

Stokes County 2023 Annual Report



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Animal Control

Tommy Reeves, Chief Animal Control Officer

In 2023, there were many personnel changes in Animal Control including the hiring of a new Chief Animal Control Officer, Mr. Tommy Reeves, towards the end of the year. Several new employees have been welcomed aboard in both the officer positions and kennel attendant staff positions. With Ms. Natalie Johnson being given additional duties in her attendant position, she has taken on a larger role in supervising the animal shelter operations. While 2023 was a year of increased turnover for Animal Control, things are on a positive uptick and department operations are moving forward in great stride as we go into 2024.

There were periods in 2023 where shelter operations slowed down while the County transitioned between veterinarians. The shelter was able to contract with and utilize the veterinarian services of Dr. Ralph Houser who has been a great asset to animal services. Dr. Houser developed a working protocol for animal care that is being utilized by shelter staff. This has allowed kennel attendants to increase care and treatment of animals at the shelter which has greatly reduced the amount of outside vet bills. Through this partnership and increased training for department personnel, Animal Control is able to better serve the community and animals in a way that is improved for the county.

The animal shelter was able to receive a shipping container to store feed in which has freed up additional storage space in other buildings and has increased food/supply organization. From the previous FY 23/24 budget, a CO2 dart gun and five .22 magnum rifles have been ordered and implemented into service by animal control officers. The implementation of rifles will allow for more humane responses and will increase the toolbox of resources available to officers for the protection of animals and citizens.

2023 TOTALS: The below numbers for 2023 were pulled from the current shelter software system. This system is very inundated and with the personnel turnover, different reports may reflect varying outputs. To fix this issue, in 2024 we are working towards acquiring a new program that would provide more effective results for both shelter and field staff with reporting and filing. More information to come.

- Calls for Service: Animal Control ran approximately **1,100 calls**
- Shelter numbers:
 - Adoptions from the shelter: **165 animals**
 - Adoptions by other rescues: **325 animals**
 - Redemption to owner: **53 animals**
 - Euthanized: **214 animals**

Arts and Cultural Services/Arts Council



Eddy McGee, Director of Arts and Cultural Services

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Hosted multiple gallery exhibits, including Forsyth Technical Community College Faculty Show, Stokes County Schools exhibit, King Senior Center exhibit, and Wood to Art woodworking show.
- Served as the District 10 Lead Partner for the Artist Support Grant (five counties) in awarding \$14,000 in artist grants.
- Organized Arts Education programs in Stokes County Schools, including Columbia Marionette Theatre, Cherokee Historical Association, Mike Wiley Productions, NC Theatre for Young People, Once Upon a Blue Ridge, Shared Radiance Shakespeare, and Stokes Junior Appalachian Musicians program.
- Organized a Stokes middle and high school field trip to attend Mozart's COSI fan TUTTE opera hosted by the UNCG Opera and Music Departments.
- Awarded more than \$7,500 in college scholarships.
- Represented more than 125 artists in The Arts Place of Stokes retail market. Combined market and coffee shop annual sales of over \$200,000, paid out to artists and employees.
- Awarded more than \$100k in arts program grants, including Grassroots Grant, TAPS Grant, Artist Support Grant from the NC Arts Council.
- Sponsored events throughout Stokes County, including Foothills Farm Festival, Stokes Partnership for Children, King Pow Wow, Concerts in the Cove, Memorial and Veteran's Day programs at King Veteran's Memorial, Juneteenth in Walnut Cove, Sandy Ridge Bluegrass Show, City of King Movie Nights, Stokes Special Olympics.
- Organized and supported the following events; Hanging Rock Polar Plunge, 49th Stokes Stomp Festival on the Dan, Reach the Peaks Challenge, Stokes Soup in a Bowl, Christmas in Historic Danbury, and New Year's Eve Ball.
- Organized programs at The Arts Place of Stokes, including performances by Darrel Van Leer, Anthony Davis & the Gospel Intruders, Copper Children, Taylor Vaden, Carley Arrowood, John Cowan, and Michael Reno Harrell. Legend of Sleepy Hollow, Dolly, and Beautiful Star theatrical performances, Stained glass, fiber arts,

painting, and pottery classes. Kids Summer Art Camps. Star Gazers Special Needs Camp. Venue rental for Stokes County Schools, Stokes Early College Prom, Stokes County Health Dept., and a multitude of baby showers, reunions, and birthday parties.

- Advocacy supporter with ARTS NC and NC Arts Council to Arts Caucus Chair, Representative Kyle Hall, for additional arts funding to the NC Legislature that amounted to an increase of \$2.5 million to NC Arts Grassroots funds, \$1.5 million to A+ Schools, and more than \$48 million in capital arts funding in all 100 NC counties.
- Impacted more than 30,000 children and adults through the arts in 2023.

Emergency Communications

Matt Boyles, Emergency Communications Director

LETTER FROM DIRECTOR

Dear County Manager Brown,

As Director of Stokes County Emergency Communications, I am pleased to present the 2023 annual report of our Emergency Communications (E911 Center). The communications center provides outstanding service to the citizens and visitors of Stokes County, and partner public safety agencies throughout the county. This report highlights the personnel, activities and accomplishments of the organization over the past year.

