

Budget Meeting – May 12, 2026

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Tuesday, May 12, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. in the Graham County Community Building located at 196 Knight Street Robbinsville NC for a budget meeting. Board present Meggan Smith, Lynn Cody, Jacob Nelms and Natasha Williams. Board absent Connie Orr. Also, present Manager Brady Cody, Finance Director Stacy Carpenter and Clerk Kim Crisp.

1. Chair Smith called the meeting to order.
2. Chair Smith stated that the board would continue the budget discussions. Prior to discussion with the EM Director Brian Stevens, Chair Smith stated that the board is not here to attack any department, EMS does a great job, but they must look at all departments and see if cuts can be made.
3. Chair Smith asks Brian Stevens, EM Director, to speak. Director Stevens presented his budget with trends going in the right direction. Director Stevens stated that EMS cannot stop working overtime for the staff working (24) hour shifts, but he is utilizing more part-time workers at this time. Director Stevens discussed the schedules. Director Stevens discussed the captain's positions and their roles. Director Stevens stated that they are responsible for the supplies and ordering for EMS, they do the building maintenance including vehicles, they assist EM Management when needed, and they step up to take third call. Chair Smith asks if fire and rescue assists with third call. Director Stevens stated that they do when they can and they are volunteers. Director Stevens stated that if the captain position is eliminated, the third call truck may or may not go out, depending on a paramedic. Director Stevens stated that they have had the third truck to go out more than (400) times within the last year. Director Stevens stated that he understands that the budget is lean, he has always been very mindful of county funds, but he inherited the schedule that we now use. Director Stevens stated that their services are billed for and are reimbursed by insurance up to 51% of their budget. Director Stevens stated that our tax collector's office collects past due EMS bills with debt set off and this helps tremendously as well. Chair Smith stated that she didn't understand the process at all and she is in left field with the operations, but she is willing to learn and asks if the shifts could be changed to the prior model. Director Stevens stated that the old shifts were (48) hour shifts and most of the staff have other jobs in other counties so he would lose staff in his opinion. Commissioner Williams asks how many ambulances are required by the state. Director Stevens stated that the system they have now requires two ambulances but cautions if a third call comes in the county would not have another ambulance to respond which could result in a negative way. Commissioner Williams asks if the captain could go to the truck, would this save on overtime. Director Stevens stated that it would be the same amount of overtime, but it would remove the third truck. Commissioner Williams asks why the captain responds to every call. Director Stevens stated that the QRV responds with the medics and if not needed, they return to the base, if needed they assist with the patient.
4. The board discussed staff and the leave pay. The board discussed the overtime in detail. The board discussed higher pay for the part-time staff to entice more part-time workers. The board discussed what the shift consists of. Director Stevens stated that a large percentage of the staff live out of county so third call would be a challenge without proper staff.

5. Director Stevens stated that it would be irresponsible to cut healthcare and he was a taxpayer and it would be easier to share the burden of over 8400 people instead of on the backs of the county employees who provide healthcare at the level of service that they provide. Chair Smith stated that she values our paramedics, they were only trying to reduce costs. Director Stevens stated that last Wednesday our paramedicine employee saved a woman's life who has no family and he went to the hospital with her to be her advocate for care. Director Stevens stated that this woman would have died without this intervention. Director Stevens stated that they have applied for a grant that will pay this salary. Director Stevens stated that the paramedicine employee sees (37-38) patients per week and (160) patients per month and he gets overwhelmed, but this plan does work with patient care and cuts down on the number of 911 calls. Chair Smith asks if the captains can assist with the paramedicine program. Director Stevens stated that they do.
6. Members of the public ask questions regarding the overtime and billing. One person stated that the influx of tourists put a tremendous strain on our services and we need to investigate the possibility of some kind of tax that the county can charge to help us.
7. The board discussed collections and billing. The board discussed the EMS rates. The board discussed an advisory board for EMS. The board discussed the budget and having a five-year plan. The board discussed our rescue squad and sheriff department. The board thanked Director Stevens for his time and willingness to educate the board on the duties of the captains and the paramedicine program.
8. Chair Smith asks Manager Cody for other business. Manager Cody stated that they received the NCACC Workers Comp and Liability Renewals and asked for acceptance of the quotes. Chair Smith made the motion to accept the insurance renewals as stated with NCACC for FY2026/2027. Commissioner Cody seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.
9. The board discussed the budget and a possible increase in taxes.
10. The board discussed looking at all fees, increasing houseboat permit fees, discussed rental properties for commercial.
11. Members of the audience stated that they understand the need for the increase, and they will pay their taxes. The board discussed our elderly and to assist in getting the information to them concerning the old age exemption.
12. The board discussed the Justice Center.
13. The board discussed the fuel bills for our rescue squads, our county services and the overall costs.
14. The board discussed the Town of Robbinsville trash pickup fees not being paid. Manager Cody stated that he did speak with our alderwoman, and she stated that they will pay those fees, they have part-time help and they are currently behind paying bills.
15. The board discussed the pool and decreasing the hours of operation.
16. The board discussed the Jail and the new mental health component that the counties must provide.
17. The board discussed Sanitation and reducing hours at the sites. The board discussed leaving the sites unmanned. The board wanted the ordinance put in place.
18. The board discussed fund balance and the need to have an increase. The board discussed that other counties have a fire tax or a sanitation tax.
19. Members of the public suggested closing all sites except for the main one. Some of the board felt that Stecoah had to remain open due to the road construction.
20. The board discussed a splash pad for the kids.

21. The board discussed fees for the pool. The board discussed raising the party rental fees for the pool from \$150.00 to \$200.00.
22. The board discussed occupancy tax.
23. The board discussed senior center. Chair Smith would like to see more volunteers to assist with the meal delivery.
24. The board discussed Transit vehicles. They are all state funded.
25. The board discussed Recreation. The staff will consist of one and one-half employees.
26. Director Stacy Carpenter stated that RH Accounting will be providing an audit report at the next regular meeting for Fiscal Year 2023-2024.
27. The board all agreed that they wanted a realistic budget from all departments, no more fluff.
28. The board discussed the Sheriff Department, the Inmate Program and the cost of BLET.
29. The board discussed the Fire Departments and the Rescue Squads allocation. The Fire Chiefs discussed the cost of their equipment and the need for the allocation. Commissioner Cody stated that the departments had not received an increase in over twenty years. Fire Chief Millsaps asks that the board leave the Stecoah Fire Department at its current funding and cut his if necessary.
30. The board discussed the Cemetery, putting back the seasonal employee. Clerk Crisp gave the board an explanation of how the cemetery commission came to be and why the ordinance was put in place in good faith.
31. The board directed Director Carpenter to submit a balanced budget to the LGC by Friday, May 15, 2026, then the board would finalize in June with changes if needed.
32. Chair Smith asks for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Williams made the motion to adjourn. Chair Smith seconded this motion. Vote unanimous.

Meggan Smith, Chair, Graham County Commissioner

Lynn Cody, Vice-Chairman, Graham County Commissioner

Jacob Nelms, Member, Graham County Commissioner

Connie Orr, Member, Graham County Commissioner

Natasha Williams, Member, Graham County Commissioner

ATTEST:

Kim Crisp, Clerk to the Board