  - d. Middle School – County Match \$612,701.12 and the total spent for the middle school is \$2,450,804.45.
32. Director Garland stated that she did have a budget amendment for the board’s approval. Budget Amendment #17 for Grounds \$10,500.00 for a new mower. Commissioner Eller made the motion to approve. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
  33. Director Garland stated that she needed a motion to approve the Project Ordinance for the \$5M SCIF Grant and permission to open a separate account. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to approve. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
  34. Director Garland stated that Davenport will be here May 2<sup>nd</sup> for a Public Hearing on the back financing for the cemetery and recreation new construction and the election board renovations.
  35. Director Garland stated that she needed approval for the Resolution authorizing the negotiation of an installment financing contract and providing for certain other related matters thereto for \$2.3 million. Commissioner Eller made the motion to approve. Commissioner Wiggins seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
  36. Director Garland stated that she need permission to send the letter to the Local Government Commission notifying them of the county’s intent to do an installment financing contract. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to approve. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
  37. Director Garland stated that she needed board approval of the Audit Letter submitted by Turner and Company CPAs P.A. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to approve. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
  38. Director Garland stated that she did get notice of the opioid settlement and Graham County will be receiving \$1,181,671.00 over an eighteen-year period with the money being dedicated to our Recovery to Work Program and other opioid related matters and the money can be used as collateral for other monies as well to be used for opioid related matters.
  39. Chair Orr stated that she served on the RDA Board and was proud to say that we have our first subdivision with (13) lots for sale on Moose Branch Road and Graham County has not had another subdivision since the Fort Hill project in the 1970’s.
  40. Chair Orr asks for public comment. Commissioner Cody stated that he attended a meeting in Macon County concerning Broadband funds and our area is part of the area that will be served and was advised that Frontier is sending a reconstruction team to service our outdated lines.
  41. Chair Orr asks Manager Marino for the discussion items. Manager Marino stated that he needed approval for the releases of \$901.49 and the discoveries of \$2,885.52. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to approve. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
  42. Manager Marino asks the boards permission to send a letter of support to the State on behalf of BISON EV. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to send the letter of support. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
  43. Manager Marino stated that he needed approval of the following polls.
    - a) 3/18/2022 Leave without pay for EMS employee (new hire)
    - b) 3/20/2022 Senior Center donation of chairs to Rescue Coalition
    - c) 3/23/2022 Payment to Van Winkle Law Firm
    - d) 3/28/2022 Sheriff Grant \$14,000.00 to purchase supplies
    - e) 4/04/2022 Polygraph training \$5750.00 for deputy
    - f) 4/04/2022 Motel Cost for Polygraph Training \$7500.00
    - g) 4/06/2022 FMLA Extension Request
 Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to approve the polls as stated. Commissioner Eller seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
  44. Chair Orr asks for new or old business. No new or old business.
  45. Chair Orr 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 Wiggins made the motion as stated. Commissioner Eller seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
  46. Chair Orr asks for a motion to go back into open session. Commissioner Cody made the motion as stated. Commissioner Eller seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
  47. Chair Orr asks for a motion to approve leave without pay for a Tax Collector’s Employee due to sickness. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion. Commissioner Eller seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
  48. Chair Orr asks for a motion to allow a letter to be written to Attorney Dale Curriden that Juanita Colvard and Claudine Gibson have been the County’s Project Manager’s and Representatives for the Urgent Care since March 2015 to present and will remain as such until further notice. Commissioner Eller made the motion to approve as stated. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

49. Chair Orr asks for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to adjourn.  
Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

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Connie Orr, Chair

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Keith Eller, Vice-Chairman

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Lynn Cody, Member

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Jacob Nelms, Member

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Dale Wiggins, Member

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