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Washington County

Summary of My Interview with Washington County Commissioner

On August 8th, 2014, I interviewed one of our county commissioners, Bill Sexton, and asked him general questions about his career, decisions, and experiences during his terms. This will be a summary of what he told me.

Bill Sexton served 10 years, took a break, and has now been serving about 4 years since he came back. His new term starts in December because he is running unopposed. His main priorities within the Board are agriculture, economic development, the county hospital, and local law enforcement. When he took a break as county commissioner, he made sure to have a replacement run that was equally concerned as he in those subject matters.

Mr. Sexton's long term concerns for the county all related to school system facilities, as ours are incredibly outdated. In order to address this issue, the commissioners attempt to stimulate the economic development by bringing business out into our county. In order to better provide for businesses looking to start up in our county, the Commissioners recently acquired a grant for water and sewers to be built near our local airport.

On the subject of business coming into our county, I asked Mr. Sexton why most businesses seemed to fail within the county. He replied that he believes most companies and starting businesses do not have enough funds, they do not generate enough profit, or they did not acquire any funding help. He continued to say that being a business man himself; he sees that the new businesses coming in to our county need more help than they think. He then said that the Board tries to help the businesses if they think it will be a good investment, but they cannot always help.

I asked Mr. Sexton what is the biggest issue citizens ask him about, and he replied the local hospital. He then told me how he was on the Board when the county sold the hospital, and that that was one of the hardest decisions he has faced as a county commissioner. Even though he did not want to sell it, he knew that the county itself should not be running something they did not know how to run.

Earlier in the interview Mr. Sexton mentioned that it can sometimes be tough when one personally disagrees with the consensus of the people. I asked him how he deals with that scenario and if it has gotten easier to deal with over the years. He responded that it makes him think about the issue and find middle ground. He went on to mention that if the people themselves are split, you want to avoid division at all costs. After that, he started telling me a story in which the citizens were divided and attempted to guilt trip him into making a decision. In the end, he never had to make the decision because the problem at hand never came to fruition.

After the story, I asked him if Washington County had a problem with uninformed citizens. He responded that that can be the case, sometimes. However, he said that it really boils down to experience in deciphering what is there. He then stressed that business people are important to have on the Board as they have the experience needed to decipher that information. After he finished answering the question, he got an important phone call, and we had to end the interview.