

Continued Meeting – June 3, 2022

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Friday, June 3, 2022, at 9:00 a.m. for a continued budget meeting in the Graham County Community Building located at 196 Knight Street Robbinsville, NC. All board was present. Present by teleconference Manager Jason Marino. Also, present Finance Director Becky Garland and Clerk Kim Crisp.

1. Chair Orr called the meeting to order.
2. Chair Orr ask for changes to the agenda. Manager Marino stated that the board needed to add closed session at the beginning, if possible, to discuss personnel and add Becky Garland under Public Comment. Commissioner Eller made the motion to approve the agenda with the stated change. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
3. Chair Orr asks for a motion to go into closed session under G.S. 143-318.11(a)(1)(6) for privileged or confidential information and personnel. Commissioner Eller made the motion to go into closed session as stated. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
4. Chair Orr asks for a motion to go back into open session. Commissioner Eller made the motion to go back into open session. Commissioner Wiggins seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
5. Chair Orr asks Manager Marino to continue the discussion. Manager Marino stated that he was meeting by teleconference due to illness but has worked from home throughout the leave. Manager Marino stated that Director Garland and Clerk Crisp have been taking care of the day-to-day business and asks that Director Garland proceed with the budget discussion.
6. Director Garland stated that she wanted to make a public comment statement first as a citizen and taxpayer. Director Garland stated that she appreciated the presentation made by Lester Greene, Finance Officer for the Schools and further stated that she is seeing a major flaw in our State Government regarding all our one hundred counties. Director Garland stated that the State Budget has a \$6.7 billion dollar surplus, yet they continue to send unfunded mandates to our counties, cities, and schools and this is wrong. Director Garland encourages everyone to write to their representatives and demand that they cease these unwarranted unfunded mandates because our low to median income, our elderly and our disabled population is struggling to put food on the table and our small counties continually must raise taxes to pay for the unfunded mandates. Chair Orr stated that the State does this all the time, and they will continue to oppose this in every way possible. Chair Orr stated that our lottery revenue that was meant for the schools has been taken away and used by the State for whatever they choose, and this is wrong. Director Garland stated that our counties are an arm of the State Government, and this is how we are treated, it is ridiculous. Director Garland stated that Lester Greene looked and studies his budget to get the highest use of the funds that the State sends but it is not enough. Director Garland stated that they are increasing wages and retirement percentages continually with unfunded mandates, the inflation is continuing to increase in the cost of fuel etc. and this is all being done with unfunded mandates while the State has a \$6.7 billion dollar surplus. Director Garland stated that this is wrong!
7. Director Garland stated that she would go through each department that needed discussion, the other departments came in level from last year.
8. Manager Marino stated that he would be glad to get the state representatives and school representatives together for a meeting to discuss the inadequate school funding. Director Garland stated that we have two representatives Kevin Corbin and Karl Gillespie who work for us, and she is very thankful for their help. Director Garland stated that the school did as the commissioners asked and spent down their fund balance, so the board needs to honor that, and they have come to us for help. Director Garland stated that their request is a fair budget request and after speaking with Finance Director Greene, they have a plan going forward.
9. Director Garland stated that the board needed to have discussion on sanitation due to the large increase that we are going to be required to pay to the landfill that we currently use and stated that they had looked at different models in the past and they may want to relook at those models. Chair Orr stated that she would like to see what this would be like under private management, and she knows that this was looked at in the past. Chair Orr stated that many counties are going to private management with gated dumpsters, so we do need to have more conversation. Manager Marino stated that he would contact Sanitation Director Gavin Colvard and MESCO to develop a master plan for sanitation. Manager Marino stated that we have several things to discuss such as the shed that needs replaced and they have looked at the numbers in the past of having three manned sites throughout the county. Manager Marino stated that we would receive revenue in cardboard if our sites were manned.
10. Director Garland stated that she has never had this large of a deficit to trim before, but she did not want to do anything that would hurt our citizens services, but she is hamstrung regarding

the school. Chair Orr stated that appreciated and understands the work involved and wanted us to support our schools and agrees that an extra \$500,000.00 is a lot of money for the county to come up with but agrees that we need to fund up front the immediate needs and move upward toward the \$500,000.00 by year end. The board agreed. Manager Marino stated that he felt this is the best option forward. Commissioner Wiggins stated that we don't have a lot of options, and this is the best path forward and it is a shame that the schools must ask for more money when the state has over a six-billion-dollar surplus and further stated that our schools should not lack for anything. Director Garland stated that we needed to have a lobbyist. Chair Orr stated that only 17% of the lottery money is given to the schools and this is not what the people voted for when they voted the lottery in. Chair Orr stated that \$74-\$75 million goes to management for the lottery and our schools must struggle for money. Director Garland stated that if the school receive the full lottery allocation, no school would have to use taxpayers' dollars.

11. Manager Marino stated that he had received a call from Graham Fields, AdventHealth Representative and they are trying to get support for another hospital in Western North Carolina, which will have (67) acute care beds and the hospital would be in the Buncombe/Madison County area and he is asking the board for a letter of support. The board all agreed to a letter of support. Chair Orr stated that she will support anyone that will aid our citizens, and she has learned that Mission Health has had challenges with acute care since COVID started but this hospital was sold to a for profit corporation, and they are about numbers and not so much about patient care. Commissioner Eller stated that we do need another hospital for our far western counties. The board agreed to writing a letter in support to AdventHealth.
12. Chair Orr asks for further discussion. No further discussion.
13. Chair Orr asks for a motion to continue the meeting to Friday, June 10, 2022, at 9:00 a.m. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion as stated. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

Connie Orr, Chair

Keith Eller, Vice-Chairman

Lynn Cody, Member

Jacob Nelms, Member

Dale Wiggins, Member

ATTEST: _____
Kim Crisp, Clerk to the Board