

## Manager's Blog

I have spent one month as Interim County Manager in Caswell County. As a native of Burlington, I have had some familiarity with the county and even covered it as a newspaper reporter for the Burlington Times-News 36 years ago.

I knew coming in the job that the county has significant challenges.

I was told by the Board during my interview that staff morale is very low. For one, the county is not able to pay its employees at the same level as surrounding counties. For another, the turnover in the county manager's position has created understandable anxiety in the organization.

I knew I would have many challenges and problems to fix. Honestly, that is what I enjoy about interim work: the opportunity to leave the organization in better shape than I found it.

What I did not expect was the caliber of county employees I have to work with

I expected employees to be down-trodden and difficult to motivate. I expected that the new way of doing things I wanted to introduce would be met with strong resistance.

What I found was exactly the opposite. I found enthusiasm and a willingness to change, something that can be rare in government.

I spent the bulk of my first two weeks meeting with department heads to understand their current projects and needs. I found without exception that Caswell County employees are working extremely hard to provide the best services they can with limited resources. I've heard story after story of how, on a shoe-string budget, departments have provided services that are comparable to other places.

Simply put, our employees want to do their best for Caswell County. Many of them are natives of the county. Their hearts and families are in the county and that's why they stay here. They stay and continue to persevere in difficult circumstances because they care about Caswell County and its residents.

Lest you think I don't know what I am talking about or that I am easily hoodwinked, let me assure you that is not the case. I have spent more than 40 years working in local government or covering it for newspapers. I've worked in three cities/towns and four counties, not including the ones I've covered for newspapers. I've seen just about everything one can see. What I am seeing in Caswell County gives me much hope for a bright future!