

Regular Meeting 8/21/2007

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Tuesday, August 21, 2007 at 5:00pm. Present were Commissioners Lynn Cody, Billy Cable, Jerry Sherrill, Eugene Trull, Raymond Williams and County Attorney David Sawyer. Chairman Cody called the meeting to order and Commissioner Williams gave the invocation.

1. Commissioner Cable made the motion to approve the Agenda with the addition of item #10. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
2. Commissioner Williams made the motion to approve the Minutes. Commissioner Sherrill seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
3. Chairman Cody opened the Public Comment session of the Meeting. Chairman Cody closed the meeting as no one wished to speak.
4. David Holder met with the Board to discuss the rise in taxes for the F/Y 2007-2008. Mr. Holder stated that he had a petition of 624 names of property owners that refused to pay higher taxes. Mr. Holder read the petition: "The tax base has grown over \$200 million since 2002. The tax rates have increased over the past year and for what reason? The real estate market and the property values may be growing unbelievable in the mountains, but the homesteaded residents of our small community cannot afford to pay these higher rates. Many families struggle to prosper in Graham County and are forced to work out of town. Numerous residents are forced to leave Graham County and are forced to work out of town. Numerous residents are forced to leave Graham County just to find suitable jobs. Until further explanation can be made as to why taxes were raised and where the funds are being spent, we the undersigned refuse to pay these higher taxes." Mr. Holder told the Board that he heard rumors that the County did not have the monies to pay for the Health Department and the EMS base and he wanted to know if the County had the money to pay for these buildings. The people want to know what the Board is spending the monies on. Commissioner Cody stated that when the loans for the EMS and Health Department were secured in the amount of the loans that this Board will have to borrow over \$800,000. to finish those two facilities and we will have to borrow the monies for the pool complex and there has been some monies given to the pool to off set that cost. Mr. Holder stated in the paper it was quoted that Graham County received 3.2 million dollars from Alcoa and it was not used wisely but why build everything at one time as we need business minded people to run the County and use the monies wisely and when you build something one at a time and then you can build back the money. Commissioner Trull stated that he believed Dave was 100% right on that but when we come into office that money was already gone and the way they talked to us before the money was spent they were going to use the interest off of the money to make the payments for these projects. Well when they spent the money the bank stopped giving us the interest and its not there and the money has to be borrowed because they under financed the projects and they approved and signed the contracts on the projects and we have no choice but to borrow the money to finish and we do not have to borrow the money for the pool if the people don't want it. Mr. Holder stated he understood he had to pay taxes and the people of Graham County have the right to ask questions. Commissioner Cody stated that the concept of the EMS building came about during when he was Commissioner in 2003 and we had an architect to design the EMS building on Fort Hill and the cost was nearly of \$300,000. and today it has a price tag of over a million dollars. We also had the same architect do drawings on an Administration building to house County offices and it was going to be a two story building with the DSS and Health Department housed in it but it never materialize. We knew the tax increase would be a hardship on the people of Graham County. Commissioner Cable told the audience that North Carolina was trying to pass an exemption for the elderly in the amount of \$100,000. and I don't know if they will pass it or not. Commissioner Cable stated that we did not create this problem but we have to handle it the best that we can. The Board stated that they went line by line in the

budget trying to cut and they did when they could. Commissioner Cable stated that not having enough money for County budgets was State wide.

5. Commissioner Cable made the motion to approve the Releases and Discoveries. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous. (Attached)
6. Appointment to the Transit Advisory Board was tabled till the next Board Meeting.
7. Commissioner Trull made the motion to appoint Steve Odom to the Graham County Health Board to finish out the appointment of Naomi Edwards 10/18/2007 holding the seat of ILO DDS. Commissioner Sherrill seconded this motion. Commissioner Williams made the motion to appoint Claudine Gibson to fill the appointment of Naomi Edwards. Commissioner Cable seconded this motion. Chairman Cody voted for Steve Odom to break the tie for the position on the Graham County Health Board.
8. Commissioner Williams stated that there was a school in September in Chapel Hill for the Finance Office and did the Board want them to close the office or if just one of them go. The Board decided that Machelle Crisp needed to go to this school since she had not gone to a school since being hired. Commissioner Williams also told the Board that County Attorney Sawyer needed to draw up the contract with Swain County for the dumpster at Deals Gap in the amount of \$20,000. maintaining this site with 6 cans and the County's responsibility will be to maintain in front of the cans. Commissioner Trull asked about the letter that was sent to them about an Ambulance bill. Chairman Cody stated that the bill was correct and this individual's bill needed to be filed with his insurance company. Mr. Cody stated that the insurance company needed to get in contact with our billing office and Commissioner Trull requested that a letter be drafted and sent to this individual explaining what he needs to do in this matter.
9. Ronnie Joe Phillips, DSS Board Member Chairman, asked the Board if they could advertise for the position of DSS Director with an increase in the salary to \$75,000. a year and the County's part would be only 20%. Mr. Phillips stated that this job had been advertised for \$56,000. for three months and they had not received an application for this position. The increase of the County would be \$15,000. as they are now paying \$11,364. The State mandates the qualifications of this position. If we don't fill this position the State will fill it. September 7th is Marvin's last day of work. Chairman Cody told Mr. Phillips that they would look at their budget and table this until they see where they can get this money. Mr. Phillips stated that the State will let them put in an Interim Director and this position will be filled by Angela Campbell until a Director is selected. Commissioner Williams stated that he did not think that Ms. Campbell should be paid the \$56,000. and Mr. Phillips stated that the Board will check on this.
10. Commissioner Cable made the motion to go into Closed Session under GS 143.318.11 A6/3. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
11. Commissioner Cable had to leave the Meeting.
12. Commissioner Williams made the motion to come out of Closed Session and back into open session. Commissioner Sherrill seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
13. In closed session the Board discussed a possible law suit and mediation with the County Attorney and discussed the opening in the Tax Collector's office.
14. Blair Hyder asked the Board to look over the software for his office as the software he's using was purchased in 1987. The Board agreed for Mr. Hyder to start looking for software. Mr. Hyder stated that he would advise the Board to say

away from the transfer tax. Chairman Cody stated that the Board had to make a decision on the ¼ cent sales tax to be put on the referendum for this November election. Mr. Hyder stated that the County could do nothing and be better off. Chairman Cody stated that Mr. Don Wright, from the State, stated that the ¼ cent sales tax would off set the cost of Medicare and if the County fails to do this the County has to pick up the funds and the transfer tax is still available. Attorney Sawyer stated he would look into this and get back to the Board at their Continued Meeting 8/31/2007.

15. Commissioner Trull made the motion to hire Kristy Odom as Deputy Tax Collector at \$9.00 an hour until her probation period is up in 60 days and then go to \$9.50 an hour. Commissioner Sherrill seconded this motion. Vote unanimous of Commissioners present.

16. Commissioner Williams made the motion to continue this meeting to Friday, August 31, 2007 at 4:00pm in the Office of the County Manager at 12 North Main Street, Robbinsville, NC. Commissioner Sherrill seconded this motion. Vote unanimous by members present.

Lynn Cody, Chairman

Billy Cable, Vice-Chairman

Jerry Sherrill, Member

Eugene Trull, Member

Raymond Williams, Member

Jan Millsaps, Clerk