

Questionnaire for Candidates for Graham Mayor and City Council, General Election, November 4, 2025

Chelsea Glen Dickey	Jennifer Talley	Questions	Daniel Alvis	Bobby Chin	Randy Phillips	Jim Young
1. About right.	1. About right.	Tax rate, spending priorities 1. Is Graham's tax rate too high, too low, or about right? 2. At what level (cents per \$100 valuation) should the city's tax rate be set?	1. About right.	1.About right.	1.About right.	1. About right.
2. Tax rate should be where we are adequately taking care of citizens through city services.	2. 30 cents is current rate and the lowest in county for a city our size.		2. \$0.4550 is our current rate, and that should be examined yearly to be fair and equitable.	2. .3099.	2. .31	2. .30
3. About right.	3. About right	3. Graham has a savings account, or fund balance, of about \$13 million, which represents almost 65 percent of the city's annual budget. Is this level too high, about right, or too low? 3a. For what purpose(s) in the future, if any, do you believe the fund balance should be used? [25-word limit]	3. No response.	3. About right.	3. About right.	3. Too high.
3a. Fund balance should serve as a safeguard against economic downturns & as a reserve to seize future opportunities or incentives that strengthen Graham's local economy.	3a. A healthy fund balance ensures financial stability, protects taxpayers during emergencies, maintains essential services without raising taxes, and demonstrates strong, responsible fiscal management for our city.	[FOR QUESTION 4, SEE PAGE ??]	3a.Fund balance should be an emergency need, not a fallback fund.	3a. The fund balance is used to balance the budget ordinance annually and any funds unspent are returned to the fund balance.	3a. It should be used in emergency situation. Replacing of losses due to extreme situations.	3a. A \$13 million reserve – nearly 65% of the budget – is excessive... put some of that money to work for the residents who paid it.
5.	5.	5. Please outline how high a priority you place on the following categories of city spending by adding money to the city's annual budget:	5.	5. Depends upon the urgency of need and the requirements at that time.	5.	5.
a.High.	a. High.	a. to add more police officers to the Graham Police Department?	a. Moderate, as needs determine.	a. High.	a. High.	a. High.
b. High.	b. High.	b. to add more firefighters to the Graham Fire Department?	b. Moderate, as needs determine.	b. High.	b. High.	b. Moderate.
c. Moderate.	c. Low.	c. to add Graham's participation in Burlington's bus service	c. Low, as needs determine.	c. Low.	c. Moderate.	c. Low.
d. Moderate.	d. Moderate.	d. to make additions and expansions at Graham Regional Park on Jim Minor Road.	d. Moderate, as needs determine.	d. Moderate.	d. Low.	d. Moderate.
e. High.	e. High.	e. to build a satellite (second) fire station	e. Moderate, as needs determine.	e. High.	e. High.	e. Moderate.
6. Yes, for the purpose of public safety for our community.	6. None. We've been able to fund these important projects without raising taxes by securing state and federal grants.	6. For any categories in #5 (a. to e., above), which, if any that you deemed high priorities, would you be willing to raise property taxes to accomplish?	6. None identified as high priority at this time.	6. a. Only as a last resort.	6. Fire Department. Increasing the department would lower ISO rating and possibly lower insurance rates for residents.	6. Public safety.
7. Having city partner on state or federal grants can attract industry, create jobs, & stimulate economic growth while leveraging external funding with minimal taxpayer dollars.	7. Support (only if there is a net gain to taxpayers)	7. In general, do you support or oppose using taxpayer money as an incentive to attract industry to Graham? [25 word limit]	7. We need to have an economic development policy, formulas developed and utilized across the board based on potential tax base increases, not on personal connections.	7. Oppose.	7. Support.	7. Support.
7a. I would advocate for incentives that benefit both businesses and the community, including workforce training programs and community college partnerships, hiring incentives for local residents, state or federal grant support, infrastructure improvements like roads, utilities, and broadband, and site preparation assistance including grading, zoning, and permitting.	7a. No response.	7a. If support, what types of incentive(s) would you advocate? [50 words or less]	7a. Generally, utility connection fees can be waived based on potential utility revenue return. There is a lot of competition out there for development monies, but you cannot blow the budget on one project.	7a. –	7a. It would depend on the size and number of people it would employ.	7a. I support limited, performance-based incentives like temporary tax rebates or infrastructure support – but only for businesses that create stable, local jobs and contribute to Graham's long-term economic health.
8. No, because City of Graham already follows North Carolina's standard equal employment policies ensuring fairness...	8. No. Discrimination protections are already covered under federal law, including the Civil RightsAct.	City policy 8. Some North Carolina cities have adopted ordinances in recent years that seek to ban discrimination within their jurisdictions based on sexual orientation (i.e., lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people) in public accommodations and employment. Does Graham need such an ordinance? 8a. Would you vote for or against such an ordinance?	8. No. The Fair Labor Standards Act covers employment discrimination. ...Existing available laws should be enforced.	8. No.	8. Yes.	8. No.