As you review this annual report, I am sure that you will agree that Stokes County is very fortunate to have these dedicated professionals working 24/7/365 to keep everyone safe. On behalf of our 911 Telecommunicators, we thank you for your continued support and dedication to our department and its employees.

Sincerely,
Matt Boyles, Director



VISION

To serve and support the public safety communications needs of our customers in the most efficient and responsive manner possible.

MISSION

The Mission of the Stokes County Emergency Communications Center is to provide the citizens and visitors of Stokes County with the highest levels of emergency and non-emergency services through professional, accurate and efficient call taking and dispatching of resources. Our standard values are providing excellent customer service, compassion to all and teamwork within.

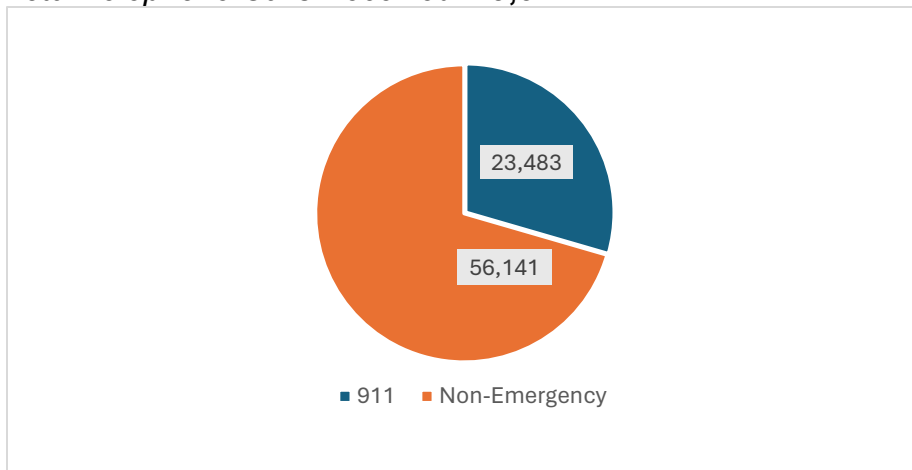
Our Motto is “Community First”

2024 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- Provide an ergonomically efficient and pleasant work environment.
- Retain appropriate level of staff within the department.
- Recruit and retain quality employees.
- Respond to calls for service and other public needs promptly.
- Process calls for service appropriately in order to provide services which protect persons and property and resolve problems in a professional and courteous manner.
- Develop and maintain open relationships with other agencies, organizations and the public at large.
- Continue providing training and continuing education for personnel.
- Continue to support operations with contemporary policies and procedures.
- Upgrade equipment as needed and continuously explore technological advances toward the enhancement of services provided.
- Maintain contingency plans.
- Continue to support National Telecommunicator Week.
- Continue to support and enhance the training and quality assurance program.
- Manage the fiscal, capital, information and personnel resources of the Emergency Communications Center with efficiency and care.

CALL CENTER STATISTICS

Total Telephone Calls Received: 79,624



911 and Non-Emergency Phone Calls Breakdown

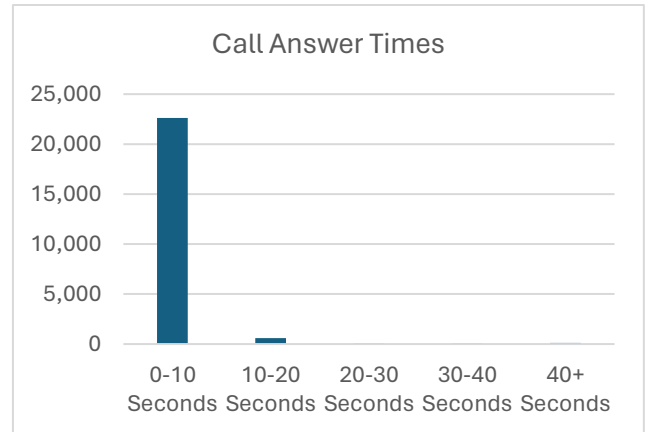
ANSWER TIME STANDARDS

In accordance with North Carolina Legislation – Administrative Code 09 NCAC 06C .0209:
(a) Ninety percent of 911 calls received on emergency lines shall be answered within 10 seconds, and 95 percent of 911 calls received on emergency lines shall be answered within 20 seconds.

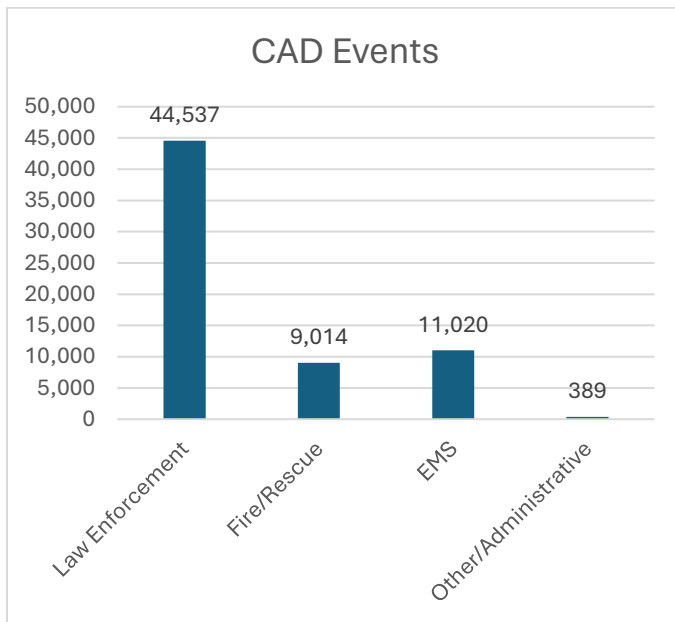
Call Answer Time - Pass/Fail Rate:

