**February 20, 2024**

The Graham County Commissioners met in regular session on Tuesday February 20, 2024. Commissioner Tremblay called the meeting to order with the flag salute. Commissioner’s, Kendra Robinson, Jarrod Knoll and Melissa Atkins were all present. Commissioner Nelson made a motion to approve the minutes from February 13, 2024. Commissioner Tremblay seconded the motion. Motion carried 2-0.

**Graham County Hospital, Melissa Atkins**

Melissa Atkins, Graham County Hospital reported they do have their crop ground up for bids. It should have went out in the newspaper last week and again this week and bids are due Wednesday February 28, 2024 at 12:00 p.m. (noon) then they will have a special Board meeting to make that selection. She reported tomorrow, they are really really excited, they get to meet with four different construction companies and we will get to hopefully decide who is building the new clinic. Melissa reported right now, they don’t have a whole lot of inpatients, but we have really been busy, our census has been way up which is good, but sometimes when it goes back down, that’s okay too. She reported they had their monthly board meeting last night and took care of their normal things, nothing big. She reported other then that, she thinks they are doing good, as far as hiring, they still have a couple open positions, but we have hired several. Melissa reported their new purchasing guy is working out really well and their new CFO is also working out really well, those are two kind of big positions to fill, so things are looking good.

**Dawson Place, Ron Radcliffe**

Ron Radcliffe arrived at this time. He reported he was originally going to come in with Dan Steffen at 10:15 a.m. to talk about Dawson Place and trying to get our sprinkler system, but he isn’t going to be here until 11:15 a.m. Ron reported they got turned down again and we had committed 20% or $6,000 something like that, and our board was going to do that and they even got the City to thrown in the meter and all that stuff to get that get this thing going and we asked them for $20,000 and they turned us down again and we don’t know why and he’s really getting frustrated. Ron jokingly said so if you’ve got $32,000 molding someplace, then laughed. He reported he as a meeting tomorrow and he thinks if he can cover the difference, he can probably get it financed through them. Ron reported the longer we wait, the longer it is going to take to get and he is probably going to be the one watering. He reported there is a guy up there that can work 3 days a week but he has to be careful, and there is so many things that have to be done inside of Dawson, like reports, daily and weekly that he is in charge of, and all the other stuff, but he can only work 3 days because he has rods and a dozen to two dozen screws in his back. Ron reported they had another one that was kind of helping out, but he walked out, so its back to this 73 year old and if I’m doing it myself, I would like to have a sprinkler system. He reported, so, he thinks he might be able to talk his board into figuring out a way to finance it. Ron reported he doesn’t understand why a simple $20,000 from Dane G Hansen isn’t possible. Commissioner Nelson said maybe he could talk to Dan and see if he has any other ideas. Ron reported he had a little bit, but the longer they keep waiting, we won’t get to have it during spring, and he wanted to be right up front, he wants to offer it to Brandon Dinkel. Ron reported they had a bid from Hays, it was less, but, Brandon is a hometown boy, pays taxes, Brandon works and has kids in school, he feels he can justify it. Commissioner Tremblay stated that way if you had a problem, he is here. Ron reported, yes, he’s not very far away. He reported he’s sure it’s going to take him awhile, he isn’t sure how many stations it’s going to take for the weird way they have to run it. Ron then said he is basically asking if the County would still do their commitment of the $6,000 or something like that, he wants to get it rolling. He reported they could be into April, May or June trying to get a yes from some other person, then he wouldn’t have it until fall. He reported he things he can talk his board into it. Commissioner Tremblay and Nelson both agreed they would honor their commitment. Commissioner Nelson stated they would check to see if there was any way they could do a little more. Commissioner Tremblay stated they would look into that, but would for sure honor their prior commitment. Ron reported he would get with the City to see if they would still give them the meter for it as well. He reported he is just getting a little frustrated, but it will take a year or more to get it up or two years up and going or we’ll look talk to the hospital. He reported he had done quite a little watering but then backed off when he had things to do, they it got so dry and they got behind. Commissioner Nelson stated all those people deserve to look out the window and see green grass. Ron agreed and stated, we financed their new windows and they have had a lot of praise, everybody including his dad, he likes it 80-85 in his room, and is 94 years of age, so those windows helped out, they are great, we have appreciated that so much. Commissioner Tremblay stated that we have to maintain, Ron agreed and said that building was built in the late 50’s or early 60’s, and yeah we all know about maintaining houses, cars, tractors, whatever it is to keep it running. Commissioner Tremblay stated they would check into it and maybe they could figure out something else. Ron said okay, that would be fantastic, he would appreciate that so much, coming from him and the board too, everybody appreciates whatever we can do. Commissioner Tremblay stated they appreciate his efforts too. Ron stated he really doesn’t mind, he really thought when Terry Adams died, he was the one taking care of all that stuff, 2-3 months, he went in and told her he would take care of the lawn outside, but he really thought 2-3 months and now they have gone into 3 years or longer, as we know, no one wants to work, anyways, he is doing what he can. Commissioner Tremblay stated they appreciate it.

