

The Herald sent all candidates for local election a series of questions, to follow are their responses...

## Candidates for Cleveland County Commission



**Mary S. Accor**

**Question #1: Name your Top 3 Priorities if elected-Be Specific**

- **Quality Job Growth-** Over the past eight years, the recruitment of new industry, expansions of existing industries have had a dramatic impact on the tax base with investments totaling approximately four billion dollars resulting in 1,897 announced job opportunities for our citizens. A continued focus on job growth and incentivizing businesses (small and big) for continued growth is crucial because the 10.7% representing the unemployed deserves the same opportunities as the 89.3% employed. Every "back to work" citizen strengthens not only the economic base, but more importantly the quality of life for the families and communities we serve. Our chamber and EDC team is constantly working to recruit businesses. We live in a competitive, global economy, and I will continue to support our proactive initiatives for job growth and recruitment.

- **Collaboration of Partnerships-** Continuing to maintain a collaborative approach to government is essential for growth. An effective leader knows that divisiveness does not promote effective change, but civility and building partnerships do. Our county is a "conversation piece" at many state and national meetings because we have mastered the element of collaboration. Negativity stifles growth. To continue to move Cleveland County forward positively, collaboration must continue to be a priority. Our partnerships with municipalities, public schools, institutions of higher learning and other public and private organizations have netted us profitable results and continue to put our county on the "global" map.

- **No New Taxes-** I will continue to promote balanced budgets having no new tax increases, and speak against unfunded mandates that place undue burdens on all county services. Unfunded mandates drain resources that could be better allotted to employee compensation and providing support to community initiatives that improve our county's well-being such as volunteer fire fighters, libraries, seniors and veterans support, arts and museums, travel and tourism events & attractions, education, safety, health and others.

**Question #2: Would you support a tax increase of any kind? Explain**

I would not support a tax increase... In my 15 years as a commissioner, the majority of the people have said "no" to any tax increase and I listened because I work for and represent the citizens of Cleveland County...and we have, prudently, been able to fund county services and give a discount to citizens paying early. As a "servant" leader, I recognize and can't ignore the fact that we have citizens struggling to make ends meet and new taxes would create an extra burden for their families. The current unemployment rate is also a reflective sign for maintaining or reducing the current tax rate (we are blessed to have one of the lowest tax rates in the state).



**Susan Allen**

**Question #1: Name your Top 3 Priorities if elected-Be Specific**

1. **Jobs:** The Number One Priority – Jobs are a number one priority in Cleveland County. We must continue to do our due diligence exploring ways we can attract new industry to our county and support our local businesses. The most important step to creating jobs is ensuring government stays out of the way so that it is easier for businesses to grow. We need to monitor unnecessary regulations brought on by government. By enhancing our community with low taxes, attractions, safe neighborhoods, invest in education to build a strong workforce; we can help bring new businesses and jobs to our county.

2. **Invest in Infrastructure to Attract Industry** – I spent 29 years developing business for a Fortune 500 Company. My responsibility was to grow our large corporate accounts Worldwide. This meant understanding client's business needs and collaborating with them to help grow their business as well as UPS. I believe my experience at UPS will enable me to make good solid decisions for Cleveland County's future growth, infrastructure and attracting industry.

3. **Invest in Education & Workforce Training** – Our youth today are the leaders for the future. We are attracting new businesses to Cleveland County. We need a strong workforce coming out of our school systems to fill new jobs we have to offer. It is important to provide our students a strong foundation for their future through programs and training. I want to see more of our children stay in our county or return to our county once they graduate from college. To do this we have to have jobs and opportunities for them. We need to support our local schools and colleges.

**Question #2: Would you support a tax increase of any kind? Explain**

I do not support a tax increase. These are tough economic times. We do not need to add additional burdens to our community.



**Ronnie Hawkins**

**Question #1: Name your Top 3 Priorities if elected-Be Specific**

1 – Economic development must be our priority at this time. Building the tax base for the county through new industrial development allows us to continue as we have for the last 12 years in not increasing the tax rate. We have put together a great EDC team that has brought over 4.9 billion in new investments and around 4000 jobs to the county.

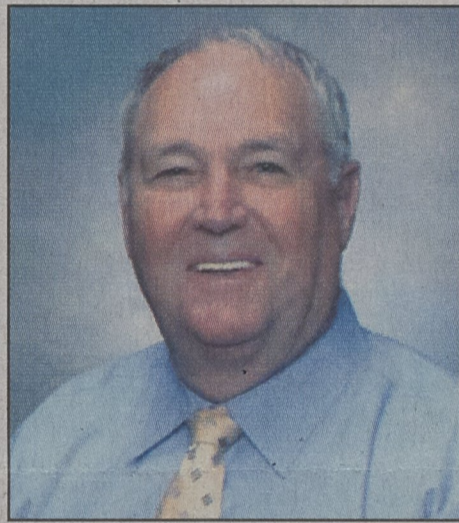
2 – Continued support for Cleveland Community College. The need to be able to train and retrain the work force for the new industry that we are trying to recruit is very important. We are now training people for new skills that will make them competitive in the new job markets that are coming to the county such as the data industry.

3 – I would like to continue to make Cleveland County a successful and progressive county in a number of endeavors. Continue to support those individuals that have visions for the future of the county, such as the Gateway Trails, Broad River Greenway, Don Gibson Theatre, Joy Performance Center, Kings Mountain Historical Museum, the Kings Mountain High School Field House project and many others. We are successful and progressive because of these individuals that believe in something and work diligently to make it succeed. We must also continue our great working relations with our municipalities to help them grow.