PASS: 98.52%

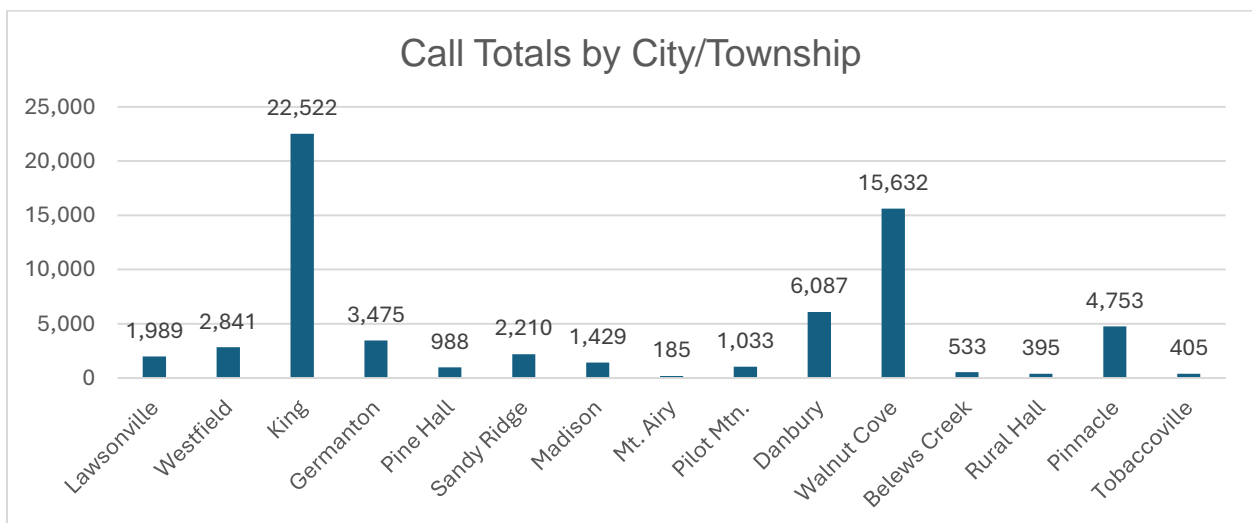
FAIL: 1.48%



COMPUTER AIDED DISPATCH (CAD) SUMMARY



Total CAD Events Created: 64,960



DEPARTMENT TRAINING

Emergency Communications personnel must maintain specific dispatch certifications throughout the year. These certifications are managed by the completion of continuing education courses. Telecommunicators attend con-ed courses monthly and quarterly. Monthly con-ed is taught in-house by a combination of in-house staff and outside agencies. Telecommunicators are also encouraged to take training courses that pertain to their job duties outside of the department throughout the state and country. For 2023, our employees attended over 1000 hours of training.

Training Topics and Highlights for 2023

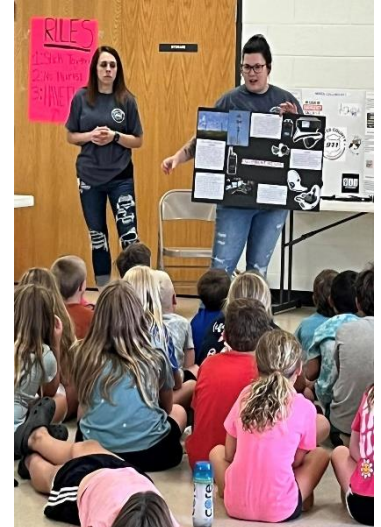
- Active Shooter Training (tabletop exercise)
- Active Shooter Training (live in-person exercise) conducted at Walnut Cove Elementary
- DCI Module 6 Training
- CE with Richmond Community College
- APCO Telecommunicator Symposium – 3 days (Greensboro, NC)
- NC State Telecommunicators Conference – 4 days (Wilmington, NC)
- PSAP Managers Course – 10-month course
- EMS/Medical Con-ed at Hanging Rock State Park
- TDD Call Training – Conducted by the State of NC
- Sheriffs Citizen Academy
- 911 Communications and Operations Course (Associates Degree Program)
- Emotional/Mental Health Training



PUBLIC EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Adopt-a-Family Christmas Drive



Stokes Family YMCA Summer Camp Event

STAFF RECOGNITION

On the morning of February 2, 2023, Cindy Tuttle called 911 to report that her husband had gone into cardiac arrest and was not breathing. Shift Supervisor Adam Mabe answered the call and immediately began providing Mrs. Tuttle CPR instructions while his partners were dispatching first responders. Once fire and EMS arrived, they took over CPR and transported Mr. Tuttle to Forsyth Medical Center. Approximately 2 weeks later, Mr. Tuttle walked out of the hospital and returned home. In April, we had the chance to personally meet the Tuttle family where TC Supervisor Adam Mabe was presented with a Life Saving Award for his quick actions to recognize the need for CPR and instructing the caller through the performance of CPR. Here is a quote from Mrs. Tuttle:



