

Regular Meeting – December 19, 2017

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Tuesday, December 19, 2019 at 5:30 p.m. for their regular monthly meeting in the Graham County Community Building located at 196 Knight Street Robbinsville, NC. All board was present.

1. Chairman Eller called the meeting to order.
2. Chairman Eller asks Commissioner Williams to give the Invocation.
3. Chairman Eller asks Commissioner Orr to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.
4. Chairman Eller asks for approval of the agenda. Manager Garland stated that we needed to add Juanita Colvard to closed session for contracts. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve the agenda with the stated change. Commissioner Wiggins seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
5. Chairman Eller asks for approval of the December 5th Regular Meeting minutes. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve the minutes as stated. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
6. Chairman Eller asks Revonda Williams to speak. Ms. Williams was not present. Commissioner Williams asks if the county still has the \$100,000.00 set aside that they were previously going to use for the Town pavilion. Manager Garland stated that we do have the money set aside. Commissioner Orr stated that she would like to use \$30,000.00 of this money to set up a Flagpole for our Veteran's and that Travel and Tourism would pay half of the cost for this flag. Commissioner Williams stated that we needed to do this for our veterans and we are talking about a 50 foot flag pole. Manager Garland stated that we would need to do a budget amendment to appropriate the money but this is doable. The board discussed the flag being put up at the health department or by the cabin going toward First Baptist Church.
7. Commissioner Williams stated that BJ Welch declined to sit on the Travel and Tourism Board and asks that we reappoint Billy Brown to the Travel and Tourism Board. Commissioner Williams made the motion to reappoint Billy Brown to the Travel and Tourism Board. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
8. Chairman Eller asks Juanita Colvard to speak. Ms. Colvard stated that there has been a new update on the Transit NCDOT Drug Testing Policy where they added four opioids. Ms. Colvard stated that this change will take place on January 1, 2018. Ms. Colvard stated that the county needed to add an addendum to their Drug Testing Policy to cover the employees who are required to take DOT drug testing. Ms. Colvard stated that she redid the Transit Drug Policy and added an addendum to the county policy. Commissioner Williams made the motion to approve the Transit Drug Policy changes and the addendum to the county policy. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
9. Chairman Eller asks Sophia Paulos to give the EDC Monthly Report. Ms. Paulos stated that she was happy to report the pre-application for the ARC Distressed County funding arrived in Raleigh last week and she thanked the board for supporting our county's ARC Team as we worked to obtain funding for projects that will have a huge impact on the county. The team submitted the following: \$100,000.00 for implementation of the strategic tourism plan which includes wayfinding signage, the points map app, downtown Wi-Fi upgrade and a buy local campaign.; \$100,000.00 for the expansion of high speed internet to residential users in Graham County; \$100,000.00 to partner with Goldenleaf in the purchase of a 3D mammogram machine for the urgent care facility set to open in the coming year, and; a \$50,000.00 grant to fund a paramedicine program, vehicle and supplies.
10. Ms. Paulos stated that efforts to revitalize Robbinsville continue to gain momentum and thanked the Graham County Historic Society for acting as the cornerstone of this effort. Ms. Paulos stated that the historic society is meeting weekly and has gained support and interest. Ms. Paulos stated that they acquired the Snider Building and they hope to restore downtown. Ms. Paulos stated that they met with representatives from the State Historic Preservation Office and the Rural Economic Development Division of the Department of Commerce and the visit was a success. Ms. Paulos stated that she is very proud of all the people who have come together to work on this issue and to volunteer for the historic society and thanked the historic society for their incredible work and progress.
11. Ms. Paulos stated that the Graham County led the way through Phase 1 of the Regional Broadband study being conducted by the Southwestern Commission and the Mountain West

Partnership. Ms. Paulos stated that we had 115% of the responses needed to reach our goal and we were the first county to reach our goal and have maintained the highest percentage than any other county in the region. Ms. Paulos stated that this has created a lot of interest in Graham County by any and every local provider in the region. Ms. Paulos stated that people have taken notice of the seriousness with which are approaching this issue and the importance that our citizens place on it. Ms. Paulos expects to see significant progress in access to high speed internet over the next year as we work with our partners in the industry to ensure that our citizens are not left behind in the digital age.

