

Special Meeting – September 25, 2023

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Monday, September 25, 2023, at 1:00 p.m. for a special meeting in the Graham County Community Building located at 196 Knight Street Robbinsville, NC for a special meeting to discuss the commercial tax revaluation with some of the county's business owners. All board was present. Also, present Tax Assessor Brandy Cook, Deputy Tax Assessor Heather Webster, Appraiser Chris Ferris, and Interim County Manager/Clerk to the Board Kim Crisp. Present by phone Stan Duncan, NC Department of Revenue and Becky Garland.

1. Chairman Nelms called the meeting to order.
2. Chairman Nelms asks for approval of the agenda. Commissioner Eller made the motion to approve. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
3. Chairman Nelms asks Chris Ferris to speak on how he came up with the commercial revaluation. Mr. Ferris stated that there were (31) comparable sales in Graham County over the past two years for commercial properties. Mr. Ferris stated that he can take a market value approach or for businesses he can do an income approach. Mr. Ferris stated that the Board of County Commissioners adopt a schedule of values that the tax office uses in appraising properties in Graham County. Mr. Ferris stated that in the income approach they use the overall cap rate on the annual income less the expenses and compare it to the market and to comparable sales.
4. Glenda Odom stated that Papa's rent is well under market and there are five acres of vacant land. Mr. Ferris stated that an appraiser looks at the highest and best use of the property and he did adjust for vacant land and/or for land that is not usable. Ms. Odom stated that Bojangles taxes is less than hers and it is a newer building. Mr. Ferris stated that the Bojangles had been mapped incorrectly and this property was not under appeal. Mr. Ferris stated that he did speak with Andy Jordan, a real estate agent and agreed that building was valued well below market.
5. Mr. Ferris stated that the Heart Center was not appealed but they agreed to relook at the property. Ms. Valaquez stated that she did not appeal but her taxes tripled. Ms. Valaquez stated that her property is a retreat. Mr. Ferris stated that there are fourteen acres, and the property has a pavilion, an office above a garage, a cafeteria, cabins, yurts, and tent sights so it is listed as commercial. Mr. Ferris stated that he would be glad to adjust for the residential part of the property. Ms. Valaquez stated that she purchased the property twenty-three years ago for \$127,500.00 and there is fifteen acres. Mr. Ferris stated that Ms. Velaquez can appeal every January and he would be glad to look at the income approach to see if that would be a fairer approach.
6. Glenda Odom stated that out of her five acres only two are usable and the other three are straight up and she still cannot understand why the Bojangles came in under her appraisal. Mr. Ferris stated that Papa's had 959 square feet more heated area than Bojangles. Ms. Odom stated that her whole building was not rented, and she has an office in the back and some storage space. Mr. Ferris stated that he would be glad to come and measure the space again. Mr. Ferris explained how he came up with the appraisal of Ms. Odom. Ms. Odom stated that this appraisal was too much for this county.
7. Tom Davis, owner of Bojangles stated that there is a difference between Papa's and Bojangles in the assets. Kaye Davis stated that the board could not expect them to pay taxes when they do not make that much money and Bojangles was closed for over four years and the board should not expect them to carry such a burden. Mr. Davis stated that they are not being treated fairly and his taxes went to \$10,000.00 per year and he has worked all his life, served time in the military and this kind of treatment is not right.
8. Mr. Ferris thanked Mr. Davis for his service. Mr. Davis stated that they did not appeal. Ms. Davis stated that they forgot the time limit to appeal as they are in their eighties and nineties now, but she would point out that the mapping of the property is wrong. Ms. Ferris stated that Becky Garland had called and appealed for January, and they would be glad to look at the income approach. Ms. Garland who was on the phone, stated that she would be willing to come in January and sit down with the tax office concerning Mr. Davis property. Mr. Ferris stated that he would send a letter to Mr. Davis to sign giving Becky Garland permission to represent their property.
9. Mr. Ferris stated that he went over the income approach with Papa's Pizza, and they were able to correct some things but most of the time, the tenant pays the taxes instead of the landlord on commercial property.
10. Mr. Davis asks if he must pay his taxes this year at the current rate because he did not appeal. Mr. Ferris stated, yes, he would. Ms. Davis stated that they would get back to the tax office in January.
11. Commissioner Orr asks if there is anything that could be done with Ms. Odom's property. Mr. Ferris stated no, because she does charge well below market rent, and he did realize that this

property is just outside of city limits, but he stated he would be glad to come back out and remeasure and take out the personal office space.

12. Ms. Velazquez thanked the board for listening and stated that her taxes did quadruple, and she was shocked and if there is anything that could be done, she would appreciate it. They discussed the gymnasium and because it is mainly used as a shower house an adjustment could be made to that building. Mr. Ferris stated that the Tapoco Lodge sold for big money, and it is in the same area of the county as Ms. Velazquez's property.
13. Chairman Nelms asks for further questions. No further questions.
14. 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