8a. Graham already adheres to North Carolina's equal employment policies that protect individuals from discrimination.	8a. Against I believe the city attorney would not advise us to pass an ordinance like this.		8a. Against, generally, unless our attorney advised we are operating outside the law.	8a. Against.	8a. For.	8a. Against.
9. Zoning along Cherry Lane near the North Carolina Commerce Park should be handled thoughtfully, balancing industrial growth with residential quality of life. Decisions should consider traffic, safety, and neighborhood impact to ensure development benefits the community while protecting residents' well-being and maintaining Graham's livability.	9. The relationship between industrial and residential zoning should be balanced and respectful of existing neighborhoods. I support strong noise and visual buffers to protect residents' quality of life. As the NC Commerce Park builds out, we've worked to ensure thoughtful planning.	9. One of the difficult areas in recent years, and likely in future ones, is the proper relationship between industrial and residential zoning along Cherry Lane near the North Carolina Commerce Park. What is your view on how zoning in this area should be handled? [50 words or less]	9. Some areas are well-suited for industrial development, and this depends on resources like water and sewer capacity, a good road network, and an increased power grid. Recognizing that existing residential areas need to be preserved, it may be that future residential development should be located elsewhere.	9. The North Carolina Commerce Park is zoned industrial to accommodate growth of business and industry which produces revenue for the cities of Graham, Mebane, and the county. We have made several improvements such as additional signage, road improvement requests and buffer requirements to try to shield residential neighborhoods from industry.	9. Larger industries should be farther away from residential areas. Smaller industries with low impact of traffic and noise could be closer to the residential areas.	9. The Cherry Lane corridor needs thoughtful, balanced zoning that protects existing neighborhoods while supporting responsible industrial growth. Clear buffers, traffic control, and strong communications with residents are essential. We must ensure that industry brings value – not disruption – to the community.
10. No response.	10. The NCDOT has legal authority over Cherry Lane, but we've worked to support residents by updating GPS routes to redirect truck traffic, installing road signage, and requesting improvements through NCDOT's STIP priority list to plan for future widening and resurfacing to better handle industrial traffic safely.	10. A related issue, is whether tractor trailers should be allowed to use Cherry Lane to traverse to/from the industrial park. Can/should anything be done to restrict such traffic? [50 words or less]	10. In a sense, traffic drives development. A Department of Transportation street is maintained and improved based on the traffic use. I question whether a ban of tractor trailers would make things better or if DOT needs to make road and signal improvements.	10. NC DOT has the responsibility for designating the vehicular use of a road. It has been asked about what actions can be taken to direct tractor-trailers to use Exit 152 to enter the NC Commerce Park.	10. Make sure that the industries have full access away from the residential areas.	10. Yes – restrictions should be considered. Cherry Lane wasn't designed for high-volume tractor-trailer traffic. We need to explore alternate routes, enforce truck designations, and protect nearby neighborhoods from noise, safety risks, and road damage. Industry access matters, but not at the expense of residential quality of life.
11. Graham is a growing, diverse community with people who care deeply about their city. While there's always room for improvement, I believe open communication, inclusion, and community engagement can continue to strengthen trust and understanding among all residents. Progress happens when everyone feels seen, heard, and valued.	11. I believe Graham is stronger and more united since I have been elected Mayor. I have worked hard to bring our community together, organizing and supporting events that celebrate our ethnic and cultural diversity and by working with community members to focus on how we can work together for Graham.	11. How do you assess Graham's racial climate/ race relations within the city? [50-word limit]	11. Graham has always been a small town where people know each other and generally feel safe. When a family moves in next door that might not talk or look like your family, that is not necessarily a bad thing. We need to say, "Hello," introduce ourselves, get to know neighbors.	11. It's wonderful. All folks I have met are warm and friendly. As a council member I interact with residents daily, and I personally have never had an issue and no one has ever complained to me about this. We as a council host cultural events to bring people together....	11. I feel that the racial relations in the city is good, but could always get better.	11. Graham's racial climate has room for growth. As a veteran, business owner, and community leader, I'm personally committed to listening building trust, and ensuring every resident feels seen and respected. Real unity takes effort, and I'll work to foster fairness, transparency, and open dialogue at every level of city leadership.

