

2019
State of the County Address
Johnston County, North Carolina

Good morning everyone and Happy New Year! I want to first thank my fellow Commissioners for the opportunity to serve as Chairman and I would like to also congratulate Vice Chairman Chad Stewart on his appointment. Before we move forward, I want to again recognize past Chairman Jeff Carver and thank him for his outstanding leadership and devotion to Johnston County. I would like to briefly review a few things from 2018 before discussing our future.

- This Board has always been focused on economic development and creating jobs for our citizens. I am pleased to say that in 2018, the Board approved four economic development incentive grants to growing companies in our County. I would like to emphasize that these grants are no-risk incentives. They are not paid until the new investment has been made, the promised jobs have been created, and taxes have been paid on the new investment.
- The merger with Alliance Behavioral Health was completed in 2018. We are partners with Wake, Durham, and Cumberland Counties. The Board recognizes the

importance of mental health services for our citizens and part of the merger agreement included a provision that Alliance would have an office in our County. Today, they are located in the former mental health offices on Brightleaf Boulevard in Smithfield.

- A big thank you goes to Johnston County citizens as the recent bond referendums for Johnston County Public Schools and Johnston Community College were approved. This is the 6th consecutive set of bond referendums that have passed since 1999. These bonds have provided funds for much needed capital improvements with attractive financing terms.
- The 2018 election also provided three new members to our Board which were sworn into office in December. We welcome newcomers, Commissioner Butch Lawter and Commissioner Patrick Harris. We also welcome the return of past member and former chairman, Commissioner Tony Braswell. I believe we have a very strong, conscientious Board that will serve Johnston County well.
- The Board selected and purchased a site for the new public safety center. We thank the Town of Smithfield for rezoning the property to accommodate this facility and we look

forward to being good neighbors to the property owners in that area. We also believe that this location not only adequately serves our need for a new detention center, but will also be a catalyst for growth east of Interstate 95.

- Once again, the County received a clean audit for Fiscal Year 2016-2017. We commend our outstanding Finance team and all County departments for this accomplishment. It is most important that we spend tax dollars wisely.
- The Board adopted the Fiscal Year 2017-2018 budget, and for the 20th straight year, did not raise the property tax rate.
- Much background work for the upcoming revaluation has been taking place in 2018 and we extend our appreciation to the Tax Department for their hard work during this process. The next budget will be based on new property values.
- Public safety has always been and will continue to be a priority for this Board. We owe a debt of gratitude to our many public safety partners and county agencies for their excellent work and dedication before, during and after the hurricanes this past fall. We are blessed in this County to have the finest public safety agencies there is between law

enforcement, Emergency Services, 911 Communications and our many other partners.

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I look forward to our Board's annual work session this spring, as it will be a time for us to focus on and discuss the future of our great County. As mentioned earlier, the property for the new public safety center has been purchased and the schematic design is underway. We anticipate the project to be completed by 2022.

The County will sell the first set of the recently voter-approved education bonds this spring and we are excited to see these projects begin. Thanks again to the voters for their support and confidence in us all.

We must continue to focus on economic development. Certainly, new investment enhances the property tax base, but more importantly, these investments provide jobs. We will continue to market Johnston County to the world and we will continue to maintain great working relationships with our existing industry partners and encourage their expansions.

Our success in economic development however, also brings pressure on our infrastructure from traffic congestion to water and sewer capacity limits. Many of our citizens in the high-growth areas of the County are already experiencing frustrations and difficulties associated with “growth”. Addressing these concerns and finding a balanced solution(s) must be one of the highest priorities of this Board.

In 2017, the Board adopted a County Aging Plan. We cannot lose focus on our senior population and we should provide consideration for that growing segment of our County. Ongoing review of our aging plan and support for those agencies involved in providing services for our aging citizens is the right thing to do.

We must remain fiscally responsible and always recognize that it is the taxpayers’ money we are managing. Our goal as a Board has always been to reach the AAA bond rating and we are only one step away. I really believe that will become a reality in the very near future.

In closing, I look forward to working with you all in 2019 to plan for the years beyond. I am sure we will have different opinions on ways to get there from time to time, but I have no doubt we will come together on a direction that’s best for

Johnston County. After all, that is why we are here – to help make our County the best it can possibly be.

Thank you,

Ted G. Godwin, Chairman

Johnston County Board of Commissioners