12. Ms. Paulos stated that she continues to work closely with Oak Valley Hardwood on marketing the remaining space available at the former Stanley building. Ms. Paulos stated that she is working with regional and state economic development partners and the potential for this building is being realized by those beyond our borders. Ms. Paulos stated that everyone is hard at work to find a good fit for the building that will create jobs, bring capital investment, and stand the test of time through economic cycles for many years to come.
13. Ms. Paulos stated that the Leadership NC program continues to be everything she heard it to be. Ms. Paulos stated that this past session was focused on public education in the state and this session provided new tools to share with our school system and a better understanding of all that our educators do to ensure our students are getting the greatest opportunities possible. Ms. Paulos stated that she gained new perspectives on how essential education is to workforce development, the critical link between education and economy, and the fresh insights on developing the people who will become the workforce of the future. Ms. Paulos stated that this program proves to be an extraordinary networking opportunity. Ms. Paulos stated that these partnerships are already proving valuable as we seek grant funding to improve the lives of our citizens.
14. Ms. Paulos gave a thank you to some of the people whose service to the county is invaluable which included our immense amount of volunteers in this county. Ms. Paulos thanked the board of commissioners for taking on the responsibility of making tough decisions, solving difficult problems and leadership.
15. Chairman Eller asks Manager Garland to give the manager's report. Manager Garland stated that the county finished the month of November with a \$7,695,466.39 cash balance which is up from this time last year. Manager Garland stated that we have collected \$944,842.18 current year taxes; \$18,921.23 prior year taxes and \$38,341.16 DMV taxes. Manager Garland stated that we are ahead in collections from this time last year of around \$104,000.00 and our tax collection rate is 41%.
16. Manager Garland stated that we had \$1,686,942.85 in revenues and \$1,096,847.28 in expenditures this past month giving us a surplus of \$590,095.57. Manager Garland stated that our sales tax collection for the month was \$181,057.64 which is up from this time last year. Manager Garland stated that we had an excellent month for occupancy tax. Manager Garland stated that we have collected \$111,000.00 in back taxes and she was very pleased with the tax office for their hard work.
17. Manager Garland stated that the budget should be at 58% and we are holding at 66% and she did not have any concerns with any department. Manager Garland stated that the draft for the audit has arrived for the board's review and she will be sending it to the Local Government Commission. Manager Garland stated that we ended the year with \$6,107,610.00 of unassigned cash balance and our fund balance is 43% which has exceeded the minimum 35% required by the state. Manager Garland stated that we are very fortunate to have this balance with our capital projects and the school's lack of funding. Manager Garland stated that the QZAB Loan would be paid off in 2021 and we paid the Health Department note off this year. Manager Garland stated that the ending tax collection rate was 96.64% which is very good. Manager Garland stated that we had one finding on our audit in the DSS Department and this has already been taken care of. Manager Garland stated that we ended the audit with a total fund balance of \$7,758,134.00 and she was very pleased.
18. Manager Garland gave a reporting on the Capital Projects. Manager Garland stated that she met with the contractor, the architect, the DSS Director and Health Director to make sure that we are not missing details that could impede the final stages of the building. Manager Garland stated that they looked to make sure the wiring for the generator and the lab/immunization room is sufficient and also discussed needed modifications for the sidewalks and door entrances for ADA compliance. Manager Garland stated that there will be a modification to the DSS entrance for ADA compliance so the architect is working on that design. Manager Garland stated

that other issues came up related to the reception area for the DSS side. The DSS Director and staff are concerned that the reception is not closed off to the public for security and confidentiality issues. Manager Garland stated that there was an option that the board did not consider which we are revisiting in the original bid. Manager Garland stated that we needed to think about cameras and she was working on quotes. The board had discussion on these issues and agreed that they needed to see the building for themselves and would have a continued meeting on Wednesday, December 20th at 11:30 a.m.