Questionnaire for Candidates for Graham Mayor and City Council, General Election, November 4, 2025

Chelsea Glen Dickey

11a. No new policies are needed, as North Carolina law already prohibits discrimination. Improving Graham's racial climate comes from modeling human decency from the top and demonstrating strong, inclusive leadership that fosters respect, understanding, and equitable treatment for all residents in every city interaction and decision.
12. No response.

12a. While other questions relate to the Mayor of Graham, this one does not. The Confederate monument is on Alamance County property, so the city has no legal jurisdiction. Decisions about its placement fall to the County Commissioners.

12b. N.A.

14. Appointments to the city's advisory boards should prioritize passion for Graham and its residents. Each board's bylaws outline the skills, experience, and dedication needed to effectively support its mission.

14a. Yes.

14b. 4-6 years.

14c. Yes, one board at a time.

14d. No, that seems like a conflict of interest.

14e. With a city of 20,000 people, it's important to ensure all voices are heard and represented, rather than offering opportunities to council members' families.

15.

Commercial: Too low.

Residential: About right.
Industrial: Too low.

16. Density should be a considered factor in evaluating new developments, ensuring they complement existing neighborhoods. Balancing growth with infrastructure, traffic, and community character helps maintain quality of life while allowing responsible development that meets Graham's evolving needs.

17. I question developments that were approved where drive-ways are too short and streets are narrow, limiting safe pedestrian and vehicle access. Planning should balance growth with infrastructure, safety, and accessibility to ensure livable, functional neighborhoods in Graham.

18. No.

Jennifer Talley

11a. I do not believe new policies are needed at this time. Graham already follows state and federal laws prohibiting discrimination. If a policy change is recommended by our city attorney I would consider it.

12. Leave it, it would be illegal to move it to my understanding

12a. As mayor, I am bound by my oath to uphold the law. The City of Graham does not own the Confederate monument or the land it stands on; it is county property. I understand that under current law, the county commissioners are not permitted to move or remove it.

12b. N.A.

14. It really depends on the board but I think it is important to try to bring people with expertise and experience on our advisory boards. For instance, we have a licensed civil engineer on our Planning Board and his knowledge is very helpful to other board members.

14a. No.

14b. I think having experience on the board is helpful and provides continuity.
14c. Yes. 2.

14d. Yes

14e. I don't think that someone being on the city council should preclude their family member from participating in public service.

15.

Commercial: About right.

Residential: Too high.
Industrial: About right.

16. The developments that are being built out were approved by prior city council members. The current city council has not approved a single development with modified density and has held all developers to the density restrictions governed by the 2035 Comprehensive Growth Management Plan.

17. Riley Meadows was where I raised serious concerns about quality, density, and infrastructure. I urged council to require higher building standards, such as hardie plank or brick instead of vinyl siding, wider roads, and additional parking for three-bedroom units. In past, substandard materials have led to costly repairs and even lawsuits.
18. No.

Questions

11a. What, if any, city policies should be changed or adopted to improve the racial climate/race relations in the city? [50 word limit]

12. There has been much discussion about the Confederate monument which is on county-owned property on the north side of the Historic Court House. While legal authorities generally contend that the city council has no jurisdiction over the statue, what is your own view on what, if anything, should be done with it?
12a. Why? [50 word limit]

12b. If move, where would you recommend it be placed? [25 word limit]
[FOR QUESTION 13 - ABOUT SESQUICENTENNIAL PARK, SEE PAGE ??]
14. What is your view on the criteria that should govern appointments to the city's advisory boards? [50 words or less]

14a. Should there be term limits on the number of years residents can serve on such boards?

