

## Special ARPA Workshop – April 5, 2022

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Tuesday, April 5, 2022, at 4:15 p.m. in the Graham County Community Building located at 196 Knight Street Robbinsville, NC for a special workshop session to discuss the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds and to develop a plan and set priorities for the funding. All board was present. Also, present Manager Jason Marino, Finance Director Becky Garland, Sheriff Jerry Crisp, Chief Deputy JJ Wooten, and Clerk Kim Crisp.

1. Chair Orr called the meeting to order.
2. Chair Orr asks Manager Jason Marino to proceed with the discussions. Manager Marino stated that they needed direction from the board on what and how they want to use the ARPA Funds. Manager Marino stated that our Sheriff/Jail and Communications Departments had submitted comparisons from other surrounding counties for premium pay for the board to review.
3. Director Garland stated that she listed the top ten highlights of the Recovery Fund Final Rule which became effective April 1, 2022. Director Garland presented a copy to the board. Director Garland stated that the board has not talked a lot on other uses of the money other than premium pay. Those highlights include public health response for a very broad range of activities; assistance to households; assistance to small businesses; assistance to non-profits; aid to impacted industry and public sector capacity. Director Garland stated that we can leverage funds for the Opioid Money that the county will begin receiving at the end of June. Commissioner Nelms stated that with the suicide rates increasing how would this look to fund an in-house counselor at the school. Chair Orr stated that we also have a good tracking system in place with our peer support specialists. Director Garland stated that there is a big need in our schools for mental health.
4. Director Garland stated that the board can consider Recovery Housing due to the shortage of housing in the county and could consider a halfway house or a step-down unit. Director Garland stated that we did need affordable housing but with that we need access to childcare. Manager Marino stated that the Rural Development Authority is in the middle of a project for affordable housing on Moose Branch and the monies could be leverage toward this project as well. Director Garland stated that we can use match money for Dogwood Foundation Grants for affordable housing or we can help citizens that needed repairs to their homes that did not qualify for the CDBG Grants.
5. Commissioner Nelms asks where we are in the CDBG project. Manager Marino stated that we are having a hard time with procurement because of the different projects but have received several responses after the second time for a project manager then we can move forward on the legal services.
6. Director Garland stated that the money can be used where COVID caused a negative impact to citizens who face food insecurities or finding childcare. Chair Orr stated that we needed to schedule a meeting on the childcare centers not being opened.
7. Director Garland stated that the money cannot be used for the new Justice Center and the board needed much discussion on premium pay to streamline who is eligible and who is not. Director Garland stated that you cannot use the money for day-to-day operations. Director Garland stated that she needed to know prior to April 30<sup>th</sup> on the board's intent for the funds.
8. Director Garland stated that the board will be receiving \$905,000.00 mid-May.
9. Manager Marino stated that the sheriff and communications had prepared paperwork for the board to review and stated that there are several options that the board can consider regarding premium pay. Manager Marino stated that the Sheriff had prepared a competitive pay range for his staff. Sheriff Crisp stated that the paperwork is the same one presented before to the board with the exception to the current pay versus the proposed. Sheriff Crisp stated that he has received two local applications, and both are uncertified so the county would have to pay for the schooling and then nothing guarantees that they will stay. Sheriff Crisp stated that he has had to reshuffle personnel and most of their time is spent in the city limits. Sheriff Crisp stated that most surrounding counties have police departments, but we do not, and this makes it harder for our officers to patrol the entire county. Chief Deputy JJ Wooten stated that they had requested a car from the Town of Robbinsville, but they have not received a response. Commissioner Nelms stated that we needed to start that conversation with the Town. Commissioner Wiggins asks what the total amount is for the difference in personnel pay. Sheriff Crisp stated that it is around \$179,000.00. Sheriff Crisp stated that Andrews Police Department pays their officers \$18.50 per hour and Bryson City pays theirs \$18.2 hour. Sheriff Crisp stated that our training budget is minimal, and he has not been hiring unless the officer is certified. Sheriff Crisp stated that the training for BASIC Law Enforcement is changing and will now be taught at a college where the candidate will stay on premises which means the county will pay room and board and they will be required to have their schooling before they are allowed to

work on the streets. Commissioner Nelms asked how long it takes if a person goes on their own to take the training. Sheriff Crisp stated that it will require a two-year degree. Commissioner Wiggins asks why all the rule changes. Sheriff Crisp stated that if an officer is not certified and they respond to a call they do not have arresting powers.

10. Chair Orr stated that the board needed to review the information presented. Commissioner Cody stated that they would look over the numbers and asks if Sheriff Crisp could present future needs in the request as well. Commissioner Nelms stated that this is a problem that we must address. Commissioner Wiggins stated that they will work through the request. Director Garland stated that she worked through the preliminary and the ask is an extra \$300,000.00 not including benefits and an extra \$59,000.00 for Communications.
11. Director Garland stated that our health insurance is going up, gas prices are going up, but we need certified trained law enforcement that will stay. Director Garland stated that she would pull the numbers together and have them ready by the budget workshops. Director Garland stated that we needed to look for reoccurring funds for these departments instead of ARPA funding. Chair Orr stated that ARPA is not recurring. Commissioner Wiggins stated that the board will try and help as many people as possible, and we will continue discussions and sit-downs.
12. Director Garland stated that the board needed to decide how they were going to spend the funding and she needed examples from the board so that she can create a spreadsheet to show the budget amount versus the intended dollars.
13. Chair Orr asks that Director Garland get the board a template to go by. The board all discussed a possible meeting date.
14. 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 Wiggins made the motion to go into closed session as stated. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
15. Chair Orr asks for a motion to go back into open session. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to go back into open session. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
16. Chair Orr asks for a motion to send a letter to Secretary Kody Kinsley with DHHS asking that they delay the issuance of CFSP Request for Proposal concerning children and family's mental health and wellbeing and consider a model that allows for regional plans aligned with the existing LME/MCO regions because there is no standard one-size-fits-all approach in our North Carolina counties. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion to approve and send the letter. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
17. Chair Orr asks for a motion to allow our BCCCP program be granted an extra \$1,000.00. Commissioner Wiggins made the motion as stated. Commissioner Nelms seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
18. Chair Orr asks for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Nelms made the motion to adjourn. Commissioner Wiggins seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

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Connie Orr, Chair

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Keith Eller, Vice-Chairman

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Lynn Cody, Member

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Jacob Nelms, Member

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Dale Wiggins, Member

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
Kim Crisp, Clerk to the Board