

2016 State of the County

March 28, 2016

7:00PM

Chairman Michael D. Page

Good evening and thank you for joining us for our 2016 State of the County Address, a tradition that we began in **2007**. As Chairman of the Board of County Commissioners, it is once again my honor to come before you to talk about where we've been in the past year, and where we are going in the coming months. Traditionally during this address, we take this time to reflect on our accomplishments, successes and progress on key initiatives. And we look ahead to challenges, and yes, opportunities on the horizon.

I'd like to welcome all of you who have joined us in these chambers. I want to also thank our audience watching us on

Channel 8 or watching us live streaming on a computer. No matter how you are accessing this information, please understand that we sincerely appreciate your interest, and efforts to make Durham County great!

Let me begin this message by recognizing my esteemed colleagues on the Board of County Commissioners. As Commissioners, we work to provide direction to the professional staff to ensure that Durham County moves forward and dynamically addresses the needs of this community.

I'd like to ask my fellow Board members to stand.

1. Vice Chairman Brenda Howerton
2. Commissioner Ellen Reckhow
3. Commissioner Fred Foster, Jr.
4. And Commissioner Wendy Jacobs

Let's give them a big hand!

I'd like to congratulate my colleagues Wendy Jacobs, Brenda Howerton and Ellen Reckhow, who were successful in the recent election. They, along with Heidi Carter and Jim Hill will comprise the next Board of County Commissioners beginning in December. Know that Fred and I will continue to support the work of Durham County, just from a different vantage point.

Let me now recognize our exceptional **County Manager Wendell M. Davis** who leads our executive staff and department heads, and indeed, the day to day operations of this county. To all of the **employees** of Durham County joining us here, and at home this evening I say "**Thank you**" for your great work! You represent a wonderful group of dedicated and committed public servants who show up each day with a sense of professionalism and compassion.

When I ended my remarks last year, I stated that our community was on the cusp of great change. This evening I want to share with you some key information to demonstrate how well we are moving forward in many areas.

As organizations do, Durham County witnessed the departure of several longtime key staff and welcomed several other senior staff members.

Emergency Management Director **Jeff Batten**, who safely managed the county's response through tornados, major ice storms, snow storms and other natural disasters;

and Deputy County Manager **Lee Worsley**, who ably served as interim County Manager and managed a variety of major projects during his tenure.

Both of them bid farewell to Durham County in 2015 and we wished them well in heading into retirement and new job opportunities.

After extensive searches, we hired Engineering Director **Jay Gibson**, Emergency Management Director **Jim Groves** and Deputy County Manager **Jodi Miller** in leadership **positions**.

Kathy Everett-Perry has been serving as Interim Human Resources Director.

I must say, we have already experienced superior work and great new ideas from these leaders, and we look forward to continuing

to bring in the **best** and **brightest** talent in some key positions that remain open.

No doubt we have an outstanding group of departments that are leading the way in many professional areas. Durham County is regularly recognized for its innovation and creativity. While the list of awards is quite lengthy, permit me to highlight some of the many honors that were received in 2015.

The **Information Services and Technology** Department

received a great number of awards for its efforts as a department and for its leadership. Director **Greg Marrow** received the Triangle Business Journal's CIO Award presented to leaders who are changing the Triangle business community through information technology. NACo named the department as a 2015 Top 10 Digital County during its annual meeting. IS&T also

received the 2015 GiGa Award by the North Carolina Local Government Information Systems Association and the 2015 Public Technology Institute Solutions Award.

Our **Durham County Tax Office** received a 2015 Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties for its “Online Property Tax Appeal Management System.”

Engineering and Environmental Services won the PTI 2015 Solutions Award for the “Charge Ahead Durham Campaign,” along with a second place Golden Post Award for Best Use of Social Media for Community Engagement from Government Social Media.

Our **Durham County Library** received the American Library Association's "John Cotton Dana Public Relations Award" for the Durham Reads Together program featuring March: Book One by Civil Rights Icon and Congressman John Lewis. This is ALA's most prestigious award and featured a \$10,000 check for our Library.

