

Youth Voice Report

My experience interviewing the Chairman of the Board of Commissioners, and attending the Board of Commissions meeting was very influential.

The first thing I did when I got to the Wake County Justice Center was meet James West. At first, I didn't have any knowledge of who he was, but I did know he was someone important because of the fact he was dressed professionally and his face was on the largest picture frame on the wall. When I first entered the room, he wasn't there, but another female advocate was, which made the anxiety go down quite a bit. When Mr. West entered the room, my anxiety showed its face again. The way he dressed was intimidating, the way he asked our names and shook our hand, was intimidating, but in a good way. Before we could even start I already wanted to leave, but I'm glad I didn't. Mr. West gave the other advocate and me valuable information that we couldn't get off of the internet, or from only attending the Board of Commissioners meeting. Mr. West told us that "this is your interview", or in other words, we were asking all of the questions and he was only there to answer them. Because my anxiety caught me off guard, when he asked who wanted to go first, my partner eventually volunteered. I don't remember her question, but I do know it was the foundation for mine. The first thing I asked was "How did you get to where you are today?" and his response was that he had a philosophy "to help the people that can't help themselves". We received additional information; such as the requirements of being a County Commissioner was obviously to be a citizen, and to have a good heart and the will to care for people. He had also given us some tips on being good leaders such as "good leaders empowers people, instead of telling people what they want them to do", or that "Nobody's perfect. If you're a perfect leader you aren't a good one, for perfect is the enemy of good", and that the good leaders don't even notice when they do good things because "If you achieve something out of the goodness of your heart, you won't even recognize

it." At the end, Mr. West had told us that we gave him some inspiration for his book, for we brought back the remembrance to why he loved his job so much.

After that dominant meeting, we attended the Wake County Board of Commissioners Meeting and got to meet almost everyone on the board. Throughout the meeting, we experienced watching the Board of Commissioners approve business items and the recognition of recent award winners. Before they approved anything, the person who needed the approval had to bring a professional presentation and give a legit and logical estimated amount of how much everything would cost. Then after that person did all of that, the Commissioners had to say "I", or agree on whether they would or wouldn't go through with the deal, and the majority vote ruled. At the end of the meeting, I heard someone say "we just sat here and watched them spend almost two million dollars", and that's when I realized how quickly money could be spent in less than an hour. I also noticed that if I wasn't in the meeting, I wouldn't have known about those two million dollars, and neither does the people that live in Wake County that doesn't even know that meeting existed.

At the end of the day, when it was time for me to go home, my mother asked me how everything went and I told her that "I am so glad I went because I learned so much. I saw things that I've been blinded to see, even though it was sitting right in front of my face. Lastly, but not least, I learned how to be a better leader." My experience was very beneficial and I am very thankful I was blessed with this opportunity.