

NCACC Youth Summit Essay

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County Commissioners are major controllers of the funds in a local government, but their job goes beyond writing a budget. A government's goal is to represent the best interest of its citizens, and a huge part of this is proper funding. Government funds are raised by taxing the population. It is important, the majority of the time, that these funds are used to benefit the people they were collected from. Deciding how much money goes to which projects and how to best use funds to provide for the needs of citizens determines how productive a government is. Therefore, county commissioners must carefully consider the use of funds. In order to properly allocate and steward local taxpayers' money, the Macon County commissioners must listen, communicate, and serve.

What better way to learn about the needs of Macon County citizens than to hear them from the citizens themselves? When asked concerning what citizens should do to contact their county commissioners (in order to address needs and concerns), Ronnie Beale, Macon County commissioner, said, "Any citizen can contact me directly, unlike a congressman, unlike a state representative, anyone can find the county commissioner. We see you in the grocery store, we see you in church, and we're out in the community". A county commissioner must be willing to be accessible and listen to the issues and concerns of their constituents. Because of this, local officials are even able to consider the views of minors more easily. Members of local government are in a unique position-- they have the opportunity to know many of their constituents personally and to affect their lives based on their input. Commissioner Beale went on to say, "Sometimes citizens just want to come by and talk. They want to find out what's going on in the county. All they know about what's going on in the county, for the most part, is what is presented in the media. But that's just the appearance of what's going on. County commissioners need to be available and knowledgeable so that we can inform and discuss with the citizens". In contrast to this personal communication, Most of the 9.8 million citizens of North Carolina won't be able to meet or talk personally with their state representative. By talking with and listening to the public on a personal level, county commissioners are better equipped to properly steward the funds of that public.

County commissioners must work together and with other town employees to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the needs of the county. Each commissioner takes on responsibility of being liaison to various groups in the county. These groups represent county programs and demographics, and they are able to communicate needs and projects to the board of commissioners through their liaison. In this way, county commissioners can stay in touch and aware of all the various aspects of county life.

Lastly, county commissioners must have a desire to serve the public; they must be willing to put the needs of the citizens as top priority and who aims to improve the value of life in their county. When Commissioner Beale was asked what his priorities were as commissioner, he responded that he aimed to "... improve services and value of life for citizens". Macon County's local government has been able to

improve the community immensely by taking citizens' views into account and making changes based on them. The more citizens communicate with their local officials, the more accurately those officials can represent them, and the more those officials can benefit the public.