Can you find out for us who was on 911 duty on the morning of February 21, 2023? My husband and I would like to thank him for helping to save his life. That morning my husband, Brad Tuttle, went into cardiac arrest (V-Tach) and luckily I was there and was quickly able to get someone through 911. The dispatcher walked me through CPR very calmly and I was able to do what he said to do, though I had not had CPR since I was in high school. First Responders, Fire Dept and EMS arrived on the scene quickly and were able to continue CPR and used the defibrillator to revive him. Today he is back at work for half days and is continuing to recover, with a good prognosis. We call him the Miracle Man. The doctors all said that this outcome only happens in 10 to 15% of their patients who have these events out of the hospital. They credit CPR and all the immediate steps that were taken. I think 911 should be recognized for their role in this.

2023 TELECOMMUNICATOR OF THE YEAR

Each year Stokes County Emergency Communications recognizes an employee who exemplifies outstanding service and dedication to our department and to the citizens of Stokes County. Nominations are submitted by their peers in writing and then an overall selection is made by the County Manager based on the nominations. This year's award winner was TC Shift Supervisor Nicole Durham!



PSAP ASSESSMENT

NC legislation requires that the NC 911 Board assess PSAP's to determine if their operations and procedures follow NC Administrative Code. On June 7, 2023 Stokes County Emergency Communications had our PSAP Assessment conducted by the NC 911 Board staff. This was the first time that our 911 center and its operations had been assessed by the state. I am extremely happy to report that our department passed 100% with no deficiencies. Stokes County Emergency Communications will not be assessed again until 2026.

SOFTWARE AND EQUIPMENT UPGRADES

This year, our department was able to purchase and implement new software and equipment to enhance public safety and to better serve our community. We also began the process of replacing our CAD software with a project completion and go-live date in mid-2024. I would like to thank the County Manager and the Board of County Commissioners for approving these projects and upgrades, and for making public safety a top priority in Stokes County. Below are some highlights:

- Back-up radio replacement – approx. \$24,000
- Radio Consolette Replacement – approx. \$121,000
- RapidSOS Premium Software (caller location software) - \$12,000
- RAVE Panic Button software (Partnership with Stokes County Schools)
- Dispatch chairs – approx. \$17,000
- Southern Software CAD replacement (2024) – approx. \$400,000

N.C. Cooperative Extension – Stokes Center

Matt Lenhardt, County Extension Director



STAFF

Matt Lenhardt, County Extension Director

Amy McKenzie, Administrative Assistant

Taylor Hartman, Extension Agent (4-H Youth Development)

Taylor Darnell, Area Agent – Commercial Horticulture, Field Crops, Pesticide Education

Savannah Meyers, Extension Agent (Family and Consumer Sciences)

Kendra Phipps, Extension Agent (Agriculture – Livestock and Field Crops)

VACANT, Extension Agent (Agriculture and Natural Resources)



OUR MISSION

We extend research-based knowledge to all North Carolinians, helping them transform science into everyday solutions that improve their lives and grow our state.

OUR VISION

We are the trusted, go-to resource for connecting research and education to the communities, economies, and families of our state, creating prosperity for all North Carolinians.

PUTTING KNOWLEDGE TO WORK

NC State Extension organizes our core programming into three areas. While these areas do not represent all of Extension’s efforts, they reflect the base services we offer across Stokes County, as well as where we are best equipped to impact the communities and economy.



FEEDING OUR FUTURE

Extension innovates better agricultural products and practices, connecting farmers with research-based tools and information to help grow North Carolina's nearly \$100 billion agriculture industry.

> 575 educational activities offered
> 4647 participants engaged in program activities



IMPROVING OUR HEALTH

Extension helps people make healthier decisions, reduce their risk of chronic disease and live better lives, while educating the public about agriculture and local food systems.

> 54 educational activities offered
> 1730 participants engaged in program activities



ENRICHING OUR YOUTH

Extension's 4-H program addresses the diverse issues and needs of today's youth, helping hundreds of thousands of youth grow into healthy and engaged leaders.

> 57 educational activities offered
> 2170 youth participated in 4-H activities

EXTENSION EVENTS



Stokes County Beef Bash- The Stokes County Cattlemen's Association held its first Beef Bash on October 13th, 2023. The community came together to taste delicious local beef, network with Stokes County cattle producers, and celebrate local agriculture.



Clover Classic Livestock Show - The show was held April 1-2, 2023 at the Winston-Salem Fairgrounds (home of the Carolina Classic Fair) in Winston-Salem. Showmanship (youth ages 18 and under) and a skill-a-thon (for youth ages 8-18) took place both days with over 100 youth participating from across NC, SC and VA.



Farmer Appreciation Dinner - Our office partnered with Stokes County Soil & Water, NC Forest Services, Farm Service Agency, and NRCS to host the 22nd annual dinner on March 23, 2023 with more than 400 people in attendance.



National Ag Day Celebration - Our agents attended the National Ag Day Celebration in Lawsonville on March 21, 2023 and met Agriculture Commissioner Steve Troxler.



