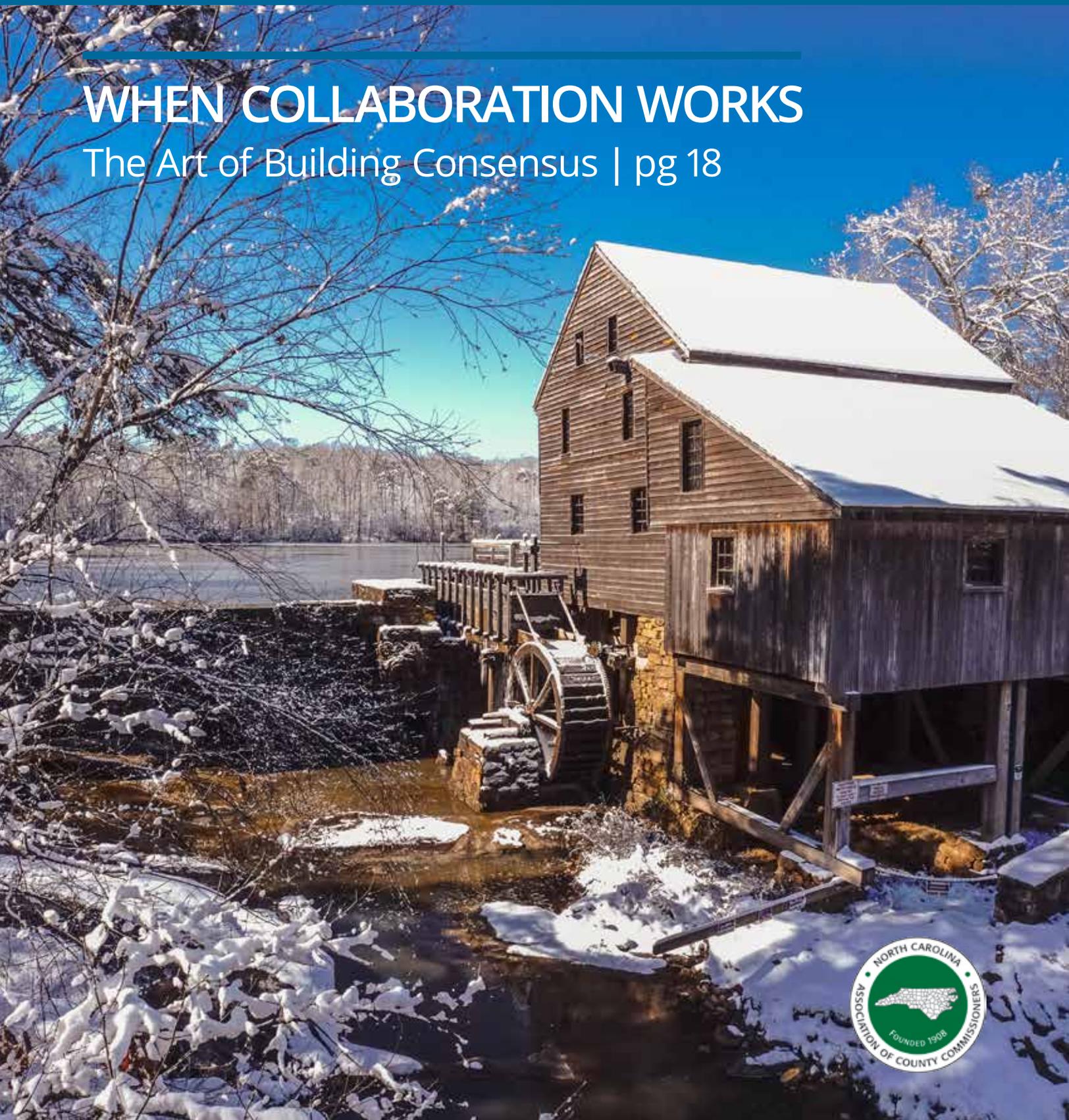


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The Story of North Carolina Counties
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Profile IN SERVICE

Ray Jeffers Person County Commissioner and NCACC Past President

Runs for NACo 2nd Vice President

By Lacy Pate | NCACC Public Relations Manager

This winter, Person County Commissioner Brannon “Ray” Jeffers launched his candidacy to become the Second Vice President of the National Association of Counties (NACo). NACo is a national advocacy and leadership organization representing the common interests of 3,069 county governments throughout the country. Jeffers is currently serving in his third term as a Person County Commissioner and has the distinction of being the youngest President of the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners (NCACC), a position he held from 2013-2014.

“Here in North Carolina we have taken the mantra that we are 100 counties but we are also one state. I think we’ve done well working with all 100 counties to move our Association, issues and goals forward at our state legislature. So I would like to apply that approach in NACo. Yes we are 3,069 counties, but we are one nation. And the more we can work together and understand each other’s issues then we can move forward together as a nation,” said Jeffers.

Jeffers attended his very first NACo conference in Nashville, Tennessee nearly ten years ago when he was a new commissioner. He immediately saw the benefits of being involved in the organization and was able to bring back to his county several things he learned at the NACo conference. Since then, he has never missed a NACo meeting and has served in several leadership positions including four terms on the NACo Board of Directors and Chair of the NACo Rural Action Caucus.

