

Helen Miller

Jackson County

### Interview with Commissioner Vicki Greene

On Monday, August 4, I interviewed Commissioner Vicki Greene of the Jackson County Board of Commissioners. After introductions, we wasted no time getting straight to business. I asked Mrs. Greene a number of questions about the community and her position as a board member, all of which she very kindly answered.

First, to break the ice, I asked Mrs. Greene a little bit about herself. She was born and raised in Jackson County, and she attended UNC Greensboro and Chapel Hill for undergraduate and graduate school respectively. Mrs. Greene was elected to her position in 2012 and plans to run for reelection when her term ends in 2016. She ran for a seat on the board wanting to put the experience and knowledge she had gathered throughout her career to good use. Mrs. Greene had worked for the Southwestern Commission and regional council governments for thirty-six years. She had a lot of experience with the kind of work commissioners did and had gone as far as she could in her line of work. She wanted to take that experience she had gained and use it “for the good of [her] fellow citizens of Jackson County instead of region wide”.

Commissioner Greene has many priorities when it comes to her county. The first is the maintenance of ordinances to preserve our environment. She wants to ensure that building cannot take place in locations that cannot maintain the new buildings and developments. Mrs. Greene also works hard to ensure that our county has the recreation facilities the citizens need. While Commissioner Greene is aware that many of the

citizens would like an indoor swimming facility, she feels it's important for other parts of the county to have local parks and recreational facilities before the board focuses on building a pool in Cullowhee, an area that already has a recreation center.

One of the long-term concerns of Mrs. Greene include ensuring that the next generation here in Jackson County is able to find and hold decent jobs once they've graduated from the local high school and college. Mrs. Greene has already come up with a few ideas on how this goal can be accomplished. She has suggested to the Chairman and County Manager that they attempt to create a joint-endeavor between Western and the county to develop an "incubator facility" where graduates from Western, such as those from the entrepreneurship program, "can be set up with some of the technical services that are needed..." to help them get started and get out into Jackson County. Mrs. Greene believes that if we can "keep our kids here", the county could provide the money through our economic director to help and ensure that the younger generation could take advantage of any sort of facility that would be offered.

When asked what some of the hardest decisions she faced were, Mrs. Greene told me that she believed some of the hardest decisions will actually occur in the coming tow years. If the county is to remain revenue neutral after the upcoming reevaluation, the board believes the tax rate will have to increase. This is a big concern for the county commissioners because of the reactions of the citizens and the financial needs of the county.

My interview with Commissioner Greene was a very interesting conversation. It was incredibly informative and helped to open my eyes to some of the issues faced in the county. I really enjoyed speaking with her and I believe Mrs. Greene, along with the other commissioners, is doing her best to “help Jackson County be the best it can be”.