

State of the County

March 23, 2015

7:00pm

Delivered by Chairman Michael D. Page

Good evening and thank you for joining us tonight for the annual State of the County Address. As we traditionally do, we take the time to reflect on our accomplishments, successes and progress on key initiatives.

First of all, I want to salute my fellow commissioners for their outstanding appearances in the video we just reviewed. I want to remind you just how dynamic they all are with their various engagements, not only in Durham County, but indeed on the state and national level as well.

Vice Chair Brenda HOWERTON made history with her election as Second Vice President of the NCACC. She is on track to become the organization's first President from Durham County, leading county officials from all 100 counties. As an officer, she is integral in helping to shape the legislative agenda and policy initiatives.

Commissioner Fred Foster Jr. serves as Vice Chair of the National Association of Counties Human Services and Education Steering Committee helping to shape policy for the nation's counties. That work impacts services to children, senior citizens, immigration, social services education and more. Fred is also 2nd vice president of the TJCOG Board of Delegates.

Our most tenured **Commissioner Ellen Reckhow** is on the Board of the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners. Ellen also chairs that group's Environment Steering Committee. In addition, she serves on the Justice and Public Safety and the General Government steering committees.

Commissioner Wendy Jacobs graduated from the second Advanced Leadership Corps, sponsored by the UNC School of Government, NCACC and the NC League of Municipalities. The program focuses on personal leadership development and allows elected officials the opportunity to enhance their leadership capabilities.

As you know we welcomed a new County Manager in 2014. **Mr. Wendell Davis** was appointed by our Board and began his work in April. He literally hit the ground running thanks to his previous employment with Durham County as Deputy County Manager from 1999-2011.

We were pleased to welcome a new Budget and Management Services Director as well.... **Claudia Odom Hager**. Claudia began her work last October. She is also having a return engagement with Durham County. Claudia worked as Budget Director during the administration of former county manager David Thompson.

I am pleased to report that Durham County continues to be financially well managed. Last year, Moody's Investors reaffirmed Durham County's Triple A bond rating and noted the following reasons:

- Effective financial management during the economic downturn and demonstrated willingness to promptly identify and close budget gaps;
- Budget reserves that continue to provide a sound cushion and;
- Substantial growing and diverse tax base with strong institutional presence.

As we have maintained for years, a Triple A rating allows Durham County to borrow money at the lowest rates available, which is a tremendous benefit to our taxpayers. We appreciate the work of our **Chief Financial Officer George Quick** and his staff for their strong stewardship over our financial operations.

We again commend **Director Kim Simpson** and the Tax Administration Department for aggressive collections efforts. Durham County finished the year with a collection rate of 99.34%, slightly below the top county. That compares favorably among the top 5 counties in NC.

In another demonstration of our economic success, Durham County continued to move forward in a positive direction with our Economic Development activities. One exciting achievement occurred last year when Durham County developed a **joint Economic Development Strategic Plan** with the City of Durham. That will significantly enhance our ability to attract new business in our community.

Durham County also partnered with the City to support **development of City Center**, a 25 story high rise, mixed use building to include two floors of subgrade parking, ground floor retail space, four floors of

office space, and a 20 story residential tower consisting of 133 apartments plus condo units.

The project also includes the **renovation of the Jack Tar Hotel** across the street, adding an additional 74 hotel rooms to downtown in walking distance to the convention center. That will help the City and County supported Convention Center attract new business.

The County also partnered with the City to support **Argos Therapeutics**, a Durham based Biopharmaceutical Company with roots at Duke University, in bringing 236 new jobs and saving 100 jobs that were at risk of being relocated. The company is investing more than \$57million in the construction of a new 116,000 square feet headquarters, research and development and commercialization of fully personalized immunotherapies for treating cancer and infectious diseases.

While money is important, we can do nothing without a top notch work force. Maintaining a well trained workforce and planning for the next generation of leaders is critical to our success. I am happy to report that a new program, **“The Leadership Academy”** was developed last year

as part of Durham County's ongoing effort to provide accountable, efficient and visionary government.