Safe Plates for Food Managers - The class was offered in April and August 2023 with 13 attendees. Stokes County Environmental Health Inspectors co-taught the series.

INTERESTED IN AGRITOURISM?

Attend this FREE one-day conference at the Forsyth Tech Stokes County Center!

Saturday, January 21, 2023
10 a.m. – 3 p.m.

The event is free, but you must register by scanning the QR code or visiting: www.forsythtech.edu/event/292/sessions

Forsyth Tech
STOKES COUNTY CENTER

In partnership with **NC COOPERATIVE EXTENSION** N.C. A&T

Sponsored by **FARM CREDIT** CAROLINA

Agritourism Conference - In partnership with Forsyth Tech Community College, Stokes County Center, Stokes County Cooperative Extension provided an workshop in January 2023. Twenty-three participants attended the workshop.



Pesticide Collection - Stokes County Cooperative Extension, in cooperation with Pesticide Disposal Assistance Program (PDAP), worked together to provide pesticide collection day for Stokes County. A total of 1,193 pounds of pesticide was collected and properly disposed.



Shepherd Boot Camp - Supply chain issues and subsequent price increases sparked by COVID-19 have led to an increased interest in small farms and homesteading. While sheep and goat numbers in NC have decreased over the past five years, the total value of sheep and goat inventory in NC has increased nearly \$800,000 from 2018 to 2022. When considering these factors in combination with overall increased interest in small ruminant production, it was evident that a workshop to build a strong foundation of proper management practices in small ruminant production was needed. Nineteen people from eleven counties in NC participated in the course.



Wool Pool - Sheep producers have been receiving low prices and are not able to adequately get a fair or market driven price for their product. Extension in NC and VA addressed this problem continuing to pool and bale wool for their producers to market wool. For the 2023 year after multiple meetings and discussions, we felt that we must continue this program as it meets the needs of many producers to garner a high price and receive payments from the FSA wool program. In 2023, we were able to ship just over 25,000 pounds of wool to Chargers Wool Processors for a premium price for local farmers.



Stokes County Bee School - Fifteen people attended an introductory class into beekeeping. There were hands on demonstration stations at the four Saturday classes as well as a field day to complete the certified beekeeper certification with NCSBA. The courses were held in February 2023.



Stokes County Agricultural Fair - Stokes County Cooperative Extension managed the livestock show with 68 youth exhibitors showcasing projects such as cattle, sheep and goats.



4-H Summer Fun - Summer Fun provides the opportunity for youth, ages 5-18, to participate in camps such as Dog Camp, Cloverbuds in Nature, STEM Camp and Life Skills Camp. 110 youth participated in the six camps offered in 2023.



Mobile Processing Unit - In 2023, the equipment was rented twenty-five times. Since 2022, 3400 birds have been processed. This has resulted in over \$115,000 economic impact. Stokes County Cooperative Extension offers two annual required trainings for consumers who plan to rent the equipment. Participants gained knowledge and skills to properly process poultry at home and produce a safe, wholesome product.



Learn. Grow. Share.

Extension Master Gardener Volunteer - We connect people with the benefits of consumer horticulture through research-based information, educational programming, and community outreach that empowers North Carolinians to cultivate healthy plants, landscapes, ecosystems, and communities.



Commercial Horticulture - Weed control in strawberry fields through recommended best management practices saved growers approximately \$7500 in chemical costs for the next growing season and approximately \$10,000 in labor for the rest of the season and the 2024 year.



Continuing Education Units for Chemical Applicators - 154 pesticide applicators received continuing education credits to keep their license valid and contribute to economic development within the county.

District Resource Center (DRC)

Laura Jones, DRC Director

In December 2022, DRC director Tony C. Hill retired after serving Stokes County for a total of 35 years. Tony was with Stokes County Sheriff's department for the first 5 years. In December 1994 he started the Day Reporting Center now known as The District Resource Center. Laura Jones accepted the Director position in December 2022 upon Mr. Hill's retirement.

It has been a very busy year; in February of 2023 we welcomed Nora Gann to join the staff of DRC as the senior office assistant. Nora was a great asset to the DRC and immediately joined the Opioid Task force committee. With Nora's experience dealing with probationers and inmates, she fit right in to accomplish duties in the DRC and pre-trial release office.

We have had 18 participants in our Pretrial release program in 2023, saving the county 1,145 jail bed days totaling \$97,325.00. Four of these participants that were accepted into pretrial experienced medical/mental health conditions that required inpatient treatment at a medical/mental health facility. This also generated a savings to Stokes County in treatment costs of approximately \$100,000.00 along with manpower supervision hours. The average time for a pretrial participant in 2023 was 67 days.

We have supervised 35 participants with a total of 840 hours in our Community Service Work Program accomplishing duties of mowing, weed-eating, leaf removal, roadside trash pick-up, painting, vehicle cleaning and general cleaning.

In September of 2023, Nora Gann resigned her position at DRC/PTR due to driving distance and other economic reasons. Nora left Stokes County with good standing, and we wish her the best in all future endeavors.

