

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Tuesday, May 16, 2023, at 5:30 p.m. in the Graham County Community Building located at 196 Knight Street Robbinsville, NC for their regular monthly meeting. All the board was present. Also, present Finance Director Stacy Carpenter, Attorney JK Coward and Interim County Manager/Clerk to the Board Kim Crisp.

1. Chairman Nelms called the meeting to order.
2. Chairman Nelms asks Commissioner Cody to give the Invocation.
3. Chairman Nelms asks Commissioner Williams to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.
4. Chairman Nelms asks for changes to the agenda. Clerk Crisp asks that we move Item 10(c) from the polls listing and add Surplus of roll up doors under new business. Commissioner Williams made the motion to approve the changes and approve the agenda. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
5. Chairman Nelms asks for approval of the May 1st Board of Equalization and Review Minutes; March 20th Public Hearing Minutes; March 21st Workshop and Regular Minutes and the April 19th Workshop and Regular Minutes. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve the minutes as stated. Commissioner Williams seconded the motion. Vote unanimous.
6. Chairman Nelms asks Transit Director Juanita Colvard to speak. Director Colvard stated that she was here to update the Title 6 – Conflict of Interest FY 2025 Policy. Director Colvard presented the updated policy and stated that there were minor changes. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve the Title 6 – Conflict of Interest FY 2025 Policy as presented. Commissioner Eller seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
7. Chairman Nelms asks Commissioner Cody to speak. Commissioner Cody Stated there were concerns brought to him over the 2023 tax reevaluation for property sold between 2019 and 2023. Commissioner Cody stated that the complainant stated that the 2023 taxes were not valued at the fair market value for the properties, for what you would pay for the property, and those properties should be valued at least at the prices paid for them. Commissioner Cody stated that he received a suggestion that down the road a list of all properties sold in Graham County between 2019 and 2023 should be checked and the information given to the board. Commissioner Cody stated that many locations give tax breaks to senior citizens and in some locations, seniors do not pay school tax after they've reached 65 years of age of course Graham County does not have a school tax. Commissioner Cody stated that other locations freeze taxes at the age of 65 years and their taxes do not increase after that age. Commissioner Cody asked that the board look into these concerns. Commissioner Cody stated that many people are moving to Graham County and living in RV 's full time and they boast about not having to pay property taxes, yet they expect full county services. Commissioner Cody stated that many locations place a limit on how long they can stay, and he suggests the campground owners pay a tax for each full-time resident residing in their community. They suggested that this would be proactive. Commissioner Cody stated that electric cars were mentioned to him because they do not operate on gasoline and thus don't pay any highway tax from the purchase of gasoline, yet they expect good roads. Commissioner Cody stated that they suggested that they be assessed a yearly tax for all electric cars and ask that they be proactive on this issue as well. Commissioner Cody stated that he received complaints of telephone interruptions, (3) times in April the telephone lines behind the dumpsters located on Highway 28 were cut and the copper was harvested. Commissioner Cody stated that they were without service for more than 12 days and there are many disabled people who live on lower Sawyer Creek Road, Upper Sawyer Creek Road and on Highway 28 going toward Fontana that are impacted each time. Commissioner Cody stated that the complaint is that the problem is escalating and needs to be stopped before someone dies. Commissioner Cody stated that he is telephoning the Sheriff's Office and reporting the complaints because the public is asking for assistance. Commissioner Cody stated that the most talked about discussion centered around that we need to all work together and pay our fair share of taxes.
8. Chairman Nelms asked Stacy Carpenter to speak. Finance Director Stacy Carpenter stated that the cash balance at this time was 8,245,703.44. Director Carpenter stated that we have \$3,233,459.09 in our Capital Projects NCCMT Account; \$117,666.90 in our School Capital Project; \$847,994.93 in our American Rescue Plan Act Account and \$4,863,778.31 in our SCIF Grant-Courthouse Account. Director Carpenter stated that we have \$38,315.00 in interest from these accounts. Director Carpenter stated that our current year tax collection was \$371.37 and the prior year was \$46,237.08 for a total of \$46,608.45. Director Carpenter stated that our total DMV collections for the month was \$60,593.66. Director Carpenter stated that our year-to-date tax collections for real was \$7,203,662.31 and our total DMV was \$551,009.08. Director Carpenter stated that our current year tax collection percentage is 96.58%. Director Carpenter

stated that our total levy was \$7,318,118.66. Director Carpenter stated that our revenues for the month were \$940,129.43 and our total expenditures were \$1,653,003.26 for a deficit of \$703,873.83. Director Carpenter stated that our revenue to date was \$16,784,563.22 and our expenses to date are \$17,382,172.66 for a deficit of \$597,609.44. Director Carpenter stated that our sales tax collection for the month of May was \$168,959.25. Director Carpenter stated that our quarter cent sales tax collected since inception is \$1,030,561.94. Director Carpenter stated that we have collected \$478,261.92 in back taxes and the tax collections office continues to work hard on foreclosures and debt set-off.