The goal of the academy is to strengthen knowledge of leadership concepts, focus on employee development, and promote self-discovery of leadership potential. This is accomplished by creating an inclusive educational environment to cultivate leadership skills regardless of position which is embodied in the academy theme's *You Can Lead from Anywhere*.

Most importantly, participating in the academy facilitates an opportunity for sharing, networking, and learning for all participants as well as fostering a sense of teamwork.

Finally, while Leadership Academy participants are not promised a pay increase or a promotion at the completion of the academy, by taking advantage of this great opportunity, an employee is making a big investment in his/her future.

We are delighted to have participants and graduates of the Leadership Academy with us this evening. Please join me in recognizing them.

[APPLAUSE]

Thank you.

Each time I deliver this report, I reflect on how Durham County has a well-deserved reputation for innovation, professional development and overall success. I am delighted to share with you some of the 2014 achievements from our departments. Permit me highlight just a few.

As you heard in the video, Durham County's **Public Health Department** received the "The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Culture of Health Award". This recognition honored six communities across the country for their commitment to health for all. This was due directly to Public Health Director Gayle Harris' unwavering commitment to promoting collaboration between organizations to increase access to medical care, creating a healthier environment and a focus on education and poverty in addition to disease as factors that impact one's health.

The winning communities, selected from more than 250 across the nation, received a no-strings attached \$25,000 cash prize in recognition of their accomplishments. Public Health combined the celebration of its Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Culture of Health Award with its annual "**Take a Loved One to the Doctor Day**" for a fun community health event.

Our **Durham County Library** held its “Durham Reads Together” program last fall. The book chosen was, “**March Book One**”, by U. S. Representative John Lewis. This graphic novel was the first of an expected series by the civil rights icon. Fortunately for us, Congressman Lewis spent several days in Durham, leading a march, signing his book, attending special events, and participating in a WUNC live interview with Frank Stasio which was open to the community. We appreciate how our **Library staff** thinks outside the box in offering outstanding programs for the entire community.

Our annual **Veterans Services** Day community celebration was highlighted with a very special event. Five current active duty service members and one veteran took the solemn oath of citizenship at last year’s program. What a wonderful way to honor the critical role of our military and to point out the importance of citizenship!

Through a collaboration with the District Court, Office of the Sheriff, Durham Police Department, our **Criminal Justice Resource Center** designed and implemented the Misdemeanor Diversion Program for 16 and 17 year old first time offenders. This program diverts youth who have committed non-violent, low level offenses for the first time away

from the adult criminal justice system. The program also **received a grant for its work from the NC Governors Crime Commission.**

Sheriff Mike Andrews was elected to a new term last year and in addition, recently received the 2015 Outstanding Law Enforcement Executive of the Year Award at the annual National Alliance on Mental Illness Crisis Intervention Team conference. Sheriff Andrews was honored for his advocacy around mental health issues and his long time support of our Crisis Intervention Team. Bottom line, he has a history of supporting and training his officers as they work to divert persons with mental illness away from the criminal justice system into treatment.

Durham County Tax Administration received the 2014 Distinguished Jurisdiction Award for its implementation of an online property tax appeals system that was the result of approximately two years of research and planning. By customizing a variety of existing technologies, Durham leveraged the strengths of each to develop a platform for increasing the efficiency of resolving taxpayer appeals, and for providing taxpayers with a new level of access to information.

Implementation of the program has resulted in a noticeable decrease in the amount of staff time required to receive, track and resolve appeals.

This online appeals systems greatly benefits our taxpayers by

streamlining the process required not only in filing their appeals, but also in developing them. Part of the system includes tools that enable taxpayers to select comparable sales for the time period relevant to the latest reappraisal date. Durham is the first county in North Carolina to utilize this suite of online applications in this way.