October 2023 DRC/PTR welcomed Kimberly Shelley Lewis, into Senior Office Assistant position. Kimberly had worked part-time with DRC previously and has been a full time Stokes County employee for nearly five years, working part time for three years prior to full time employment. Kimberly transferred to DRC from the Stokes County Tax Department. She has experience with Stokes County Jail & Stokes County Senior Services as well.

In December 2023, Brandon Tucker, our DRC Work Program Coordinator celebrated his two-year full-time anniversary with our department. Brandon worked part-time with DRC/PRT from December 2017 to his full-time employment in 2021. Brandon is a phenomenal employee; he keeps his eye on the details and makes sure all safety procedures are number one in getting the work completed.

Economic Development/Tourism

Tory Mabe, Economic Development/Tourism Tech Analyst



Stokes County Demographics & Statistics



45,175

Population 2022

47

Median Age (2021)

\$57,539

Median Household Income (2022)



3.0%

November 2023
Unemployment Rate

3.3% August 2023



Worked in Stokes County 6,616 (31.8%)
Worked Outside of Stokes County 13,793 (66.3%)
Worked Outside of North Carolina 395 (1.9%)

(Source: US Census Bureau Quick Facts & NC Commerce County Profile #37169)



\$36,481

Average Salary Increase In 2023 From 2022

\$33,384



29.6

Minute Average Travel Time To Work

20,818

2021 Employed Population

Small Business & Industry Establishments

Business Names Registered

320

2023

Assumed Business Names Registered Before 2017 Expired at end of 2022 & Required Re-submission

86

2022

71

2021 Source:

Stokes County Register Of Deeds

2022 North Carolina Commerce Data



Total Private Industry & Small Business Establishments

814



Total Manufacturing Establishments

29



Total Retail Sales (With Food/Drink)..... \$191,900,000
Total Retail Businesses (With Food/Drink)..... 184
Average Sales/Business Total (With Food/Drink).... \$1,043,011
Annual Taxable Retail Sales..... \$340,200,000

Small Businesses Welcomed to Stokes County in Last 5 Years Include:

Barn at Shelton Farm | Big Creek Lodge | Decked Out Burgers & Dogs | Dragon Glass Winery
Front Porch Creamery | MidSummer Brewing | King Skate Factory | Linda Vista Mexican
Luna's Mexican Kitchen | Liv For Swets | Market By Dragonfly | Moser Farm Market
1889 Taphouse | Palmetto Theatre | Pilot Mountain Wedding & Events | Fun Time Arcade
Rocky's Coffee & Ice Cream | Southern Charm Grill | StoCo Provisions | 311 Tavern

TOP 2023 STOKES COUNTY EMPLOYERS

Rank	Company Name	Industry	Class	Employment Range
1	Stokes County Schools	Educational Services	Public Sector	500-999
2	County Of Stokes	Public Administration	Public Sector	250-499
3	Wal-Mart Associates Inc.	Retail Trade	Private Sector	250-499
4	Wieland Copper Products Llc	Manufacturing	Private Sector	100-249
5	Ymca Of Northwest North Carolina	Accommodation and Food Services	Private Sector	100-249
6	Food Lion	Retail Trade	Private Sector	100-249
7	Lifebrite Hospital Group Of Stokes	Health Care and Social Assistance	Private Sector	100-249
8	Autumn Corporation	Health Care and Social Assistance	Private Sector	100-249
9	Universal Health Care/King	Health Care and Social Assistance	Private Sector	100-249
10	Forsyth Technical College	Educational Services	Public Sector	50-99
11	Defender Services Inc	Administrative and Support and Waste Management	Private Sector	50-99
12	City Of King	Public Administration	Public Sector	50-99
13	Parkdale America Llc	Manufacturing	Private Sector	50-99
14	Insperty Peo Services Lp	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	Private Sector	50-99
15	Shoreline Healthcare Management Llc	Health Care and Social Assistance	Private Sector	50-99
16	Lowes Foods Llc	Retail Trade	Private Sector	50-99
17	Oasis Ahr Llc	Health Care and Social Assistance	Private Sector	50-99
18	Walnut Ridge Assisted Living	Health Care and Social Assistance	Private Sector	50-99
19	Dairi-O	Accommodation and Food Services	Private Sector	50-99
20	U S Postal Service	Transportation and Warehousing	Public Sector	50-99
21	Usa Attachments Inc	Manufacturing	Private Sector	50-99
22	Mcdonalds Restaurant	Accommodation and Food Services	Private Sector	50-99
23	Dolgencorp Llc	Retail Trade	Private Sector	50-99
24	Stewarts Grading And Hauling Inc	Construction	Private Sector	50-99
25	Town & Country Grille Llc	Accommodation and Food Services	Private Sector	50-99

DATA: NC Commerce Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) Largest Employers - 2023 - Quarter 2

EMPLOYMENT, OCCUPATIONS, AND WORKFORCE



Largest Industries: Manufacturing (3,948 people), Health Care & Social Assistance (2,648 people, and Retail Trade (2,162 people), and the highest paying industries are Utilities (\$70,169), Information (\$53,587), and Educational Services (\$48,022).



From 2020 to 2021, employment in Stokes County, NC declined at a rate of -4.74%, from 21.1k employees to 20.1k employees. The most common job groups, by number of people living in Stokes County, NC, are Office & Administrative Support Occupations (2,068 people), Production Occupations (1,774 people), and Installation, Maintenance, & Repair Occupations (1,635 people). This chart illustrates the share breakdown of the primary jobs held by residents of Stokes County, NC.

