

By: Kye Laughter

Government is important for society to function. County government is a more personal and local form of government and is in charge of managing the county budget, public safety, housing, education and enhancing the lives of local constituents. During my tour of the Henderson County Courthouse I sat down with Chairman Tommy Thompson and got a better understanding of how county government works. Thompson said that the most important issue to him is creating a better place to live for those in the county. One of the biggest issues facing Henderson County is the budget and who gets what.

Many people come to the board of commissioners asking for money or for approval of their budget. During the June 24th meeting, "Cane Creek Water" requested a construction contract and budget approval for building a pump station in the county.

Thompson said that one of the responsibilities he was not aware of when he first became Chairman was how time consuming the job was. Thompson has worked in county government since 1974 and says that a usual week as Chairman can total anywhere from 20 hours of work to 60 hours. Between meetings, calls and transportation the life of a County Chairman can be hectic. Thompson has been involved in County Government for 32 years and is well aware of the inner workings of Henderson County.

Construction on the Old Henderson County Courthouse began in 1904 and was completed in 1905. The Courthouse now serves as a Heritage Museum. The Old Courtroom is where county commissioners conduct their meetings. The courtroom has been remodeled and the courthouse architecture is Neo-Classical Revival; which was extremely popular during the early 1900s and has elements of Greek architecture. The Henderson County Courthouse is unique with its Greek porticos and the statue of Themis perched upon the golden dome. The jail has long been demolished and the interior has been renovated. This three story building is an essential piece of Henderson County History and serves as a unifying symbol for a small county.

One of the most interesting things I discovered was the gatekeeper in the basement, Mr. Jingles. A cat named Rascal was hired to deal with the rat problem in the Historic Courthouse but failed to do his job and was quickly replaced with the backup rat-hunter, Mr. Jingles. Mr. Jingles is extremely friendly and clearly has a lot of influence in county politics. During my interview of Chairman Thompson, Mr. Jingles clearly wanted to be included in the conversation and jumped on the table.

Mr. Jingles is just one solution to a local issue that did not require an act of Congress or a D.C. Bureaucrat. It takes native and involved leaders who understand their hometown to tackle issues with simple and personal solutions that are minute in the eyes of the Washington Machine. Whether it's a parking lot being demolished or a Water Pump being built, for once I can agree with Former House Speaker Tip O'Neill and support his claim that indeed, "All politics is local."

http://www.abajournal.com/news/article/adopted_cat_provides_rapid_resolution_to_ratzilla_proble_m_at_historic_court/

<http://architecturestyles.org/neoclassical/>