Our 4-H program, a division of our **Cooperative Extension Department**, partnered with Durham Public Schools and other organizations to provide STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math), programming using workshops, camps, activities and experiments for over 600 Durham County students. Funds and other resources were obtained to build a 10-bed vegetable garden behind Lakeview Alternative School.

This garden reaped pounds of fresh produce for the culinary arts program, enhanced the accessibility of the science program and created a sense of community and solidarity among the students and teachers. Best of all, the garden even provided food for a Thanksgiving Feast shared by participants! A tasty learning opportunity!

The Bionomic Educational Training Center is a workforce development training program for youth at Southern School of Energy and

Sustainability that addresses water quality via stormwater retrofit design and implementation. **Soil and Water Conservation** leads this initiative in collaboration with Durham Public Schools. This program also trains our youth for future employment by educating them about urban-containment sources and Best Management Practices to improve water quality. Specifically this program is helping them become employed in green-infrastructure careers, and teaches them how to establish successful agribusinesses...a win-win that helps improve self-esteem.

Durham County Emergency Medical Services and DPS' City of Medicine Academy Magnet School began teaching an EMT course at the school in the fall. In December, we graduated City of Medicine youth paramedics, a first for this community!

The City of Durham and Durham County embarked on an **“open data” partnership** that will lay the groundwork for businesses, non-profits, journalists, universities, and residents to access and use the wealth of public data available between the two government organizations, while becoming even more transparent to the residents of Durham. The project is expected to launch later this summer. This collaboration will bring us to a new level of transparency!

And our new Durham County Justice Center, whose construction was managed by Durham County Engineering, received a “Gold” level certification as a LEED Certified Building. **That brings Durham County’s total of LEED buildings to 8.** In addition, a new State Employees Credit Union “Cash Points Machine” was installed in the parking deck adjoining the new Durham County Courthouse. This will help employees, visitors to the courthouse and DPAC customers enjoy the convenience of obtaining quick cash.

Our Triangle Wastewater Treatment Plant received honors from the NC American Water Works Association and Water Environment Associations’ and was named “**Collection System of the Year.**” That plant is managed by our Engineering’s Utility Division.

This represents just a few of the outstanding achievements from the previous year, and we are grateful to our innovative workforce for always being a leader in local government practices, programs and services.

As many of you may know Durham County has joined other communities across the nation in making a commitment to help save

young men of color. Just about this time last year during my “State of the County” remarks, I spoke about the ever growing number of young men whose futures were being lost due to court involvement, violence, lack of education and a lack of mentors to show them a better way forward. I challenged our community to come together to make the future success of young men of color in Durham County a priority.

Shortly thereafter, and thanks to Mayor Bell, we learned more about **President Obama’s My Brothers Keeper Initiative**. Those ideals he detailed meshed well with what we were hoping to achieve here in Durham, and we began to take action to engage with MBK.

On November 13th, we held our initial **My Brother’s Keeper kickoff** event at our Human Services Building. Approximately 160 community leaders joined us and promised to support our efforts to improve outcomes for Durham’s young men of color. We started the event with a video message from President Obama, which set the tone for our important task ahead. School Board Chairman Heidi Carter, Mayor Bill Bell and I pledged total collaboration for this critical task that would become a part of the fabric of Durham County.

Dr. Bryant Marks of Morehouse College gave the challenge to the group with his insightful, researched-based comments. In addition to his work

at Morehouse, where he directs the Morehouse Male Initiative, Dr. Marks is also a member of the President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for African Americans. Dr. Marks confronted myths with facts, and offered new approaches to reaching our youth. At that first event, participants divided into 3 areas to discuss critical issues impacting youth:

1. Educational Attainment
2. Court Involvement
3. Job Training

At the end of the evening, we collected the comments and pledged to move forward with the My Brother's Keeper plan of action. As we examined the comments, some immediate feedback reminded us that an important voice was missing from our conversation...that of our youth.

As we had more conversations and began to put the action plan into motion, we also added one additional, critical committee... Health.