14b. If so, what number of years?

14c. Should there be a limit on *how many* advisory boards a resident can serve on simultaneously? If so, how many?
14d. Should spouses or other close family members of city council members be eligible for appointment to advisory boards?

14. e. Why or why not? [25 word limit]

Other policy issues

15. In your opinion, is Graham's rate of growth too slow, too fast, or about right?
Commercial:

Residential:
Industrial:

16. Some have contended that a number of developments approved in, or proposed for, the city are "too dense," relative to nearby existing neighborhoods. What is your view on how significant a factor density of new proposed subdivisions should be compared to existing ones. [50 word limit]

17. Are there any particular projects – commercial, residential, or industrial – to which you particularly object, or question the wisdom of the city council having granted approval for over the past 2-5 years? [50 word limit]

18. In addition to state-mandated newspaper legal notices about an upcoming proposed zoning change, state law requires that residents near such a project are mailed individual notifications by first class mail. In Graham, residents within 150 feet of the proposed rezoning are sent such notifications. Some other local jurisdictions give broader notifications to property owners: for instance, Mebane's is those property owners within 300 feet, Burlington's is 400 feet. Is Graham's 150-foot standard sufficient?

Daniel Alvis

11a. None. As said before for another tricky legal question, existing available and applicable laws should be enforced if there is an actionable violation.

12. This is a historic monument owned by the county on county property. I do not see that Graham has a "dog in that fight."

12a. Alamance County owns and operates properties in Graham and throughout other municipalities. This is not a Graham issue.

12b. Moving the statue would be a county issue.

14. Interested residents with some background or familiarity with a particular advisory board should be considered. ...If we happen to have multiple applicants, perhaps we could develop interview guidelines and have staff related to those boards conduct those interviews and make recommendations to city council. We need to trust our employees.

14a. Yes, there should be established maximum number of terms before board member must sit out.
14b. 2 or 3 terms is reasonable with a year break in between.

14c. It seems that one board or commission at a time is reasonable.
14d. There could be conflict with spouses and potential influence elected official may have on them.
14e. See above.

15.

Commercial: About right.
Residential: About right.
Industrial: Too low.

16. I agree, density has increased. A single-family home neighborhood deserves transitional buffer between it and an apartment complex.... Developers may say that a project cannot work without a certain number of units. I don't believe we should give in to developers, rather, we should protect the interests of our residents.

17. Graham, like other cities and towns across the state and country, is hanging on and trying to figure out how to adjust to a new economy. I do question why buildings and shells of former businesses have been allowed to continue to exist unimproved.

18. 150 feet generally covers adjacent properties. I am not opposed to increasing the notification limits.

Bobby Chin

11a. All current city policies are in compliance with existing federal and state laws.

12. Leave it.

12a. Graham does not have any legal authority to make decisions about this monument but as a retired US Army Colonel, I view this as memorial marker for many local soldiers that lost their lives. Their bodies were never recovered, so they should be remembered for their service to their State.

12b. —

14. The City of Graham website provides information for those interested in serving.

14a. No.

14b. —

14c. Yes. 2.

14d. Yes.

14e. A willingness to serve is a civic duty. If there is a potential of a conflict of interest, the person should recuse themselves from voting.

15.

Commercial: About right.

Residential: About right.
Industrial: About right.

16. This council has not allowed any modified dense housing developments since being elected. This was a crucial issue and the reason why many of the current council members ran for office. We wanted to protect established neighborhoods from tract building and overdevelopment.

17. This council has received complaints from residents of some of the residential developments in regard to issues such as parking, housing density, and excessive numbers of apartment complexes. I want to make it clear that those decisions were made by council members that are NO LONGER on the Council.

18. Yes.

Randy Phillips

11a. Unknown at this time.

12. No response.

12a. No response.

12b. No response.

14. A person should live within the city limits and have a knowledge of the city ordinances and what the city is looking toward the future.

14a. No.

