

Workshop Session – September 20, 2022

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Tuesday, September 20, 2022, at 5:00 p.m. in the Graham County Community Building located at 196 Knight Street Robbinsville, NC for their regular workshop session. All board was present. Also, present Manager Jason Marino, Clerk Kim Crisp and Russ Harris, Executive Director with Southwestern Commission.

1. Chair Orr called the workshop session to order.
2. Chair Orr asks for approval of the agenda. Commissioner Eller made the motion to approve. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
3. Chair Orr welcomed Russ Harris, Executive Director, Southwestern Commission and asks him to speak. Director Harris thanked the board for their partnership with them and for their time in allowing him to give an update and present the annual reporting to the board. Director Harris stated that they receive \$155,000.00 from their local governments and they use those funds to use as leverage in helping match grant funding. Director Harris stated that they have brought in \$15M into the region. Director Harris stated that they have three departments and those are:
 - a. Area Agency on Aging and these funds provide food, respite care, elder abuse awareness and host the Senior Celebration that will be held in Swain County this year. Director Harris stated that they provided 175,339 meals through the Nutrition Program across Region A.
 - b. Community and Economic Development with goals to increase the supply of new rental housing; increase the supply of new homes for homeownership; preserve and rehabilitate existing housing stock; provide homeownership and rent assistance and provide homeless housing. Director Harris stated that they assisted with the Graham County Rural Development Authority for \$125,000.00. Director Harris stated that they have aided in access to the internet and this grant enabled Graham County Schools to replace many obsolete Chromebooks for students at all grade levels.
 - c. Workforce Development with on-the-job training and offers hope to students who may not otherwise obtain higher education or necessary certifications while helping to fill the current workforce needs in vital fields like healthcare. Director Harris stated that they pilot the program as “Train Up” which is a fresh look at a solution to help employers in our region with their training needs.
4. Chair Orr stated that our county will continue to work with Southwestern Commission along with our “7 Sister Counties” in the west. Chair Orr stated that the Rural Development Authorities Azalea Hills Project is now complete, and they will be moving on to another project and thanked Director Harris for the \$125,000.00 that they had funded for this project.
5. Commissioner Nelms stated that the biggest challenge as a Graham County Businessowner was getting folks to work.
6. Director Harris thanked the board for their time and stated that workforce is not easy and hopes that Graham County will see the benefits of allowing them to lead their EDC program. Director Harris stated that they have a network with the region, and they have supplied funding for nine businesses; intent to host twelve different trainings which will impact (94) employees in our region.
7. Chair Orr stated that she is excited to work with experts in their fields and will look forward to working with Southwestern Commission.
8. Chair Orr asks for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Cody made the motion. Commissioner Wiggins seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

Connie Orr, Chair

Keith Eller, Vice-Chair

Lynn Cody, Member

Jacob Nelms, Member

Dale Wiggins, Member

ATTEST: _____
Kim Crisp, Clerk to the Board