We have now **established 4 committees and 8 co-chairs leading our effort to research effective strategies, best practices and other critical information required to produce Durham's My Brother's Keeper Plan of Action.** We held our first planning meeting a few months ago to provide co-chairs with their official charge.

Many of our co-chairs are here this evening, and I would like for them to stand at this time:

- Dr. Philip Graham and Dr. Donna-Marie Winn---**Education**
- Dr. Wizdom Powell and Michael Scott—**Health**
- Judge Leon Stanback and Rev. James Blake—**Court Involvement**
- Farad Ali and Roger Shackelford—**Job Training and Placement**

[APPLAUSE]

Thank you for your leadership of this initiative.

These chairs have contacted persons who attended the initial summit, and other interested persons, to flesh out their committees and are fully engaged in the work that is required to align with our timetable.

Let me mention the **Youth Summit** which was held Saturday, January 24th at the Durham Convention Center. I must tell you that it was an enlightening, productive day! More than 125 youth, ages 11-21 attended that event and participated in our discussions.

For three hours, we worked to receive feedback from the youth about issues directly affecting them in our four key areas. They also heard from **motivational speaker Mike Rae Anderson, our County**

Manager Wendell Davis and others who care about the success of these young males. Our plan is to take their comments, and use them to help inform the work that is being done toward the goal of producing our Durham's My Brothers' Keeper Action Plan.

Let me ask if any of the young men, participants and volunteers who attended that Youth event are here this evening, please stand at this time.

[APPLAUSE]

Thank you for your support and attendance.

Sometimes the work that you do locally is seen by others outside the community. Such was the case last month. Our County Manager was unexpectedly contacted by the staff of US Secretary of Labor Thomas Perez. They shared that they had learned of the great MBK work underway in Durham, and wanted to see if the Secretary could stop by the following week when he was in the area to host a roundtable discussion on employment, apprenticeships and more.

Well, thanks to the staff of the County Manager, **Labor Secretary Perez joined us on February 11th and held a highly interactive roundtable discussion with local leaders**, some of our MBK co-chairs and youth who attended our MBK Summit. Secretary Perez engaged the group in discussions about strategies and policies that the US

Department of Labor might implement at the national level to encourage employers to consider more robust training opportunities for youth. We were very proud of the success of that event and we appreciated the remarks from Secretary Perez.

I'm told that many of our Commissioners heard Secretary Perez speak to county officials in Washington later in February while attending the National Association of Counties Legislative Conference, and that he indeed referenced his visit to Durham County and the great work being done here.

On February 12th, County Manager Wendell Davis and I traveled to the White House for the My Brother's Keeper National Convening event.

There, we joined leaders from 73 communities', from 38 states who are also participating in the My Brother's Keeper Initiative.

During that day, we engaged in productive discussions and workshops on education, college readiness, career preparation, successfully entering the workforce and more. Valerie Jarrett, senior advisor to the president, and Attorney General Eric Holder spoke during the event. Holder stressed to participants that the program's goal is to "widen the circle of opportunity" for young men of color.

As I stated last year, and as I reiterate this evening, we are in this endeavor for the long term. Durham County Government cannot do this work alone. **It will take our entire community toiling together in new ways, and with new partners, to ensure that our MBK goals are realized.** There is much at stake in this work, and I am convinced that we will succeed. Our goal remains leading these young men to achieve lifelong success, by surrounding them with supports from cradle to college to career.

Our new County Manager Davis arrived last spring and challenged our Board to embrace an enhanced performance management approach that takes our strategic plan to a higher level. While praising the work that had gone on, he recognized the need to take a deeper dive into developing deliberate strategies to ensure success.

He offered a **“best practice” management model** used in many communities across the country, and indeed around the world. Our county manager learned this model in his early years in local government administration, and has launched the concept within our government as way of doing business.

Simply put, **Managing for Results** will allow us, as your elected leaders, to work with the benefit of data and trends over time, and to review programs and services objectively. Data will help ensure that we are getting what we pay for, which helps ensure that we are more effective in buying the right services with **your tax dollars**.