14b. –

14c. Yes. Two boards.

14d. No.

14e. I feel that it could pose a conflict of interest.

15. No response. .

16. I feel that most are too dense. If next to an existing subdivision, it should be about the same density as the neighboring subdivision.

17. I feel that the residential projects are being passed too quickly.

18. No.

Jim Young

11a. Graham should adopt policies that promote transparency, community engagement, and equal access to city services. I support expanded cultural events, citizen advisory boards, and stronger outreach efforts to ensure all voices are heard. Respect and inclusion must be intentional, not assumed – and leadership should lead by example.
12. Leave it.

12a. Graham has zero say over this issue.

12b. –

14. Appointments should be based on a person's qualifications, community involvement, and willingness to serve – not political connections. Boards should reflect the diversity of Graham's residents, and no one individual or group should dominate. Transparency, balance, and a focus on public service should guide every appointment.
14a. Yes.

14b. 6 years, two 3-year terms.

14c. Yes. 2.

14d. No.

14e. Board service should reflect the broader community. Limiting overlap prevents conflicts of interest and encourages more diverse participation, fresh ideas, and fair public representation.
15.

Commercial: About right.

Residential: Too high.
Industrial: About right.

16. Density must respect the character of existing neighborhoods. Packing high-density subdivisions beside lower-density areas without adequate buffers, infrastructure, or public input is irresponsible. Density should be context-sensitive, not developer-driven. Residents who've built lives in these areas deserve a voice – not to be steamrolled by outside interests.

17. Riley's Meadow, Lacey's Farm, Roger's Nest, Windsor Townhomes are a mess.

18. No.

Questionnaire for Candidates for Graham Mayor and City Council, General Election, November 4, 2025

(Continued from page 13)

Chelsea Glen Dickey

18a. A larger radius – like 300-400 feet – would be appropriate to ensure more nearby residents are informed, have opportunity to provide input on proposed zoning changes.
19. To improve notification, the city should prioritize including affected community members in initial meetings for long-term land use or master plan revisions. Direct mail, email alerts, and public workshops can ensure transparency, engagement, and meaningful input from residents at the earliest planning stages.
20. Yes.

20a. Keep the same.
20b. n/a.

21. Graham voters can have confidence I will maintain transparency and avoid conflicts of interest. I will disclose relevant interests, recuse myself on matters involving my primary residence, my husband will not sit on boards, and I do not own significant property or businesses downtown, prioritizing residents' best interests.

22. My strongest disagreements involve how the council represents our community. Members appear to meet outside public meetings, often in groups of three around the city, which is prohibited by North Carolina's Open Meetings Law. They are not listening to residents, specifically regarding the community's request to prioritize park repairs.
23. The three main issues facing Graham over the next five years are upgrading aging utilities, including wastewater and water lines; preserving the city's small-town charm and identity; and managing economic development to ensure growth benefits the community without increasing the taxpayer burden.

Jennifer Talley

18a. This is the first time this issue has been raised. I am very much in favor or participation so I would be willing to consider this change.
19. I strongly support increasing public awareness and participation in land use planning. We should hold multiple town hall meetings, send out surveys, and provide broad public notice to ensure residents have a voice. The best decisions about Graham's future growth come from listening to the people who live here.
20. Yes.

20a. Keep the same.
20b. N.A.

21. The majority of work at city council involves land use, zoning, securing alternate funding, and advocating for our citizens. I am guided by what's best for the community as a whole, not individual interests. When a council member has a potential or perceived conflict, they follow procedure by recusing themselves.

22. I haven't always agreed on issues of fiscal responsibility, growth, and public safety. I believe Graham should be business-friendly, promote responsible and sustainable growth, protect established neighborhoods, and fully support public safety. Since being elected, we've secured over \$20 million in infrastructure funding and millions more in grant funding.
23. GROWTH - Graham is growing rapidly, and we must ensure our infrastructure and staffing can handle the increased demand. INFRASTRUCTURE - Graham's infrastructure is aging with some utility lines over 75 years old. NEW FIRE SUBSTATION - We need to build a new substation to handle the growth and reduce our response times.

