

Amos Stead, Pitt County

County government, the most common place an everyday person would come into contact with government, but one with very little judicial power. County government is in charge of a local budget, which provides supplies for everything from social services, to the local sheriff, and even a public landfill. There are many things the county government looks over; in Pitt County there is a budget of over 200 million dollars, quite a lot of money goes through the county to keep everything in good condition.

Every county is separated into different districts, overseen by commissioners, which is a very large part of most county government changes. Commissioners meet once monthly to do everything from conducting public hearings to recognizing workers. Commissioners also approve a yearly budget in June or July, which supports almost everything public within the county.

In July, I attended a Pitt County Commissioners meeting. The meeting is conducted by the commissioners using parliamentary procedure. The County Manager is also in attendance to provide input and advice. The meeting was broadcast over local cable television.

The July meeting included recognition of county workers. Workers recognized were from the Social Work Department, Police Department, the Detention Center, and the Extension Agency; one of my 4-H agents was awarded her ten year recognition.

James Rhodes, Pitt County Director of Development, presented a proposal to the Board of Commissioners to allocate \$5,000 to rural development. This would be a good faith investment towards a federal grant for \$80,000. The grant money would be used to improve low income housing in rural areas of Pitt County. After some discussion, they passed the proposal providing funding to low income areas.

Mr. Rhodes also discussed a rezoning issue. The issue was placed in public hearing. Judson Whitehurst was suggesting that his land be rezoned to move the industrial zoning closer together, rather than separate it by the agricultural zone. His land is currently being used as a private landfill and recycling center. After Mr. Whitehurst spoke, his neighbor, Mr. Davenport, spoke. Mr. Davenport, a farmer, was concerned about the effects of the rezoning on his property. The board voted to give the two men 60 days to reach an agreement which is satisfactory to both men. The board stated that they would like to see the men leave as friends.

I was scheduled to meet with the county manager and one of the county commissioners later that day. However, they were both unavailable due to a prior meeting going beyond its originally allotted time. Glenn Webb, another county commissioner, conducted a phone interview with me instead. He informed me of the duties of a county commissioner, talked about how our local budget is allocated, and how we fill the spaces sometimes missed by state

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government. For instance, Pitt County is employing additional teachers that the state is not paying.

After my time at the Board of Commissioners' meeting and my phone interview with Mr. Webb, I realized that county government is like driving a car with a faulty clutch and without power steering. The Board is constrained by state regulations and budget deficits, yet it is answerable to its local citizens. It is a very difficult job that I have earned a new respect for and that I think many others should know more about.