9. Director Carpenter stated that our capital projects expenditures to date are:
 - a. Election Board / Bathroom Renovation \$272,709.92
 - b. Recreation Building \$217,673.01
 - c. Cemetery Building \$195,341.53
 - d. Justice Center \$362,500.00
 - e. Middle School - County Match \$1,214,367.41Total County Dollars for capital projects is \$2,262,591.87 and total Middle School funds is \$4,668,304.12.
10. Director Carpenter stated that our ideal budget remaining should be at 17% and we are holding at 23%.
11. Director Carpenter stated that the Sheriff's Department is seeking permission to spend the department Justice Grant Funds in the amount of \$91,000.00 and \$53,000.00 and she would need a motion from the board. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve these payments. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote was unanimous.
12. Director Carpenter stated that currently she can approve items of \$1000.00 and anything over \$5000.00 goes to the board. Director Carpenter asks permission that when the department heads identify recurring charges that we do not have to poll those expenditures. Chairman Nelms stated that if we have already budgeted those items, we do not need to have a poll. Commissioner Orr agreed and stated that any recurring expenses be paid. Commissioner Cody stated if anything comes up outside the norm or unexpected, then that can be brought to the board. Commissioner Cody stated that grant funds in and out are already adopted and can be paid. Director Carpenter stated that she would be having a department head meeting to let them know to identify to her the reoccurring charges.
13. Director Carpenter stated that she has a resolution for approval to open a new bank account for the jail commissary. Director Carpenter stated that the jail uses a company who will handle the funds electronically, but we do not need those funds going through the general account. This account will allow inmates to purchase items with a card and when they are released from jail a debit card can be printed that they can take with them instead of having to wait for finance to cut a check. Commissioner Williams made the motion to approve the new bank account as stated. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote was unanimous.
14. Director Carpenter said that she has Budget Amendment #17 for approval for our minivan replacement, supplies to complete the fiscal year for dental, and for the sheriff's budget which will move 12,000 from the Sheriff's Department to the Jail as well as recording \$2000.00 from the Duke Crisis Grant funds. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve budget amendment as stated. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote was unanimous.
15. Director Carpenter stated that she did have signature cards for the board to sign as well as a project ordinance for the SCIF Grant for the \$5,000,000.00 to be moved into capital expenses.
16. Director Carpenter stated that she did have a project ordinance for approval for the cemetery building, the recreation building and the renovations at the community building in the amount of \$850,000.00. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve the project ordinance as stated. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote was unanimous.
17. Director Carpenter stated that she had Budget Amendment #16 for DSS Crisis money and LIEAP funds in the amount of \$4,012.00. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve the amendment as stated. Commissioner Eller seconded this motion. Vote was unanimous.
18. Director Carpenter stated that our pool lifeguards will be receiving an increase in pay. The certified lifeguards will make \$14.00 per hour and the non-certified lifeguards will be paid \$12.00 per hour. The board did not oppose.
19. Director Carpenter stated that she would need approval for a resolution for the health department to open a bank account for fundraising on our Fitness and Wellness Center. Director Carpenter stated that the funds did not need to be in the general fund. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve the new bank account as stated. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote was unanimous.
20. Chairman Nelms asks for public comment. Clerk Crisp stated that Joe Deddo had signed up for public comment. Mr. Deddo stated as far as the sales tax being less than last year, he was a simple person, and he knows how many fish he sells where years ago it was five times what it is now. Mr. Deddo stated that he spends \$300.00 a week just on fish food and the recession is real.