DATA: the Census Bureau ACS 5-Year Estimate

STOKES COUNTY TOURISM STATISTICS

2022 County Level Visitor Spending

\$51.29 Million

10.7% Increase Over
2021 Spending Total



TAX REVENUES GENERATED

2022

2021



\$79.85 Tax Savings Per Resident

\$78.57 Tax Savings Per Resident

2020

2019



Hanging Rock Visitation Statistics



2014: 480,938	2019: 689,379
2015: 596,819	2020: 908,384
2016: 651,942	2021: 935,823
2017: 672,611	2022: 879,657
2018: 678,896	2023: 904,589

Friends of the Sauratown Mountains began work on the Sheep Rock Ridge Trail connecting the State Park to Town of Danbury with a trailhead entering the parking lot behind The Arts Place of Stokes. The North Carolina budget allocated \$5 million to completion of the Vade Mecum project and bidding of the project began at the end of 2023.



ORGANIZATION MISSION, AND FUNCTION

Stokes County Economic Development & Tourism proudly serves all county businesses from small, locally owned, who serve as the lifeline of each small community, to the medium and large manufacturing operations all of which employ and provide a means for quality of living to residents. The Department upholds a vital connection between industry and small businesses to local government, the state, and funders for incentives or projects that help to better our communities and towns. Business Retention, Development, Infrastructure and Quality of Life are key in helping maintain and create a path for future development helping to sustain Stokes County for future generations.

Looking to relocate, expand or develop your business in Stokes County? The Economic Development Team is committed to forming a specialized plan, helping make connections to assist in seeing your project to completion. Serving as the link to State and Local Resources or Grant Opportunities from local and state organizations including PTRC, Visit NC, Commerce, and EDPNC. We are proud to maintain the rural charm while encouraging Place Based Economic Development opportunities.

It is the goal of the Tourism arm to encourage visitation to Stokes County for Outdoor Adventure, Agricultural Rural Heritage, and Family Fun in the Mountains or along the River, via advertising statewide and regionally in a variety of mediums. Tourism Marketing brings awareness to area assets and encourages visitors to extend their visit and support local businesses while in the area. Marketing efforts lead visitors to online resources, smartphone app, or social media pages where visitors find up to date information on events and user generated content to show why #StokesROCKS

DEPARTMENT STRUCTURE

In 2023 under the direction of Interim Economic Development Director Eddy McGee the teamwork concept became a strong focus for departmental structure and organization. The necessity of this was bought about at our first meeting with a local resident who wanted to venture into starting an RV Campground. The prospective business owner had done much research and had an idea on county departments to visit, his first step was to visit with Economic Development for ideas on what to include on the site to help showcase rural and agricultural heritage of Stokes County. The department was able to connect this future business owner with resources in the Stokes County School System and form a path that would help connect them to county departments for rezoning, inspections, sewer and water. After this initial case the director and analyst formed a one pager of "Tips for Starting a Business in Stokes County" a simple front and back document outlining which county departments to start and connect with along the business development phase, including Register of Deeds to file assumed business name, answers to questions about business license or permit needs, informs on business personal property listings with the Tax Office. Concluding with direction for Zoning, Inspections, Permits, and reasons to contact Environmental Health for water and septic needs in areas without public infrastructure. Throughout the year once a business owner contacted the department, we set up an initial face to face with

representatives from the Tax Office, Public Works, Planning & Zoning, Environmental Health, and County Managers Office depending on specific project needs.

MAJOR NEW INVESTMENTS IN STOKES COUNTY

- Building Reuse Grant for expansion of Mitchell's Meat Processing Retail Space in the Meadows community paying out all \$10,000 of county match funding to the project. The county submitted reimbursement from NC Commerce of \$36,301.35 out of the \$200,000 matching funds grant.
- Continued development of the Meadows Community water project, including an additional \$15 million in funding from the State Budget to support Economic Growth providing the extra needed funding to complete expansion in the area served by previous state funding for this project.
- Dan River Mile Marker Project Engineering to promote safety and visitation to and along sections of the river. In October 2023 Stokes County Economic Development submitted a \$10,000 grant application to the Duke Energy Foundation's Vibrant Economies Grant Program, the department received the grant in an Award Announcement on December 18, 2023 at Pitzer Road Access.



NOTABLE PROJECTS AND DEVELOPMENTS IN STOKES COUNTY

- 2022 Golden Leaf Site Identification Program Grant completed by Strategic Development Group was presented to Interim Director Eddy McGee identifying 7 exploration zones and 16 sites concentrated around incorporated areas of the county. McGee and Mabe helped rule out one property due to topography and collaborated with SBG to finalize the report.
- Moratock Bridge Replacement Project moved into full gear with an initial webinar with Ramey Kemp discussing the need to find offset land for project as the new location would be downstream from the old bridge and right of way would need to be purchased. The park falls under a LWCF land management agreement where federal funds were used to purchase the park property initially. This classification didn't allow for purchase of property with federal money that had already been purchased by federal funds. Economic Dev and Tax Office worked to identify and contact an adjacent landowner who agreed to work with us and the project engineers through property visits, surveying and purchase. New bridge plans bring the abutment back into Sheppard Mill road by cutting through the backstop of the Baseball field, to remedy this situation in accordance with LECF Guidelines a resolution to abandon the baseball field which included a Public Hearing was formed and scheduled. The solution was met with no opposition and passed to form a green space at Moratock. NC DOT Engineers and project managers at Ramey Kemp have commended the department for going above and beyond to be in front of and on top of keeping this project moving. A compliment attributed to collaborating and bringing together Public Works, Tax Office, and County Managers Office.