**Graham County EMS/FIRE Director, Mickie Helberg**

Mickie Helberg arrived at this time. She reported they will be having storm spotters meeting March 6, 2024 at 6:30 p.m. at the Frontier Stage, and this flyer will go out in the newspaper and she will post on social media. Mickie asked if it was okay to leave a flyer in Commissioner’s room for the Community to see. Commissioners reported she could. Mickie reported every two years, one of the councils she is a member of, the EMS side of it, has a re-appointment letter and usually Dan Reese and her are on that. She reported if we wanted her to continue, she would ask that the Commissioner’s sign the letter. Commissioner’s reviewed and signed it. Mickie reported that it is good for 2 years, so it will expire in 2026. She reported that just kind of aligns with the Homeland Security council and they have some grants, we got some Cots through them.

**Road & Bridge, Wayne Pfeifer**

Wanye Pfeifer arrived at this time. Wayne reported they are hauling millings this morning, they have 5 trucks hauling. Commissioner Nelson asked if they were just hauling the millings out to Road & Bridge. Wayne responded with for now, they are taking them out to the Landfill, he said he doesn’t have enough help to take it out to the country and scatter but before they get done, they will probably take some down the Worcester road and scatter on some of them hills and different places, probably the eight mile road in spots. Commissioner Tremblay asked how many loads Wayne estimated were there? Wayne reported it was over 300 loads, probably closer to 360 or something, there is quite a few. He reported they weighted the first 3 or 4 loads but are just going to go by the honor system now, he said if he loads them heavy, they get a bonus, if he loads them light, they don’t. Wanye reported the guy said he has been doing this several years, so he’s probably going to get them pretty close to right. Commissioner Nelson asked Wanye how many tons are they getting on a load? Wanye responded with the first load was light, Jim weighted and he only had 75,000 so he called up Rocky and he was going to talk to his loader man about getting them a little heavier. He general weight on some of those is about 44,000, he thinks they can get about 40,000. Commissioner Tremblay asked Wayne so we are getting about 20 tons? Wayne said yes. Wayne reported the only other thing he had was he got in touch with BTI this morning, Brian had quit so he talked to Lynn up there, he reported he asked for a bid for tractors and Lynn said they usually give us flat rate, and Wayne told them he was trying to see if they can’t cut some corners for the taxpayers, so Lynn said since he has no salesman, he’s the manager of the store up there and he is doing Brians job right now, so he told me he could have a bid by next week, Tuesday. Commissioner Nelson said he had not heard any complaints right now but if he did, he would call him. Wayne reported he does have a few guys blading, what’s left that isn’t hauling millings. Wayne said he heard Commissioner Tremblay had a big fire. He reported he was in Hays, but he reported he wasn’t around, but if they would have needed tankers, and would have called him, he would have somebody to do it.

