

Workshop Session – May 19, 2026

The Graham County Board of Commissioners met Tuesday, May 19, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. in the Graham County Community Building located at 196 Knight Street Robbinsville, NC for their regular monthly workshop session. Board present Meggan Smith, Lynn Cody, Connie Orr and Natasha Williams. Board absent Jacob Nelms. Also, present Manager Brady Cody, Finance Director Stacy Carpenter and Clerk Kim Crisp.

1. Chair Smith called the workshop session to order.
2. Chair Smith stated that Moseley Architects were here tonight to update the board with new drawings for the Justice Center and ask Jason Hopkins and Todd Davis to speak.
3. Mr. Davis stated that it has been a while since this project began and they looked at the proposed site and met with the Judge and the Court Staff on their needs. Mr. Davis stated that Mr. Hopkins will give the board a review of how they think the building will look.
4. Jason Hopkins stated that after speaking with Manager Cody they looked at a single courthouse with a smaller jail, a (40) bed jail and he understands that a jail is not in the scope at this time, but they did include the estimates for the board. Mr. Hopkins stated that it can be done, it will be a tight fit and will be located at the front of the property. Mr. Hopkins stated this site is smaller at just (3.2) acres so they took the original plan and downsized it for a one-story building. Mr. Hopkins stated that with a one story building you gain efficiency but lose interior sizing. Mr. Hopkins stated that if the board wanted to expand in the future, you would not want to put the jail on top of the court facility. Mr. Hopkins stated that they designed the building to have separate entrances for the Judges, Judicial Staff and Probation. Mr. Hopkins stated that this would be smaller square footage and the jail would be small, they built the Polk County Jail Facility with 60 beds, and the core spaces cannot shrink but you need to build where you can expand in the future. Mr. Davis stated that a Jail must be built by Sheriff Standards and the design for Graham County will not be multiple levels but you did need separation for the female inmates. Mr. Davis stated that he understands that this county does not keep a female population at this time, but the concept is to put the Jail on the lower level and have the court system on the top level. Commissioner Cody asks where the restrooms are. Mr. Hopkins stated that the restrooms are marked (tlts) on the drawing and they are per code. Mr. Hopkins stated that a one-story building would utilize most of the property so if the board considered the sheriff department in the future it would be a tight fit with the property being landlocked. Mr. Hopkins stated that there are a couple of options, the court only, a 25,000 square foot jail and a 19,000 square foot courthouse. Mr. Davis stated that they did receive feedback from the judges and court staff, and they have made the specs as small as possible and reiterated that they do not want the jail to be located above the courthouse. Mr. Davis stated that a one-story structure limits the inmate traffic on court days as well. Mr. Hopkins stated that a one-story courthouse only is \$13.5 million and a jail with the courthouse is \$31-\$35 million. Mr. Davis encouraged the board to hire a Construction Manager at Risk (CMAR) so they can subcontract with smaller companies to keep the project costs down. Mr. Davis stated that a CMAR will estimate the costs at each phase of the contract and you have guaranteed price after design and keep changing orders down. Mr. Hopkins stated that the cost of the estimate is based on what the submarket is willing to charge, their project in Haywood County went for \$650.00 per square foot and their subcontractors drove the costs up but with a CMAR you pay more up front but save money during construction. Mr. Davis stated that a CMAR will use local vendors to estimate the project.

5. Chair Smith stated that the board will discuss but it depends upon the budget prior to moving forward, she further stated that the board is committed to making this happen somehow.
6. Mr. Hopkins stated that they can be creative and work the numbers down.
7. Chair Smith asks if this building is a metal building quote as they requested. Mr. Hopkins stated that this one is not. Mr. Davis stated that most metal buildings are pre-engineered, which might be fine for the courthouse but not the jail. Mr. Davis stated that you will have to use up to four feet of rockwork on the exterior. Chair Smith stated that the desire of the board is to have a metal building. Finance Director Carpenter stated that we have \$7 million from the SCIF Grant and \$1.9 million from sales tax at this time. Chair Smith stated that this design needs to be as basic as it can be with a nice foyer. Mr. Hopkins stated that there are irregularities with pre-engineered buildings and the spans are limited, they can put them in that format, but it is not functionally ideal because they will be forced to do a boxy shape, it will reduce the cost some but not by much. Mr. Davis stated that Saluda County South Carolina did one for an EMS Base and it bid at \$430.00 per square feet and the market availability for a building is a long turn around. Mr. Hopkins stated that they can put it in and look at the square footage, if they go that route, will it be courthouse only and is the jail is off the table. Chair Smith stated that they needed to save as much money as they could and they want the building in the middle of the site. Chair Smith stated that they will have to do a jail at some point but that will be in the future. Mr. Davis stated that they couldn't shrink the jail units and you must have a kitchen to provide meals unless you do it in a different way so you would need to design the building for an add-on and the cost will be determined by the size of the property. Chair Smith stated that the property does not have to have the sheriff's department on it, they would not need a big building. Mr. Davis stated that the police and sheriffs' offices have a risk factor and if you renovated this building you would have to convert with that risk factor.
8. Chair Smith thanked Mr. Davis and Mr. Hopkins for coming and presenting the new prices and asked when they can expect the new pricing for the metal building. Mr. Hopkins stated that they should have the site estimates and layout within two weeks.
9. Chair Smith asks for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Williams made the motion to adjourn. Commissioner Orr 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