

**Sarah Booze**

**Stokes County**

## **Interview with Rhonda Jones, Stokes County Commissioner**

**How long have you served on the Board? Will you run for re-election when your current term expires?**

I am on the third year of my first term. I plan to run for one more term. I believe in term limits of eight years. Since there is no limit I will be self-imposing my own term limit.

**What are your local priorities, or what county issues hold the most importance to you?**

I have no agenda other than to help our county in whatever it needs. Of course, we need economic development, and I want to see smart growth that preserves our quality of life. For example, low level street lights (see the stars and deter crime) and aesthetically pleasing buildings that will not repel tourism.

**Are there long-term concerns you have about our county?**

Yes, we have a large gap in salaries when compared to surrounding counties. This has made retaining employees very difficult. Also, we have managed to keep our taxes low, but lower salaries have also played a role in this. Unfortunately, the cost of living and competition of salaries continues to grow at a rate that will make keeping our low tax rate very difficult. We must also re balance the employment in the county so that schools and county government do not continue to be the top county employers.

**What role does the Board of Commissioners play in addressing those concerns?**

As a team we are committed to running the county as lean as we can. Naturally, sacrifices are made, but there are choices that must be done. We have managed to get another cell tower to encourage growth, leased the hospital to grow healthcare, built new schools to reinforce our educational infrastructure, as well as, establishing an early college program to help train citizens for a vocation once it evolves into a full time community college.

**What are the biggest issues that citizens ask you about?**

This term has been a very emotionally driven term meaning there have been divisive issues that really pulled at the heart strings of our citizens such the Marriage Amendment, the combining of the Health Department and Social Services, and the threat of fracking. An ongoing issue I'm asked about regularly is fracking.

**What are some of the responsibilities for county governments that you were not aware of when you ran for office?**

I did a lot of planning and research before I ran for office. Additionally, I attended a summer program at Peace College called Institute for Women in Public Service in 2006. I don't think I've come across anything I was not aware of; however, getting acclimated to the time demand and balancing my life has taken some practice.

**What are the hardest decisions you've faced as a county commissioner?**

All decisions are hard because there is no way to please everyone. I try my best to make the fairest and best decisions I can for everyone in the county with the information I have. The most gut wrenching decision I've been faced with was the Marriage Amendment Resolution.