

Interview with Gary D. Blevins County Commissioner

To begin my tour of local government, I attended the August 4th Wilkes county commissioner's meeting and was fascinated by the agenda and order of business the commissioners followed. The commissioners were mostly discussing budget choices with the most interesting one being the purchase of an armoured vehicle by the sheriff's department. This budget decision was especially relevant as the sheriff's department had recently encountered a social dispute that had led to gunfire. This demonstrated how the county departments work together and how they rely on each other to function correctly.

The next morning I had the opportunity to interview county commissioner Gary D. Blevins. I was immediately impressed with how casual and comfortable he was with his position. He told me how he had been a commissioner for many years and had served as chairman for two of those years. I realized he knew his job inside and out, and he demonstrated that throughout the interview. I asked Mr. Blevins, "what issues within your county do you make decisions on the most"? He replied that the commissioners made decisions affecting many different county departments, but that budget decisions were probably the most prevalent. We then discussed many of the different projects the county had undertaken over the last year or so. He told me how the commissioners had helped plan and coordinate most of them. I was most surprised by how this group of five men can affect the county as a whole and citizens on an individual basis. Their decisions while seeming small at times can make the difference between the growth or death of towns, communities, and neighborhoods. Commissioner Blevins explained that when making these pivotal decisions the commissioners take time to assure they are not affecting other people groups than the obvious people involved.

As we discussed the importance of the county commissioner office Mr. Blevins explained that while their office is up for election every two years their individual decisions affect the long term health of the county. He told me how they hoped that their planning today would afford Wilkes county great business and residential growth in the next few decades. Hearing this I asked him, "what do you feel is the biggest issue Wilkes county faces in the coming year"? He replied that encouraging new business growth was his main concern and that keeping existing businesses in Wilkes county was a current issue. He told me that a few of the other commissioners and himself had been trying to encourage larger companies corporate offices to move into wilkes. This would in turn create several new job openings in Wilkes county and bring new money into the county.

I spent about an hour and a half conversing with commissioner Blevins about his office and I could have talked to him for several more hours. He explained the lives of the commissioners very well and told me how their positions kept them very busy, I realized that the commissioners are just normal people like us working full time jobs that set their free time aside to serve their communities. At the end of the interview I felt very informed about county government and even inclined to research local government more in the future.