The **Criminal Justice Resource Center** was recognized by the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners with an Excellence in Innovation Award for its Misdemeanor Diversion Program. It also garnered a "Recovery Month Educational Event" Award from SAMHSA, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Durham County's Public Health and Emergency Management departments conducted a **Strategic National Stockpile** exercise to test how well we would conduct ourselves in the event of a

wide spread public health/security threat. The exercise ran over two days and involved local hospitals, public safety, our universities, city and county staff and community partners.

Emergency Management's David Marsee and Public

Health's Pat Gentry were honored with Durham County On the Spot awards for their leadership of this critical collaborative work.

Durham County's Office of the Sheriff received grant funding through the Office of Justice Programs to obtain a critical upgrade to the agency's bomb response robot. The robot is utilized by the **Hazardous Devices Unit (HDU)**, and is one of only **15** such units in the State of North Carolina. This nationally accredited unit provides regional service to five counties.

In its efforts to provide a high level of communications with the public, the Sheriff hired a Senior Public Information Officer to

help with media inquiries during major incidents, arrests and key events and to communicate public service information.

Kelly Warnock, Nutrition Communications and Health

promotion Program Manager was awarded the GlaxoSmithKline

2015 Child Health Recognition Award –Public Health State

Recognition category for her outstanding leadership and work in

the promotion and implementation of services that are helping

improve the food and nutrition environment in Durham County.

Durham County Extension Director **Delphine Sellars** received

the Leadership and Service Award from the North Carolina

Federation of Cooperative Extension Associations. **Deborah**

McGiffin, Family and Consumer Sciences Agent was elected

President of the NC North Central District Extension

Association of Family and Consumer Sciences.

Please join me in celebrating our staff for these outstanding accomplishments!

If you follow Durham County Government closely, you know that one of our major initiatives is our My Brother's Keeper program-Durham's connection to the Presidential Initiative started by President Obama with the goal of improving life outcomes for boys and young men of color. In this second year of our involvement, I want to reiterate that MBK Durham is continuing to develop and remain connected to this national movement.

You will recall last year's state of the county remarks in which I noted that four key committees were operating with community leaders, educators and subject matter experts. Beginning in the spring and continuing until **November 2015**, the Educational

Attainment, Job Training and Placement, Court Involvement, and Health committees completed a policy review, and drafted prioritized recommendations.

Each committee was led by two co-chairs and included feedback from academic, professional and community leaders. After an intense period of work, our committees completed their research and crafted its draft “My Brother’s Keeper Action Plan.”

As that work was underway, three committee co-chairs, two community leaders and one county staff person attended the **Cities United 2nd Annual Convening** where the **National League of Cities** discussed the technical assistance needed and available to help with this effort. These connections helped ensure that Durham was moving in line with other communities who were a bit further ahead in their planning.

In the fall, participants from MBK Durham participated in the ***Gathering of Leaders Conference*** in New Orleans. Attending this conference gave us a chance to meet and learn from other MBK Communities across the nation. It's always a goal to see and hear about programs and opportunities that are working well.

In an effort to share the progress of the ongoing work of the four key committees, Health Committee Co-chair, Dr. Wizdom Powell and community partners DeWarren Langley and Justin Reid spoke about policy goals on our regular TV Show, **In Touch With Durham County.**

Committee members signaled that their initial work was completed and that they were ready to share findings in October.

Staff began preparing the written report and selected a date to unveil the findings to the community at large.

Prior to hosting the BIG EVENT on November 14th, about 80 community members came together on the evening of November 3rd to view the documentary “**Rise: The Promise of My Brother’s Keeper.**” The film featured interviews with President Barack Obama and a focus on several communities who have successfully established programs aimed at redirecting young men of color from challenging life circumstances to a road to success.

Following the riveting film, an engaging discussion was conducted, focusing on how Durham might replicate or create similar programs to help its young men. Parents, young people,

community leaders, elected officials and educators participated in the event.

On a bright Saturday morning, about 150 youth, leaders, mentors and elected officials came together to hear some results from the report.

