

**Interview of Ellis Williford, Wilson County Manager  
By Daniela Agostini, Wilson County 4-H**

When I asked County Manager Ellis Williford on July 16, 2013 what the most challenging part of his job was, he replied with personnel. When I then asked him what the most satisfying part of his job was, his quick response was also personnel. Patiently listening and acting on the public's demands is difficult for local governments and county managers such as Mr. Williford, however these officials make it their duty to serve the community with care and concern.

There are many roles in local government; Wilson County contains twenty separate departments. The county commissioners have monthly meetings in which they consider laws and issues presented by the people. Commissioners are elected every four years by each district; Wilson has a total of seven commissioners whose elected years are not staggered (In other words all commissioners serve at the same time). The county manager, however, is not elected, but must apply for the position and be appointed by the commissioners.

The county manager has many responsibilities. The county manager assists the county commissioners by providing them with information, helping them draw conclusions, and implementing their decisions. A large part of the county manager's job is handling the community's budget. Other county employees that work closely with the county manager when drafting a budget proposal, are the finance department, and the human resource department (however all departments contribute to the budget). Mr. Ellis Williford has been the county manager in Wilson for twenty years, and before that position, he served as the county manager in Edgecombe County for

eight years. Mr. Ellis Williford looks at revenues, requests, and funds to attain an estimate of the next year's budget. The following is a list of the budget recipients requiring financial attention in increasing order: EMS/health department, public health, law enforcement, social services, and education.

The annual budget process is lengthy and complex; the county manager must send several budget request forms, make estimates and recommendations, and hold meetings to finalize the proposed budget. While a citizen may voice his or her opinion at any Board of County Commissioner's meeting, there is a public hearing in June in which all citizens are welcome to speak specifically on the proposed budget.

Although the county manager and county commissioners are most familiar, the many other departments in our local government are just as important when it comes to managing a county. County Manager Ellis Williford gave me a tour of one of the several government buildings in Wilson, pointing out different departments and explaining how crucial each one was to Wilson County's unity and progress as a community. I spoke with people from the mapping department, water department, finance department, and several other areas. I was surprised learn that our relatively small county depends on twenty different departments in order to run smoothly.

Mr. Williford also mentioned how beneficial the 4-H program is and gave it great praise. He told me that he went through the program and credited 4-H with helping him become a confident public speaker. It is truly encouraging and rewarding to me as an active 4-Her to know that 4-H is so greatly acknowledged and appreciated by our county government.