Questions

18a. If not, what radius do you believe would be appropriate? [25 word limit]

19. Meanwhile, no notification whatsoever is required to residents whose properties might be affected by proposed changes in the city's long-term land use plan, which is typically revised about every 10 years. What, if anything, can/should be done to improve notification to residents who are affected by the periodic revisions in the city's long-term land use plan? [50 word limit]

City council pay, benefits, elections
20. Graham city councilmen now receive about \$480 per month (about \$5,776 annually), and the mayor about \$784 per month (roughly \$9,408 annually) as compensation for their service on the city council. Are those amounts adequate and fair?
20a. Would you vote to increase these amounts during your term or keep them the same?
20b. If raise, by how much, or to what level?

General comments
22. What is your area of strongest disagreement with action(s) taken by the city council in the past 2-5 years? [50 word limit]

23. In your view, what are the three main issues facing Graham during the next five years? [50 word limit]

Daniel Alvis

18a. We should find what works for Graham. If that means increasing, fine. It does not take many extra resources to send a few more letters.
19. Such changes require public hearings for approval. Land use, or zoning, is conceptual and does not immediately change what is on the ground now. I wish more people would participate in public informational meetings.

20. We should be in line with comparable cities of our size.

20a. No response.
20b. No response.

21. If elected, my job is to represent all of Graham's citizens, not just friends in my circle. Just as I believe all ordinances and laws should be applied evenly to all citizens. The bottom line is, I am a Graham resident, too – if it affects you, it affects me, too.

22. Sesquicentennial Park being used as a puppet, saying it is unfit as a park, but could be valuable for development.

23. 1. keeping a capable staff of employees to provide city services. 2. evaluating which services to provide and which can be outsourced by contract to private providers that can save taxpayer monies. 3. balancing our history and future.

Bobby Chin

18a.—
19. Only if necessary. Notification to residents about these revisions and publication of proposed changes to would be available on the City's website for people to access and open public hearings if warranted.

20. Yes.

20a. Keep the same.
20b. The council pay is adjusted to the annual Cost of Living Allowance given to all city employees.

21. I am retired and have no financial investments in the City of Graham.

22. None.

23. Expansion of Graham-Mebane Lake or construction of a new water reservoir to meet the future needs of Graham. Construction of a new fire station & training center at the Graham Regional Park in collaboration with the Alamance Community College. Replacement of the aging water lines in Graham.

Randy Phillips

18a. ...a minimum of 400 ft. Depending on area. If only one means of egress is available. . . everyone in area should be notified regardless of distance.
19. If a change is made in the properties, notification should be given at the time of the change.

20. Yes.

20a. Keep the same.
20b. —

21. I do not own a business and the only property I do own is where my house is located. Therefore any decision I make for businesses will not effect me and decisions I make for residential will effect me as well as all property owners.

22. The lack of attracting more commercial and industries to the Graham area.

23. 1. Upgrading the infrastructure in the downtown area. 2. New substations for the fire department. 3. The cleaning up of the old Culp Weaving building and holding the owners responsible.

Jim Young

18a. 300 feet. Zoning changes affect more than just adjacent properties. A broader notification radius gives more residents a fair chance to voice concerns, stay informed.
19. The city should notify affected property owners by mail and hold well-publicized public meetings in impacted areas. Land use plan changes shape our future and deserve the same transparency as rezoning cases. Residents have a right to know when long-term changes could affect their neighborhoods and property values.
20. No.

20a. Keep the same.

20b. I believe current compensation is low for the time and responsibility involved. However, now is not the time to increase it. There are more pressing priorities – like public safety, infrastructure, and cost-of-living concerns – that need funding first. Leadership means putting residents' needs ahead of our own.
21. I have a long-standing record of transparency and ethical leadership. I'll disclose all potential conflicts, recuse myself when appropriate, and put the interests of Graham residents first. I've served in leadership roles without compromise, and I'll continue to lead with integrity, accountability, and a clear focus on public trust.
22. Residential projects that were approved are too dense.

23. Graham must focus on: 1. Supporting small business growth through smarter zoning and reduced red tape; 2. Protecting neighborhoods from overdevelopment; and 3. Strengthening infrastructure to keep up with growth. A thriving local economy depends on empowering entrepreneurs – not just attracting outside developers or chain stores.