

PROFILE IN SERVICE



NCACC thanks Bobby Parker, Beaufort County Tax Assessor and NCPTS Oversight Committee Member, for nearly 60 years of public service

by Lacy Pate
NCACC Public Relations Manager

Over the last several years, the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners has been working closely with several counties and Farragut – a North Carolina-based software provider – to offer all 100 counties a complete property tax solution to assist with appraisals, billing, and collections. Bobby Parker, Beaufort County Tax Assessor, played an important role in the evolution of the North Carolina Property Tax Solution (NCPTS) in his position on the NCPTS Oversight Committee representing small counties. NCACC honors his dedication to public service and contributions to NCPTS over the years.

Parker was born and raised in Washington, North Carolina, where he met his wife of 63 years, Verna Wallace Parker. The two have four children and six grandchildren. Parker’s long career with Beaufort County began as he was preparing to retire from his federal job in the U.S. Geological Survey mapping division. Parker’s federal work involved extensive travel

and included almost all phases of mapping. Just as Parker was getting ready to retire, Frank Sheppard, who was serving as the Beaufort County Tax Administrator at the time, approached him about an appraisal position. Parker described how his decision to accept the appraisal job turned into a second career.

“My first day was April 16, 1993, and I planned to work for about three to four years. That was around the time that the Tax Assessor was retiring, and he asked me to apply for his job. I had not thought about it, so he advised me to talk to the county manager. The next thing I knew, I was being interviewed by the county commissioners, and on January 13, 1997, I became the tax assessor. For eight years, I ran both departments as tax assessor and administrator. I thoroughly enjoyed the job and am grateful for having good staff. The best tool you can have is quality people in your office, who you can rely on,” Parker shared.

Parker explained why it is so important for all property to be listed and assessed. He said counties must remain vigilant to ensure that anything that is missed is discovered, billed,

and sent to the tax collector. “We [in Beaufort County] have a lot of waterfront property that is valuable, so we need to make sure it’s valued at the right market value. Revenue from property tax is where we get our funds to keep our libraries, schools, and hospitals running.”

“When we started using NCPTS in 2013, we only used it for billing and collections. In 2015, a new appraisal tool came online, and our commissioners thought it was time to get something more up to date. We looked at other systems in North Carolina and decided to go with the whole NCPTS package,” Parker stated.

After Beaufort County’s first year working with NCPTS, the Beaufort County Tax Office was honored by the North Carolina Association of Assessing Officers with the 2014 Joseph E. Hunt Distinguished Jurisdiction Award – Small Jurisdiction. The award is given to three jurisdictions annually - a small, medium, and large jurisdiction - for outstanding achievement in tax administration and public service. Recipients are typically honored for finding innovative ways to solve problems, educating the public, or increasing efficiency in tax administration.

The thing that sets NCPTS apart is its governance structure, which puts member counties in charge of deciding what capabilities are needed to improve performance. The Oversight Committee, on which Parker serves, collaborates with all the member counties to reach agreement on best business practices and investments in software enhancements. Parker currently serves as the representative for small counties and describes how NCPTS ensures small counties’ needs are addressed.

“I have enjoyed working with the Oversight Committee because we all know each other and work well together. We all understand each other, and it has been a pleasure to serve

with the folks on the Oversight Committee. We [small counties] are able to pick out the things we need, and the group understands. Also, as NCPTS member counties, we pool our resources to invest in enhancements that would otherwise be unaffordable for smaller counties. We do appreciate that,” said Parker.

Michael Taylor, who chairs the NCPTS Oversight Committee and serves as Deputy County Manager and Chief Information Officer for Pitt County reflected on his time working with Parker. “Bobby has been an active member of the NCPTS collaborative since Beaufort County joined; he speaks up. He faithfully attended what was originally the NCPTS Steering Committee meetings. Many know and appreciate his vast professional knowledge and experience. Having served with Bobby, I am impressed by his ability to sometimes speak hard truth in a manner that is constructive. Those qualities made Bobby a logical choice as a small county representative on the modified NCPTS Oversight Committee governance structure. Although his participation, wisdom and congenial demeanor will be missed, we wish him all the best as he sets forth on new ventures,” Taylor shared.

On December 31, 2020, Bobby Parker will retire after serving 28 years with Beaufort County and 31 years working for the U.S. Geological Survey. On behalf of NCACC and the entire county family, we congratulate him and wish him well as he begins this new milestone in his life. Parker plans to spend his retirement years visiting family and friends and spending time under a nice shade tree with his two-year-old dachshund. When it is safe to travel again, he looks forward to seeing his children and grandchildren and meeting up with old friends. Parker jokes they will reminisce about their fond memories and “tell stories that get bigger and better every year.” 