**Theel Insurance/Freedom Claims, Darren Booth**

Darren Booth with Theel Insurance was up next. He presented Commissioner’s and Graham County Clerk with a quarterly report from Freedom Claims from September 2023- December 2023 and reported on the way up here, he had a guy give him up the information up to date right now what our savings are at this point. Darren reported they’ve been pretty busy trying to get people signed up and this and that, but we’ve got the new clerk here and works with him very well. Darren asked Commissioner’s if he could leave a packet for Jarrod Knoll, he handed packet to Jarrod. Darren proceeded to go through the report he provided, for the first 3 months of our 2nd year with Freedom Claims. He explained the report in depth and showed where it reflected we had saved $52,175.60 in the first 3 months and currently had roughly $63,000. He showed us the 4 month September 2023 – December 2023, we had a savings of roughly $16,000. He reported it was showing a savings of $52,175.60 but to date, we are roughly at $63,000 savings. Darren reported we had a rough month there in November, we had a lot of claims that came through, but we still have good reserves. He reported the next few pages show benefits by location and service provider and explained the listing of what providers were seen the most often. He then went on to show the RX (pharmacy/prescription) report. He explained the pie charts that showed generic vs non generic drugs being used by employees. He reported on the pie graph it shows 86.2% of our people are using the generic drugs but on the other pie graph it reflects the cost. Commissioner Tremblay asked so generic makes up 14.3% of the total cost and they are 86.2% total used? Darren answered yes, it is really nice to get to 90% on generic drugs and we are almost there, but there are them certain deals or issues people have, that don’t have generic drugs for. Darren reported the next page is just a summary of our benefits, we have a $500 deductible for single, family is a $1,000, co-insurance for single is $1000 so total deductible is $1500 for single, and $3000 for family total. He went through the rest of the benefits overview. Darren reported this is doing really well for us, we made a great decision and of all the groups they have brought on since he’s been there, they have stayed with them through the first year and are seeing the benefits. Darren asked Commissioner’s if they had any questions? Commissioners didn’t have any. Darren asked if we still worked with Hadley from Blue Cross Blue Shield, Graham County Clerk reported that we do. Graham County Clerk Kendra reported he just stopped into my office just to say hello a couple weeks ago, yeah he's good to work with. Darren said we renew in September, so he will have another quarterly coming down the pike and then after that we will be in the renewal process. Commissioner Tremblay stated it sounds great and looks good. Commissioner Nelson asked if we had any employees questioning the insurance, Kendra responded no we had not, Commissioner Tremblay stated everyone kind of got used to it. Clerk Kendra said it has been good, she’s had zero complaints since the renewal. Darren asked if we get any calls from other counties they are trying to get? Kendra responded yeah, we have what is called “list-serve” and it is basically all 105 counties that you can send out an email and it goes to every other clerk, and we have a lot of people that reach out, I just had a county call me not that long ago and I told them we are in our second year and I gave them or typically give them all of my contacts and say these are the people that I reach out to at Freedom Claims and I have zero trouble, I mean they are really easy to work with, they are so easy and so good. Darren stated he knew that some counties he’s been working on, that he hasn’t got, there is tremendous savings there in front of them, they are on a state plan, you come off the state plan, its unbelievable. He reported he gives them the information, and they stay with what they are doing. Commissioner Tremblay stated nobody likes change. Clerk Kendra stated she was telling somebody the other day, it was another employee, think about how much money, I kind of game them some rough estimates, so say our claims at the end of the month are sitting at $15,000, some months more, some less, and the rest of that, is just sitting with Blue Cross, think about that, we are able to put roughly $17,000 away a month to give back to us, we get to keep that money, just think about that. Darren said he loves it when they get to the presentation and shows the dollar amount for claims and the percentage of that group, and how many actual people, and he always points out the number, if there is 0%, nobody even went to the doctor and out of 160 people, that is almost 39%, that is people they’ve already paid for, just sending money to Blue Cross instead we can take and put into reserves. Darren says he always tells them people, we are going to pay for what happens in our house, not anymore. Commissioner Tremblay reported he appreciated his help. Darren said Congratulations Kendra, I’m pretty exited for you. Commissioner Tremblay stated after Darren left, that has been a good deal. Kendra said even being able to keep it 5% that we are paying, it has cut down some of the reserves that we can put away with the premiums going up, but it’s a huge thing, it’s a huge benefit that the County has for sure, I don’t know that everyone knows that.