Our county manager brought in an international expert in this area to begin to lead his administrative staff through a process first understanding the key concepts, and then working to build Durham County's Managing for Results model.

The Manager also had to work with our Board of Commissioners to make sure we understood how this work will lead to better outcomes for our community.

I must say it was an ambitious undertaking for us all, but I am pleased at where we are.

First of all let me share with you a basic performance cycle with 4 areas:

- **We Plan** for what we want to achieve

- **We Budget** for the results we want
- **We Manage** to ensure we are achieving those results
- And we **Evaluate and Learn** to determine how we can make improvements for better outcomes

We understand that measurement is powerful: what gets measured gets done; if you don't measure results, you can't tell success from failure; if you can't recognize failure, you can't correct it.

These are some management practices that will be utilized moving forward in our process:

Every program the county funds has a full set of measures that provide a useful basis for managers to monitor effectiveness and efficiency.

Performance measures are defined in writing with instructions or documentation to enable accurate data collection

Performance targets are set, reviewed and updated so they are consistent with the program's objectives

Managers at all levels review actual performance versus target on a regular basis and take action to keep on track.

There are interactive reviews of performance between levels of management on a regular basis—managers are held accountable for achieving program performance objectives in regular reviews

Every employee has a line of sight to know how his/her performance contributes to our organizational performance.

Since the introduction of **Managing for Results**, Durham County's Managing for Success Model, our staff has participated in several learning labs and workshops, using the information as well as other "best practices" to craft our own Durham County model.

Our employees worked in these 4 separate areas to develop our model. They studied best practices in their respective areas, made recommendations and eventually refined a draft model.

With that work completed, our Board came in to hear about the model and shared our input. We were supportive of most of the work done by staff and added just a few of our own thoughts, particularly in the area of customer service. It was important to us that it rest as a foundation to support all of our other efforts.

At the end of October, the draft model was shared by a staff group of about 100 county employees to receive feedback. In November, our Board held a half day retreat to review the work and give our blessing. We made a few changes and concurred with the recommended four year implementation time frame.

Our staff is now hard at work to operationalize the model, which will begin this year with seven pilot departments.

Let me share the model...

As you can see, our Strategic Goals rest atop of the model. These are the familiar strategic goals that our Board approved in 2012...

Community and Family Prosperity, Health and Well-Being for all, Safe and Secure Community, Environmental Stewardship and Accountable, Efficient and Visionary Government.

Very important are the Four Main Components that you see represented in the quadrants of the model:

- Strategic and Operational Planning,
- Budgeting for Results,
- Managing Service Delivery,
- and finally Learning, Evaluation and Accountability.

It all rests on building on the foundation of exceptional customer service driven by:

- Effective Communications and Stakeholder Engagement With Clear Roles,
- Effective Partnerships and Collaboration that add value,
- Results focused leadership and governance
- and Core Values and a High-Performance Culture.

As I mentioned, this new model has an implementation time line that will be rolled out over several budget years. This work is too important to rush, and we want to make sure we incorporate the process appropriately.

Yes, as it sounds, this Managing for Results Model involves a great deal of work, but we are convinced that at the end of the day, it is well worth the effort to make sure **Durham County is maximizing its fiscal resources and demonstrating great stewardship of your tax dollars.** The benefits will be a clear path to provide improved service results for addressing the challenging in our ever growing community.

Our community is on the cusp of great change, and we must be intentional with our work. I want to thank County Manager Davis and his staff for their work thus far and I am sure Durham County will continue to create a culture that embraces innovation in leadership and service delivery.

Author Jim Collins, notes “Greatness is not a function of circumstance. Greatness, it turns out, is largely a matter of conscious choice, and discipline.”

As we move forward in 2015, Durham County will rise to address the ever-changing needs and demands for service for Durham County’s dynamic and growing population.

Thank you!