

“Helping lives within the county is an awesome feeling!” -Commissioner Deborah Brown

Improving the Quality of life

By law, each county in North Carolina has a board of commissioners. The size of the boards in each county varies in size, term of office, process of election, process of selecting the chairperson, and administrative structure. These variations have no correlation to the population of the county or any other objective criteria.

I had the pleasure of interviewing County Commissioner Deborah Brown of Henderson, North Carolina. Commissioner Brown provided me with valuable information that I was unaware of and that will be an asset to my role as a community member.

The County Commissioner roles and duties are numerous and they vary. Counties are complex organizations, operating literally dozens of distinct business functions, governed by elected officials (or more depending on the number of judges a county has), and overseen by a commission that acts as the executive, legislative and the judicial branch of government at various times. As a County Commissioner their responsibilities are to oversee what goes on within the county. Commissioners are responsible for governing activities budget process, collecting taxes, and using funds that are received to improve quality of life for all citizens are only a few of their responsibilities. Governing is basically a main responsibility of a commissioner.

Commissioner Brown has served on the board of Vance County since the year 2000. When asked would she run for reelection when her current term expires she replies “I am not sure”. Commissioner Brown is currently in her fourth term. She is one of the seven county commissioners serving in Vance County. Henderson is a small rural town full of history, which is located 40 minutes north outside of the capital city of Raleigh.

Commissioner Brown expressed that what she enjoyed most about being a commissioner was the opportunity to help improve living, working, and retirement situations for Vance County residents. As a commissioner she feels that some of the boards’ biggest accomplishments are getting county wide water, improving Fire and EMS services which allowed better coverage for citizens, and the County Wide Land Use Plan which helps to attract businesses. “The County Wide Land Use Plan raised a lot of controversy, but making the decisions to go forth with the plan wasn’t hard it was individuals who opposed the decision that made it hard”, she stated.

Although there are some long term concerns Mrs. Brown has about our county. Some of which are the state of the economy, unemployment and crime. Commissioner Brown emphasized “no jobs cause a higher rate of crime.” “As County Commissioners, we must provide the best and most needed services for our citizens and lastly education is needed for improvement”, she stated.

The county issues that holds the most importance to Commissioner Brown are to keep taxes low, to get a farmers market built, making sure the county is continuing to work in the 21st century and up to date with technology, and lastly to continue to improve the job situation.

Commissioner Brown explains that it is like a domino effect; keep taxes low with our best services which will help to attract businesses, also keeping tax base low, creating jobs, which will greatly lower unemployment rate.

The main issues brought to the attention of Vance County Commissioners are taxes, litter issues and highway conditions. Vance County citizen's often state they are unable to pay taxes due to lack of income. Citizens wish to be litter free. The highway issues are the conditions of road, streets and highways. There were some responsibilities for county governments that Commissioner Brown was not aware of when she ran for office and they were: the water treatment system and that Kerr Lake was a big asset to our water supply. She was unaware of the budget process and how funds are allocated for the county. Commissioner Brown also states that "you want to do more, but you have less to do it with and that I am still learning because things change from week to week and month to month."

Some of Commissioner Brown's future goals as a county commissioner are to continue to work with commissioners as a team. "There is no 'I' in team, we have to work together to improve and support the county and education" she stated. Commissioner Brown wants to be a commissioner who will work with others, to build a new animal shelter, to bring in more tourism, a tourist welcome center, and an East Coast Hall of Fame Center which are only a few of the boards many future endeavors.

Commissioner Brown believes improving the quality of life for the citizens of Vance County should be first, and if it is not, one should step back and ask will it improve all Vance County citizens; if so it will be justifiable in voting yes to the issue.

"If you're passionate with helping others it's a good thing." - Commissioner Deborah Brown

Samaria Carter

Vance County Henderson, NC

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