**Community Development, Dan Steffen**

Dan Steffen arrived at this time. Dan provided Commissioners with a weekly Community Development report to review and told Commissioner’s he would give them a minute to read through it. Dan asked if Ron Radcliffe came in and talked to the Commissioners at 10:15 am? Commissioners reported he had. Dan reported, Dane G Hansen grant for sprinklers was denied and they wanted to move forward with just their funds and wanted to ask if Commissioners would still honor their commitment? Commissioner Tremblay reported they told Ron they were still on board and asked if there was any other avenues on grants? Dan reported he talked to a couple trustees and it comes down to it is more of a want than a need and that’s why it got denied even though they had 60% of the funds put together. He reported he is going to apply for another grant from Dane G Hansen on another project so we will see if it’s a want or a need. He reported everything else he looked at for the sprinklers at Dawson just doesn’t fit. Commissioner Nelson said they told Ron to see if maybe they couldn’t find something else or Commissioners could help out more maybe. Dan reported he would check back with him. Commissioner Tremblay asked Dan if he had found anything out on the recycling project? Commissioner Nelson said he saw the email Dan had sent out an email to someone in Colby about the cost of a building? Dan reported yes, Chris Mikkelson is meeting with Van Koon, the Morton building rep out of Colby, he meets with him Wednesday or Thursday. He reported he just let him know they had a meeting set up but he wanted to come out and visit and see any needs or door openings, etc. Dan reported he is still waiting to hear back, he hadn’t heard back from Corina, she had already been in touch with the Bureau Waste Management and KDHE and he didn’t want to call them at the same time. Dan reported as far as an update on the Millbrook Fire Station, the issue with that is, in terms of the service area, and he went through and cut and pasted and got the service area, there is 20 houses in that area, and they are only allowed $2,000 per resident, so with 20 households, we are looking at $40,000 minimum and they will figure either 2.3, so it could be 80,000 as a possibility, but then 51% of those households, so 11 of those households, have to be low to moderate income. Dan reported so we would have to survey those, which we can do to see if they are 51% if they will comply with the survey as that is always an issue to. Commissioner Nelson said probably 1/3 of those people probably wouldn’t comply if he had to guess. Commissioner Tremblay said then you have the issue of the deadline being March 1, 2024. Dan reported they would have to have an architect by March 1 and April 1 a cost estimate. He reported he thinks we still leave it as a project, but there is no way they can meet those deadlines and get the surveys done this year, and pray that they keep block grants in tact the way it is for next year and go after that. Dan reported this was quite a challenge making the map of the service area, the pages don’t quite match up so it was like putting together a puzzle, but he will hold onto it and go through with Corina and say timeframe wise and surveys, we would probably have to start the surveys, he will make a note to start surveys next winter so they have them for that area. Commissioner Tremblay said it wouldn’t hurt to be ready. Dan said get everything in place for the next round, with everything she has going on with CVR grants and all the other things, there is no way she could have the time and you don’t want to slap one of these things together. Dan reported he would let Corina know to put that as a 2025 project. He reported the surveys, a lot of times they try to mail them, I mean 20 households, it would be more effective to go door to door. Commissioner Tremblay said well they have to respond or get the survey complete. Dan reported door to door on 20 houses is nothing, he has helped out where they have done a lot more then that. He reported he is still growing as far as Facebook followers and emails registered. Dan reported Workforce Development, there is an application he just got, but he’s going to have to clarify with them based upon what we have learned, we got by with the one with the hospital, now he thinks it is included in there that for the hire on bonus, the employee has to relocate within the 26 counties of the EIC region, for our funds, they will have to either relocate to Graham County to qualify for 100% of the offer or a surrounding county for 50% of what we offer. He reported that employee has to relocate from outside the 26 county area. Our participates will be from the south because they are out of the EIC. He reported they let it slide when Lucas was there, but not it’s somebody else has taken over the program, so they are going by the letter of the whole purpose to be to re-populate the region first, and second being hard to fill positions. Dan reported he has several meetings coming up this week and next, the housing committee had a meeting. He reported Housing committee, Corina and Cannan came over and talked about HAT information and going to find out what we need under housing need assessment, reviews, and so on. He reported they are making a map and they are going to divide the city into sections so we can do a drive by and rate every house a, b, c, or d, meaning excellence shape, adequate, satisfactory or needs rehabilitation or dilapidated. He reported then they will have a map of things. He then presented Commissioners with a paper conversation from a Facebook page. He reported he was made aware of a Facebook page called Concerned Citizens of Graham County. Dan reported there is a lot of speculation on, so he made his own post of which it was