

Emily Owens
Hertford County
Youth Summit 2015

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Hertford County is in the northeast region of North Carolina. My county is also a border to Southampton County, Virginia. Hertford county also has the wide Chowan River which is known for fishing and other water related activities.

On Tuesday, August 11, 2015, I interviewed Mr. Johnnie Ray Farmer. Mr. Farmer is a county commissioner in Hertford County. He has currently been on the board for 14 years. He is not sure whether he will run for reelection when his term expires because he has served for quite some time.

We spoke about some of his local priorities and issues that hold the most importance to him. He informed me that transportation was the most important thing in our county. He serves on the Rural Planning Organization board along with others. Although, on the RPO board (Rural Planning Organization), they work with the Department of Transportation to inform them of the conditions of local roads. He also once served on the Mental Health board for 12 years, but is not currently.

One of his long-term concerns for our county is economical development. Hertford County is a rural, agricultural county. This means that we do not have as many large, industrial businesses in our county and we have more farms. Currently, it does not take as many people to farm, so we need to employ them with other better paying jobs. He plans on doing this by creating roads so the trucks from Nucor and other trucking businesses can import and export more effectively.

Taxes was the biggest issue that people came to him about. Hertford County has one of the highest taxes rates in the state, we also have not raised the tax rate in eight years. This is because we do not have many big industries to help pay taxes like most counties and not as many people in the county because we are so rural.

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The hardest decision he has had to face a county commissioner would be budget. He would love to spend money to help everyone that needed it, for example EMS and firefighters, then the budget would be huge and taxes would skyrocket.

On August 17, 2015, I attended a county commissioner's meeting. They opened with a prayer and public comment. Next, Mr. Farmer introduced me and how I would be attending Youth Summit. Then, other citizens spoke about things that they needed from them. After everyone was finished, the commissioners had their comments and then the session was closed.