Mr. Deddo stated that three gas stations have closed, and it is hard to run a business from Memorial Day to Labor Day. Mr. Deddo stated that in Graham County at one time there used to be seven trout pawns and more than seven hatcheries, but it is getting very disheartening to open the paper and see four pages of names of persons who have not paid their county tax. Mr. Deddo stated that he understands the revaluation is mandated by law and he sent a letter March 31, 2023, asking questions and thanked Mr. Cody and our finance officer for answering their part but he did not get some other questions answered. Mr. Deddo stated that in March 2020 the county closed everything down and he had a deputy to come to his pond and tell him that he could not be opened. Mr. Deddo stated that he got with Becky Garland so permits could be issued because people could not go anywhere which was kind of hard. Mr. Deddo stated that if you want to buy land here it's getting harder and harder and the only way our kids can have a place to build is for land to be passed down because they can no longer afford to purchase property in the county. Mr. Deddo stated that the government takes money for programs now we have the devastating news of our stadium which may require a new stadium, the board is trying to balance a budget all the while facing increases of up to 110%. Mr. Deddo stated that his personal taxes if the mil rate stays the same will be \$5700.00 per year. Mr. Deddo stated that the people are wonderful here, but some do not have money to pay taxes and he recognizes that some people can, and he appreciates the commissioners and the finance officer and would never want to do that job. Mr. Deddo stated that Duke Energy is expecting an increase of 10% in the upcoming year and now his taxes have increased 30%. Chairman Nelms stated that the upcoming budget mil rate has not been set and it will be July first before this goes into effect. Chairman Nelms stated that it is hard for people, and they have taken every consideration regarding the impact that the new homes and new purchases have done in the revaluation. Mr. Deddo stated that now we have people coming here who have two and three homes and they're building homes here bigger than their homes in other places and the impact is not affecting the new homeowners, but it is affecting the people who live here year-round. Mr. Deddo stated that the county needed to consider impact fees for those residents who do come in and pay exorbitant prices on their land. Mr. Deddo thanked the commissioners for their time and hopes that they realize that it is just hard to make it in these times.

21. Finance Director Stacy Carpenter stated that she would need to do a budget amendment for the lifeguards which will have a \$5000.00 increase to their budget. Commissioner Orr stated that we have to open our pool because this is one benefit for our taxpayers. Director Carpenter stated that Ronnie Williams, our recreation director, has been very thorough and we will open on June first. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve the budget amendment as stated. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote was unanimous.
22. Chairman Nelms asked for the discussion items. Chairman Nelms asks for a motion to approve the Memorandum of Agreement with the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians with our Graham County Health Department. Commissioner Cody made the motion to approve the MOA as presented. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote was unanimous.
23. Chairman Nelms stated that he will ask for approval of the polls at one time and the polls were as follows:
 - a. Payment for Cellebrite \$11,663.00; WNC Contracting \$12,822.87 and \$9030.38
 - b. Payment for NCACC \$92,148.00; Jack Millsaps & Son \$6000.00
 - c. Accept Quote Orr Contracting Bush Hog - \$1,850.00 and accept pay out.
 - d. Accept request for annual leave request.
 - e. Poll to hire B Walls, EMS
 - f. Payment for WNC Contracting \$23,336.98; final payment Middle School \$63,075.44; T-Mobile \$99,722.37
 - g. Accept lowest quote on cameras TP Teknologies \$44,273.78
 - h. Approve poll on Transit Premium pay.
 - i. Approve payment for 2022 Chev Silverado Health Department \$46,871.35
 - j. Approve cylinders for 1999 Garbage Truck \$5400.00Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve the polls as stated. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote was unanimous.
24. Chairman Nelms asked for a motion to reappoint Brian Johnson and Edd Satterfield to the RDA board effective April the first 2023. Commissioner Orr made the motion to reappoint as stated. Commissioner Eller seconded this motion. The vote was unanimous.
25. Chairman Nelms asked for a motion to reappoint Jason Marino to the RDA board effective May 1, 2023. Commissioner Orr made the motion to appoint Jason Marino as stated. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote was unanimous.
26. Chairman Nelms stated that there will be a meeting to discuss future substance abuse treatment facilities in Macon County on Thursday May 25th 2023 at 2:00 o'clock PM. Representatives Carl Gillespie, Mark Pless, and Mark Clampett along with Senator Kevin Corbin invited this board to attend.

27. Chairman Nelms asked for a motion to approve Orr Contracting to bush hog our Fort Hill properties. Commissioner Eller made the motion to approve. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote was unanimous.
28. Chairman Nelms asked for a motion to surplus three roll up doors that are 10 x 12. Clerk Crisp asks for permission to take sealed bids. Commissioner Williams made the motion to surplus the doors as stated. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
29. Chairman Nelms 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 Williams made the motion to go into closed session as stated. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
30. Chairman Nelms asks for a motion to go back into open session. Commissioner Williams made the motion as stated. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
31. Chairman Nelms asks for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Williams made the motion as stated. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

Jacob Nelms, Chairman

Natasha Williams, Vice-Chair

Lynn Cody, Member

Keith Eller, Member

Connie Orr, Member

ATTEST:

Kim Crisp, Clerk to the Board