responded to so he responded again and he has not heard anything back last he saw there was no other comments. He reported he wanted to make Commissioner’s aware of it and wasn’t sure if they had seen it or were aware of it on Facebook. It is exactly, replying to what Jason, you had a text or an email about. Graham County Clerk, Kendra stated this information was also the same information on our Facebook and our website that she had put up. Dan reported the last time he looked, he had heard nothing back. He asked Commissioner if they had any thoughts, comments? Commissioner Nelson said he tells people this is money that if we don’t use, someone else will. Dan agreed. Commissioner Tremblay said in his own opinion, we have to have a point man, they won’t even talk to or deal with us if you don’t have someone representing you about what’s out there and available so if we are going to just sit here and not doing anything. Dan stated he thinks in the first year, they accomplished a lot. Commissioner Tremblay agreed. Dan said he brought a lot of dollars in and now those dollars, the CVR grant, $100,000 going out the next month or two to assist greatly two different businesses and then money left over, we will open up for applications. He reported they are also going to do, they’ve been working on it with Network Kansas a “pitch your porch” which is basically we will take applications, people wanting to redo something on their business and 5 will be awarded $3000 in grant funds through Network Kansas that we will get to award to assist in those costs of upgrading their building or signs. He reported basically because we are an E-Community, we have access to those funds. Dan reported he has gallons of paint in his office they are still trying to put together a paint the town project and we want to do it on a residential basis so if there is somebody that could use it, we throw a coat of paint on their house, it may not be gray based on the colors of paint we have, but he also wants to make it available to Jarrod Knoll’s daughter and Drew Deges on the wall. He asked Commissioners if his response on Facebook was acceptable? Commissioner Nelson responded, yeah, that is what they wanted. Dan reported based upon him being in and out, if anyone wants to set up a time to sit down and visit, he is happy to, like he said early on, the things that irk him are lack of transparency and duplication. Commissioner Tremblay said, no he thinks it looks good. County Clerk Kendra said she did save the document for when he was in there in case there were any questions, it’s the letter Dan asked me to type up, giving you approval to apply for grants. Kendra gave it to Commissioners to review and sign. Commissioner Tremblay made a motion to allow Dan to work directly with those people. Clerk Kendra asked Commissioner Nelson for a second? Commissioner Nelson seconded the motion. Motion carried 2-0. Kendra told Dan she would sign and seal it and get him a copy for him. Kendra told Dan she still had not heard back from Secretary of State on the letter stating we are in good standing with them and she asked her long time deputy Deb Keith about it and she said of course we are in good standing, we are a county. Dan asked if there was anything in a file saying that somewhere? Kendra reported she reached out to the Secretary of State’s office, she actually emailed the request to 3 people at the Secretary of States office and have had no response at all, she reported they are gearing up for elections, we start advance voting next week. Dan said he would just put a note in there that the letter was unavailable and to check with the Secretary of State. Kendra said she can reach out to them again, but we start advance voting next week so the main focus is the election coming up. Dan reported if we weren’t in good standing, how would we be able to conduct elections. Commissioner Nelson said he did notice some mileage on one voucher, going to Hays or something? Dan responded yes, he went to pickup signs and brochures and didn’t want to keep the car over the weekend. Dan reported the one thing he omitted, he isn’t sure how he missed it, but the grant we received from the Patterson family, he didn’t include it in last years, he got it in late December, but will include it in this years grants. It was a grant for organization, so he applied most of it to the special projects fund, so when he does the end of the month budget report and grants applied for, it will be on there.

**New Business**

Commissioners reviewed and signed 1 voucher for Freedom Claims for health insurance claims paid in the amount of $6,023.69. Commissioner reviewed and signed Abstract of Commissioner Minutes from 9/12/2023 – current. Commissioners reviewed and signed Accounts Payable vouchers. Graham County Clerk, Kendra Robinson reported to Commissioners that Rachelle, GH Co Appraiser had posted all of the NRP information onto the Graham County website for the community. Kendra also reminded Commissioner’s and public watching video the deadline to register to vote in the Presidential Preference Primary election on March 19th, 2024 was Tuesday February 20, 2024. Kendra also reminded them that the deadline for voters to apply for an advance mail out ballot was also Tuesday, February 20, 2024.

Commissioner reviewed bids from Elliott Plumbing and Pittman’s Plumbing for hot water heater in basement of Health Department. Commissioner Tremblay made a motion to accept Elliott Plumbing’s bid. Commissioner Nelson seconded the motion. Motion carried 2-0.

As there was no further information to be discussed, Commissioner Tremblay made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Nelson seconded the motion. Motion carried 2-0.

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Kendra Robinson, County Clerk Troy Tremblay, Chairman