Some of the key findings and recommendations included:

- Ensure Boys and Men of Color complete post-secondary education and achieve career readiness, successful entry into the workforce, and job stability
- Support streamlined referral processes within formal and informal systems of care to improve detection of early signs of psychological distress
- Increase the number of boys of color who are enrolled in high quality early childhood education programs

- Revise comprehensive health education curricula in Durham Public Schools to address harmful male social norms and enhance socio-emotional competence.
- Enable career readiness, successful entry into the workforce, and job stability for court-involved youth

Currently, we are moving forward to determine how MBK fits within a broader collective impact strategy for youth services in Durham. We are working to identify and prioritize recommendations to implement in the short and long term.

Key research based findings from each area were instructive and now intense work continues to move the needle as called for in the charge. We began forming an executive committee **last**

month to guide the implementation of the 24 recommendations from the action plan.

You can find the full report at MBK Durham's website.

www.mbkdurham.info

Finally, we are currently in the process of selecting an MBK Coordinator who will take over management of the MBK Durham Initiative. Durham County Government is dedicated to ensuring that young people have the resources and opportunities that they need to build a foundation for a successful life.

Last fall the County Manager and his staff provided our Board of Commissioners with an update on the progress of Managing for Results. MFR was introduced to our organization in 2014.

Why are we moving in this direction? Government needs goals and measures of success to learn, improve and of course to be

accountable. The principles of MFR allow us to measure results and achievement. Bottom line. We need to know where we are before we know how far we need to go to reach our goal.

Our team built our specific Managing for Results business model and departments are moving forward toward its full implementation.

Managing for Results entails:

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

The first group of County Departments were trained and developed performance measures as a part of the current budget process. A second cohort of 10 departments is now beginning to develop the work needed to join the initial group. As you

review our Durham County Budget document each year going forward, you will see evolution of this critical work.

By Budget Year '17-'18, all Durham County departments will be fully engaged in using performance measures to manage service delivery. With this process, departments can make data driven recommendations to our County Commissioners.

Objective information allows us to operate more efficiently and effectively.

As the implementation continues, I urge you to watch for some key changes.

Our existing Strategic Plan will be refreshed beginning in late spring. A culture of innovation, leadership and employee empowerment is being developed.

Quarterly Management Reports are being provided to the community via our website. Communications with the

community and with our employees are helping develop an understanding of and appreciation for Managing for Results.

Another change we are proud of is Durham County's participation in its first citizen survey. We worked with the city to craft questions to help us assess citizen satisfaction with service delivery, and to help establish a baseline for future surveys.

Our goal now is to use **learning and evaluation**, a key component of Managing for Results to help us improve the process each year.

A quick summary of the results note that, in many key areas, we compete well with other jurisdictions our size across the nation.

Residents Have a Positive Perception of the County

- 80% rated the County as an excellent or good place to live and work, compared to 7% or less rating it as below average or poor
- 82% are satisfied with the overall quality of life in their neighborhood, compared to only 7% who are dissatisfied

Durham County Rates Higher Than Other Large

Communities in the Overall Quality of Services Provided

- The County rated 14% above the average for other large communities in the overall quality of services provided by the County

To view the Durham County 2015 Resident Survey report, visit our website, www.dconc.gov --You will find it on the **County Manager's Page** under **Managing for Results**.

During a recent meeting of business leaders and policy makers, economist Mike Walden characterized our state economy as **positive and looking up for 2016**. He added that the state's job growth outpaced the nation. He pointed to the prospect of better jobs, and continued economic growth. Durham County, along with other key urban counties will continue to see the unemployment rate decrease.

Durham County works to make investments in companies that will create jobs in our community, and our hope is that our residents will seek appropriate training to successfully obtain employment in these industries.

In 2015, Our Board continued to support economic development in our community in concert with our partners, the State of North Carolina and the City of Durham.

Please note the list of companies on the screen that demonstrate recent Economic Development contract commitments.

In total, these contracts represent over \$25.5 million dollars over the next eight years. Our goal is to continue to work with these companies and others to help Durham County residents obtain gainful employment.

Continuing to emphasize the growing improvement in Durham County's economy, our **City-County Inspections Department** set a record in 2015 for the number of permits issued by any one trade including building, electrical, plumbing, and mechanical or fire. The electrical division surpassed the 10,000 permit threshold, thereby achieving a new record!

