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Hoke County

## My First County Commissioners Meeting

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This past week I attended my first county Commissioners Meeting and learned some very interesting things about the current issues in my county. In this essay I will discuss some of the things I was able to do and learn while attending this meeting.

With the help of my 4-H agent, Ms. Cathy Brown, I met the Hoke County Commissioners before the meeting started. I was able to share with them my upcoming participation in the Youth Summit as the Hoke county delegate, and express my interest in the issues of my county. My Commissioners expressed the joy they had in the fact they would see me at the Youth Summit and they were happy to see a young person taking such an interest.

The meeting started at 7:00 pm. I was given a list of the issues to be discussed that night. The most interesting of the issues which was brought to light, was the approval of a permit for AT&T to erect a cell phone tower.

Open discussions began with the lawyer from AT&T introducing himself. He then continued to tell the Commissioners and everyone else in the room why AT&T needs to put another cell tower in Hoke County, and how the addition of another cell tower would help everyone in the county. After thanking the Commissioners again for taking the time to hear his case, the lawyer for AT&T took his seat. It was then time for the people who were against the cell tower to voice their concerns.

One of the adjacent property owners stood up and expressed why she was against the cell tower. Her reasoning was that the cell tower was going to be placed right on the property line, and she did not want to have a cell tower that close to her property. She also stated that she had horses in a pasture that is right next to where the cell tower would be placed, and that if her horses were to escape from her pasture and wander over to the cell tower, they could potentially be fatally injured. If that were to happen, she questioned, "Who would be liable?" Another of her many concerns, was who would be responsible for making sure something did not happen to

the tower, and if something were to happen, who would they contact in order to get everything repaired. Her last problem with the cell tower was that it would not be very appealing to the eye, and that it could ruin her property value if she ever wanted to sell.

After the adjacent property owner sat down, a gentleman living near where the cell tower would be placed stood up, introduced himself, and expressed that one of the reasons he moved to his current location was because there are not an abundant amount of cell towers everywhere. He continued to say that he had had done research on where the cell tower could have been placed, and that there was another location about a mile away from where AT&T wanted to build the tower. He went on to say that, he agreed with the adjacent property owner, when she said that a cell tower is a hideous sight.

The part of the meeting that, to me, expressed our independence and freedom was that the citizens were able to ask questions and voice their opinions without having to request permissions prior to attending the meeting. Some of the people had concerns about how the tower could affect their health, while others wondered how the tower could affect the environment.

During my first County Commissioners meeting, I learned that the issues that are presented to the Commissioners do not go straight to the commissioners, but go through other committees first. If those committees fail to make a decision, then the issue is presented to the commissioners. I also learned that the only way you can have your voice heard and make a difference in your community is if you go to your City Council and County Commissioners meetings. After attending my first County Commissioners meeting, I plan to attend as many County Commissioners meetings as possible, and encourage others to do the same. By the way, the Commissioners voted unanimously to grant the approval of the permit that allows AT&T to build the cell tower.