“I really enjoy working with NACo, and as a commissioner from a rural county, I am able to work with urban counterparts, other states and the region to solve common problems,” said Jeffers. Jeffers hopes that by sharing his story about how NACo involvement can help individual counties, he can grow its membership across the nation.

As Chair of the Rural Action Caucus,

Jeffers worked closely with NACo’s current President Roy Charles Brooks, who was serving as the Chair of the Large Urban County Caucus at the time. Together, they were able to identify common issues facing both urban and rural counties and collaborate on potential solutions. “The opiate epidemic doesn’t stop at a rural or urban county line,” explained Jeffers.

On economic development, Jeffers encourages rural counties to join forces with urban counterparts to find opportunities to collaborate and promote growth across county lines. As NCACC President, Jeffers led an initiative to examine and enhance the county role in economic development to achieve sustainable growth for all counties – large and small, rural and urban. “If our neighbor does well, so does Person County, and if Person County does well, so does our neighbor,” he said.

Jeffers is optimistic that by working together, rural and urban counties can innovate by leveraging their unique strengths. Although Person County’s population is only about 40,000, the county is located within 60 miles of the state’s capital and two other large urban areas. Being geographically close provides an opportunity to share the workforce and attract companies to the area, boosting employment in all the surrounding counties.



As a youngster, Commissioner Jeffers worked on his family’s farm, which was purchased by his great grandfather in 1919. He credits his grandparents for instilling a sense of community service in him at an early age, as he attended civic and charitable organization meetings with them.



“I want to roll up my sleeves and get to work for our nation’s counties.”

“One of the things we’ve seen is that the rural counties have been very good at attracting manufacturing jobs and urban areas attract more mid to high-technology jobs. So, why can’t we work together? A lot of urban areas may not have the room to build a large manufacturing plant, but we do have that space in rural areas. If we combine our strengths, we can have the design work done in an urban area and the rural area can build the product,” said Jeffers.

Jeffers’ commitment to public service and his approach to policy making is driven largely by the values instilled by his grandparents, who helped raise him. Both grandparents were heavily involved in civic and charitable organizations in the community. As a young child, Jeffers often joined them in their civic activities, and became involved in the community at an early age. He served as President of the local chapter of Future Farmers of America (FFA), and his political career evolved from there. “I didn’t think I’d do it this early, but the timing was right and I really enjoy hitting the ground running. I think that’s one reason I’ve been blessed with the opportunity to move forward so quickly. I learned that if you set your mind to a goal and work hard, you can achieve it.”

As a youngster, Jeffers worked on his family’s farm, which was purchased by his great grandfather in 1919. “Growing up on a tobacco farm, we learned a little bit about hard work and that’s what I’ve tried to do as a county commissioner for my county and as Past President of NCACC. And, that’s what I’m offering NACo. I want to roll my sleeves up and get to

work for our nation’s counties.”

Jeffers is proud of the longevity of his family’s farm, which is approaching its 100 year anniversary. Agriculture and farm preservation have always been a personal interest for Jeffers. He attended North Carolina Agriculture & Technical University and focused on agriculture education. “We were tobacco farmers up until about 2003 and we’ve tried to look at new ways to continue farming. One thing I’ve taken on is the growing farm to table movement. We’ll dip our toes in that market with niche farming and micro gardening. This year we were able to offer several different types of vegetables at farmer’s markets and farm to table restaurants. We also offered pasture raised poultry and we’ll be adding pasture raised pork as well.”

In addition to Jeffers’ responsibilities in the board room and on the farm, he serves as the director of a training program for working dogs and world-class competitive dogs. He works mostly with German Shepherds, training them to become police dogs, personal protection dogs, or to compete in the International Utility Dog sport, also known as IPO. IPO is a European sport that Americans adopted in the 1970’s. The sport was originally developed to test the character and breed worthiness in dogs through three main phases: protection, obedience and tracking. Jeffers also competes with his own dog at the regional and national levels. “I always loved dogs and as soon as I could read, I was looking in the classifieds for a dog. In 1999, I learned that we had a training club just 30 miles away, so I’ve

been going there since, and have been the training director for the past ten years,” said Jeffers.

This July, NACo members will elect the 2nd Vice President at NACo’s Annual Conference in Nashville, Tennessee. In the meantime, commissioners will have several opportunities to help with Jeffers’ campaign. In March, NCACC members will attend the NACo Legislative Conference. The conference is an excellent opportunity to team up with Commissioner Jeffers and advocate on his behalf while networking with NACo members from other states. Please remember to ask NACo members to support our North Carolina candidate! ■

www.jeffersfornaco.com

Commissioner Jeffers is currently serving in his third term as a Person County Commissioner and fourth term on the NACo Board of Directors. He previously served as the 97th President of the NCACC (from 2013-2014) and has the distinction of being the youngest President in the Association’s history. Jeffers serves as a member of the N.C. Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund Board. He is a former member of the N.C. Rural Center New Generation Advisory Council, and formerly served as Chair of the NACo Rural Action Caucus. He attended Piedmont Community College and North Carolina Agriculture & Technical University, and is an alumnus of Cambridge Leadership Institute’s county leadership program. More information on Commissioner Jeffers is available at his campaign website: www.jeffersfornaco.com.