Large construction projects that the department worked on included the **Wallace Wade Stadium** renovation project valued

at \$55 million dollars, the \$24 million dollar **Bayer Crop Science Greenhouse project, Duke's Cameron Addition and Parking Garage** at \$57 million dollars and the **Liberty Warehouse project** valued at \$24 million dollars.

Inspections also played a key role in the opening of our new hotels including the **21C Museum Hotel, The Durham Hotel, the Aloft Hotel** on Blackwell Street next to DPAC and the **Residence Inn by Marriott.**

The work of our Inspections Department is proof positive of real economic revitalization in our community. Thanks to Director Gene Bradham for his leadership.

By any measure, Durham County is a fortunate community that continues to receive many accolades. **U S News & World Report** recently selected our community to join its 2016 list of

best places to live in America. In joining the top five, specifically in the number 4 position, we were noted for critical factors such as quality health care, cost of living, employment opportunities and access to good schools.

We continue to be financially well-managed and last month our Finance and Budget team visited the rating agencies to reaffirm our Triple AAA bond status. Our Triple AAA bond ratings were reaffirmed by both Standard and Poor's and Moody's Investor Services rating agencies. In reviewing our record, they noted our strong financial management and budgeting operations, the level of our fund balance, and our strong credit worthiness as some of the factors that went into the decision to reaffirm our superior bond ratings.

We have to thank our Tax Administrator Kim Simpson and her team for the dynamic work that they performed in 2015 especially related to the Reappraisal Process. Parcels were reviewed and assessed as the foundation of our reappraisal process. Notice of change of values were mailed to 100,000 property owners in the fall. Kim and her team are geared up to respond to appeals and to help citizens pay the taxes they owe.

Her current year collection rate for 2015 was a phenomenal **99.60%** keeping Durham County among the top tier of counties in North Carolina in terms of collections. We were just slightly behind Wake and Buncombe Counties.

Shifting from **Fiscal Health** to **Physical Health**, Durham County recently ranked 15th in the state's ranking of healthy counties, a change from 11th place. While our next door

neighbor Wake County may be number One, I know we can get to that number.

Our Public Health Director Gayle Harris knows it is within our ability to do that. She is working with key health partners such as Dr Eugene Washington, Chancellor for Health Affairs at Duke University, and others such as the Partnership for a Healthy Durham, to develop and implement effective strategies to attack barriers to good health; be it poverty, crime, chronic disease management and more.

I must tell you that we are home to nearly 300,000 citizens and we've realized double digit growth over the past five years.

Certainly that growth trend will continue.

Many of us are familiar with the term... the "graying of America." The chart on the screen demonstrates significant

growth of residents 55 and older over the past years and that pattern will continue.

One project that we are proud to participate in is the redevelopment of the former Whitted School, which is on track to provide 79 affordable senior housing units, as well as 8 pre-kindergarten classrooms operated by Durham Public Schools.

This unique public-private partnership represents out-of-the-box thinking that we must bring to bear as we work to assist our broader community. This intergenerational living concept is a new model which challenges us to take a fresh look at the needs of our residents as they grow in years.

While we boast about our economic success, we know that not everyone in our community has recovered from the 2008 financial downturn, nor have they been positively affected by our successes. Nearly 22% of children in this community live in

poverty, and a significant number of our residents who live in certain census tracts are economically disconnected from the larger financial vitality in this community.

Pope Francis once said, **“A population that does not take care of the elderly and of children and the young, has no future, because it abuses both its memory and its promise.”**

Durham County simply cannot afford to leave any of our citizens behind. We must increase our collaborative efforts with the City of Durham, particularly the Mayor’s Poverty Initiative, Durham Public Schools and others to reach the least among us, and help build stronger individuals and families.

As our population grows we must prepare now, and anticipate the changes we must make to address the needs of our current and future residents. No matter what challenges emerge, I know that we have the right team in place to keep us moving in the

right direction. We have amazing employees. We have talented and innovative management and we have outstanding county commissioners.

With that, I am confident that Durham County will continue to be a leader among local government for years to come.

Thank you!