

My County

Rutherford County sits at the bottom of the Blue Ridge Mountains in Western North Carolina. We have many beautiful and historical homes, buildings, and sites to visit. The first gold coin was minted in Rutherford County. We are small and friendly, yet we are close to large cities such as Asheville, Hickory, and Charlotte.

Usually two or three times a year, I attend a County Commissioners meeting. I do this for a double purpose. I am interested in the workings of the county and I do it for my 4-H Citizenship Project Book. Sometimes they can be entertaining, but sometimes they can be boring. They are, however interesting most of the time. I learn something new every time I go like who our county manager is or what the needs are in certain departments. One of the meetings I attended in early 2014 was mainly about our local, long established Rescue Squad and what they needed and where they were going.

On June 2, 2014, I had the opportunity to not only attend the Commissioners meeting, but to speak about 4-H and our new Rutherford County 4-H Teen Club. Our Teen Club is focused on Citizenship, Leadership, and Community Service. Our Teen Leader, Sheila Bell, and our 4-H Agent, Cynthia Robbins, were recognized with us at this Commissioners meeting.

On June 5, I had the opportunity and privilege to interview Mr. William Eckler, the Chair of our Board of Commissioners. We met at the Rutherford County Annex building, where the commissioners meet. The Annex building is packed with

a beautiful exhibit of Rutherford County's history. I met with Mr. Eckler in his office where we talked for about forty-five minutes. I asked him the interview questions and he answered every question without hesitation.

Mr. Eckler was very kind and considerate to this very inexperienced interviewer. He told me that he had never ran for a political office until 2008, and he lost in that election. He said the reason he ran again in 2010 was that he had been trying to do things as a private citizen and was getting nowhere.

When asked what he is most proud of or his greatest achievement, he answered by saying there was two. The first was getting the former County Manager to resign and to start the hunt for a new County Manager. He said they interviewed many applicants and were pleased with the hiring of Mr. Carl Classen. They feel Mr. Classen has proven to be a great asset to our county. The second thing that has happened during his term was being named Interim County Manager. He stated that he learned so much from this experience and is grateful for that opportunity. He learned about the actual needs of county agencies and was able to get to know many of the county employees. His best experience was the involvement in the Economic Development Agency. He says Economic Development is a real asset to Rutherford County and this is one of the most important agencies in Rutherford County.

While working as Interim County Manager, he was involved in getting Horsehead to our county. Horsehead is a new manufacturing company, which produces zinc. An additional four hundred jobs has been added to our county. Most importantly, the Horsehead Corporation has invested over four hundred billion dollars into our county.

While Mr. Eckler was acting at the Interim County Manager, he says approximately fifteen hundred jobs were created. Air Team has created an additional seventy jobs. They make HVAC, huge heating and air-conditioning units for extremely large, buildings, hospitals, etc.

Mr. Eckler and his wife moved to Rutherford County over twenty-six years ago from Florida. They bought their land over thirty years ago and had been coming here and loving Rutherford County for over forty years. He decided not to run for reelection so he can spend more time with his family. He plans to work around the house and he is very involved in his church.

I am very appreciative to Mr. Eckler for taking his time with me. I also appreciate Commissioners Julius Owens for recommending and allowing me to attend the Youth Voice event.