19. Manager Garland stated that the 911 Call Center was going well and Misty previously had contracts to present this evening but needed to relook at the contracts. Manager Garland stated that as we get closer to the end we may need to have some more polling of the board.
20. Manager Garland stated that she has the plans for the new administration building and she needed final approval in order to proceed the plans to the engineering phase. Manager Garland stated that the estimated cost of this project is \$1,273,000.00.
21. Manager Garland stated that the county the county is needing to install Office 365 on their computers due to Microsoft Office going out from under support. Manager Garland stated that she upgraded licenses two years ago and they are now moving to a web hosted platform. Manager Garland stated that it will cost us about \$20,000.00 to \$22,000.00 each year for access and there is a \$9,500.00 cost to deploy and get it set up and this will be an item for the upcoming budget.
22. Manager Garland stated that the Sanitation Trailer will be moved by the mover right after the New Year and we will begin taking off the porches next week and begin moving Jacob and Hope by the end of the week.
23. Manager Garland stated that she had met with Jessica Jones and Liz Velazquez concerning Frontier and had a good meeting. Manager Garland stated that we have started the process of more outreach to other counties. Manager Garland asks that the board entertain a resolution to be sent to the FCC. The board asks that it be ready by January 2nd meeting. Commissioner Williams asks that a copy of this be sent to the Town of Santeetlah so they can send them out with their monthly water bills. The board gave a directive to Manager Garland to prepare a resolution for the next meeting.
24. Manager Garland stated that NCDOT would like to meet with the board in February if possible and asks that the board review their schedules.
25. Manager Garland asks the board to have a Special Workshop Session on January 2nd to go over the personnel policy proposed changes. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to hold a Special Workshop Session on January 2nd at 5:00 p.m. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
26. Commissioner Wiggins stated that the board needed to consider being a part of the lawsuit against Frontier. Ms. Velazquez stated that she had been contacted by a Frontier Representative and they asked her not to contact the FCC with any future complaints. The board all agreed that all complaints needed to be sent to the FCC.
27. Commissioner Williams stated that we needed to send a protest letter to Duke Energy opposing the increase of rates due to the Coal Ashe Clean-up. Commissioner Williams would like the letter to be prepared by the next meeting date.
28. Chairman Eller asks for public comment. No public comment was given.
29. Chairman Eller asks for the discussion items. Manager Garland stated that we have Releases in the amount of \$418.28. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to approve the releases. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
30. Manager Garland stated that there is an update to the Resolution to adopt the Smoky Mountain Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan and this needed board approval. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve the Resolution to adopt the Smoky Mountain Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan Update. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
31. Manager Garland stated that the board needed to approve the poll for the Change Order #5 to the P&J Building. Commissioner Orr made the motion to approve the poll as stated. Commissioner Wiggins seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
32. Manager Garland stated that the board had a listing of the Road Naming Board recommendations. Clerk Crisp stated that one homeowner had called to appeal the road name which is set to be Anderson Road and he would like for it to be Boree Road. Commissioner Nelms made the motion to leave the road names as the Road Naming Board had presented. Commissioner Wiggins seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
33. Manager Garland reminded the board of the holiday closings.

34. Manager Garland stated that the Local Government Commission is hosting a training at Southwestern Community College and requests that she take the finance staff. The board wanted Martha Day, Molly Lunsford and Melissa Blevins to attend the class as well. Commissioner Orr made the motion to have everyone in the county that assists in finance to take the upcoming course at Southwestern Community College held by the Local Government Commission. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
35. Manager Garland stated that the road closure on Highway 28 will be closed for at least two months.
36. Chairman Eller asks for new or old business. No new or old business was discussed.
37. Chairman Eller stated that the board would now go into closed session under G.S. 143-318.11A (1) (3) (5) (6) for privileged or confidential information, attorney-client privilege, personnel and contracts. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to go into closed session as stated. Commissioner Orr seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
38. Commissioner Nelms made the motion to go back into open session. Commissioner Williams seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
39. Commissioner Orr made the motion to extend Rhonda Cape's FMLA for two more weeks. Commissioner Wiggins seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
40. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to continue this meeting to Wednesday, December 20, 2017 at 11:30 a.m. at the P&J Building. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

Keith Eller, Chairman, Graham County Commissioner

Connie Orr, Vice-Chairman, Graham County Commissioner

Jacob Nelms, Member, Graham County Commissioner

Dale E. Wiggins, Member, Graham County Commissioner

Raymond Williams, Member, Graham County Commissioner

ATTEST:

Kim Crisp, Clerk to the Board