**Question #2: Would you support a tax increase of any kind? Explain**

I will not support a tax rate increase. For the twelve years that I have served on the County Commission we have gone through some hard times. In 2000, the un-

employment rate was over 14% with loss of our textile industry and we have continued to bring that number down. Everyone knows that the unemployment rate in our county has been like a yo-yo, we bring new jobs and then because of the economy we have lay-offs. But the one constant is that we have managed because of good stewardship to grow the county, make it successful and have done so without a tax increase. We continue to have a balanced budget and still provide incentives for new businesses and build the infrastructure for the future of Cleveland County. We have diversified our economic impact so that we will never have to face the loss of one industry and the impact that it had so many years ago on the lives of the citizens of our county. We have purchased property for new development, built a new jail, partnered with the Cleveland County schools, Cleveland Community College and the county to build the LeGrand Center. We have provided funds for quality of life issues for our county and we work closely with each municipality in helping with their economic growth and success. We are growing, we are progressive, we are successful and again we have done all of this without raising the tax rate but by building the tax base.



**Johnny Hutchins**

**Question #1: Name your Top 3 Priorities if elected-Be Specific**

1 – Building a strong economic base for Cleveland County by working together to bring new industries and expanding the current companies is my priority. Cleveland County has been recognized for our efforts of attracting new businesses that have brought jobs to our county. Cleveland County has been faced with the loss of many jobs, but with the efforts of the commissioners, working closely as team leaders, we have made Cleveland County economically stronger. The billions of dollars that these companies have invested into our county has been a proven winner by raising our tax base so that there has been no tax rate increase. With the economic development team we have, working to make our county prosper, Cleveland County has continued to support our law enforcement and community services without the citizens being burdened with higher taxes.

2 – As we continue to move forward with economic development we must continue to support and work with our education sources in Cleveland County to prepare the citizens for the workforce. Without education and training from our resources, these companies cannot continue to grow. It is my desire to keep our citizens working and raising their families in Cleveland County. We have and will continue to support all our education sources and its positive effects it has on the training and preparing workers to become great employees for the new job opportunities, so that they can stay in Cleveland County.

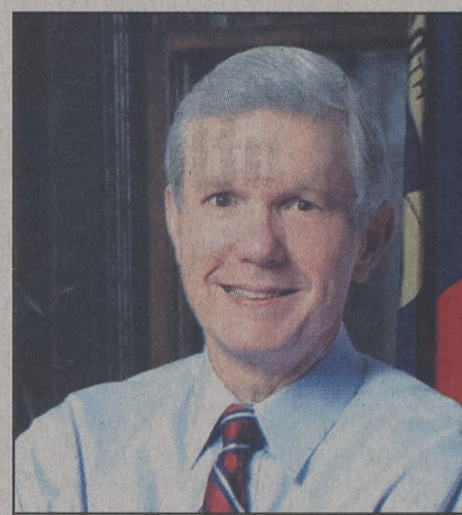
3 – I will continue to support the efforts that have increased the quality of life for all the citizens in Cleveland County. Our county has been blessed with many people who had a vision and acted upon it and with the support of the commissioners and other leaders the vision became a reality. The Gateway Trails, The Don Gibson Theatre, The Broad River Greenway, the Earl Scruggs Center, The American Legion World Series and The LeGrand Center to name few. These joint efforts enhance our county and attract outside tourism. I am honored to be your voice in local government and I will continue to put SERVICE BEFORE SELF. We must continue the team work to make Cleveland County a better place to live.

**Question #2: Would you support a tax increase of any kind? Explain**

No I would not support a tax increase. I

do not foresee a reason that taxes would have to be increased with the efforts that the commissioners have put forth attracting new businesses and expanding what we have which in return has increased the tax base of our county. With the global economy being in the state it is, we are not in a situation where our citizens could take on the burden. We have continued to support the needs of this county on the current tax rate.

## Candidates for NC Governor



**Walter Dalton**

**Question #1: Name your Top 3 Priorities if elected - be specific**

1 – Jobs. I fully realize that we've been through tough times, I'm from an area that suffered high unemployment due to the loss of textile and furniture jobs. That's why I have been working with industry leaders, small businesses, and community colleges to lay a foundation for creating jobs now and for the future.

The JOBS Commission, which I chaired, has prototypes that will pay great dividends in the future, but we must do more. It will take time to regain all the jobs lost from the financial collapse, but the proposal I recently made will accelerate that job creation and provide greater opportunity for all our citizens. My plan would provide tax relief for small businesses and for employers who hire long-term unemployed workers to put people back to work faster, position North Carolina to react to changing trends with more effective outreach to companies primed for expansion, and target resources to high-growth businesses with the greatest growth potential.

2. **Education.** Growing our economy is as much about creating jobs as it's about making certain we have the graduates to fill them. Our state's economic success will depend on how well we align our education system with our job needs. If we fail to make this connection, our economic future could be in jeopardy and the best jobs might move out of state or never be created at all.

While in these tough economic times state government must prioritize how it spends taxpayer money, it's during this critical period when we should be investing in public education – not turning our back on it.

Education has long been a passion of mine. As both state Senator and Lt. Governor, I've been a leader on issues to improve education and sought innovative ways to help students learn critical skills in order to succeed in today's economy. I chaired the Senate Education Committee, leading efforts to reduce class sizes, raise teacher standards and pay, and increase accountability. I worked to increase funding for community colleges and universities, so more students could pursue technical training and higher education. I wrote the Innovative Education Initiatives Act to create unique learning opportunities, such as early college high schools, that help high school students get an early start on job training and college credits. If elected, I will work with you to be the