- The DM2 Sewer Expansion Agreement between Stokes County and City of King project was completed, and the company moved into their new building at beginning of 2023. Hosting a "Machining and A Meal" Community Day which included a tour on April 21, 2023.

2023 YEAR IN REVIEW

- 2023 Visit North Carolina Tourism Conference provided an opportunity to collaborate with tourism partners, marketing firms and Visit NC representatives from across the state. Tourism and Marketing Coordinator, Tory Mabe, was able to meet with and pitch story and content ideas to media and statewide organizations and event planners who develop content that encourages visitors to an area to stay multiple days experiencing more in a regional area. Best practices and new trends for marketing and sharing content online or via social media on a more personal level to the prospective visitor, instead of at the visitor were discussed. VisitNC Marketing Co-Op opportunities were presented, and valuable connections made.
- Stokes County Occupancy Tax Establishment discussion began at the beginning of the year between Economic Development and Interim County Manager. In February a Resolution was approved by the Board of Commissioners and submitted to the General Assembly asking for authorization to collect and levy a room occupancy tax at the 6% rate on the overnight rental rate of all vacation rental and accommodation within the county. During the month of March, Interim County Manager Amber Brown and Economic Development Tech Analyst Tory Mabe attended and spoke at meetings of each of the three town or city commissioner boards. In person presentations were to share information collected overtime on the number of vacation rental properties, and estimated rates that the Stokes County Tax office, Mapping Department and Economic Development had estimated. The mapping office produced a full countywide map pin pointing each of the vacation rental properties, an average daily rate, contact information, and link to online reservations. Collaboration between Interim County Manager, Tax Office, and Economic Development continued throughout the year including consulting with Chris Cavanaugh of Magellan Strategy Group on best practices for collection of Occupancy Tax, ideas on projects that the 1/3rd could be suggested to the Tourism Development Authority, and valuable information on number of members and whom they represent to be placed on the newly formed TDA. In late summer the General Assembly moved Occupancy Tax legislation into a committee vote, the Stokes County legislation passed into law mid-October. During the last quarter of 2023, the team met and formed a timeline for completion of the local Resolution levying the tax, formation of the TDA, and educational public meetings that all Vacation Rental Property owners would be invited to attend and hear a presentation from Chris Cavanaugh on his NC Occupancy Tax Report. Two public input presentations were scheduled for early January 2024, with a Public Hearing set for the first Commissioner Meeting of 2024, Resolution presentation at the second January Meeting, with initial collection of the tax to begin second quarter of 2024.

- Public Presentation of Economic Development & Tourism were set with Stokes



County Senior Services to present four different times to Senior Groups in King, Lawsonville, Francisco, and Walnut Cove. Tech Analyst Tory Mabe prepared an interactive presentation and set up at each satellite location where 30-40 people attended to hear updates and information on why Stokes County is attractive to visitors and prospective business development. Handouts were presented, feedback noted, and questions answered.

- Sauratown Mountains Scenic Byway Committee meetings with board of directors, and community input sessions planned in Danbury and Pilot Mountain. Input meetings are required in the Byway Bylaws and beneficial comments were received at each session. The Sauratown Mountain Scenic Byway was not selected for a National Byway Grant. The Scenic Byway Committee meets 3-4 times a year to plan projects along the route.
- Mitchell's Meat Processing Building Re-Use Grant continues as a partnership between NC Commerce and Stokes County where 5% match payments have been paid out after three submissions of \$3,600 in January, \$5,946.93 in March, and \$3,99.50 in July. Bi-annual reports are to be made to NC Commerce and have been completed upon the due dates of January 15th and July 15th. In September a reimbursement of \$36,301.35 was submitted for payment and approved after supplemental documentation of receipts and invoices in late October. Since this was the first submission from Commerce to Stokes County in the new fiscal year a Budget Amendment was required from Finance to reallocate \$200,000 into an Economic Grants line item. Funds received from Commerce are deposited and a check cut from County to Mitchell's Meats LLC each time a submission is made. To this point about 1/4th of the work has been completed on the Reuse Project.
- Stokes County Economic Development Attends High School Career Fairs at each of the three High Schools and Calvary Christian School during each school semesters in 2023. At each Career Fair, Tech Analyst Mabe sets up a table with information about Tourism and answers questions from students at each grade level on hospitality and the career paths that are available and fields of study that would benefit someone in college to hold such a role.
- Stokes County Summer Intern Program continues into year two with Katherine Byerly as a part-time summer intern. Katherine works to maintain social media accounts throughout the summer, developing graphics and content for each channel and assisting with any Ayer or graphic design needs for print or digital advertisements. Katherine developed weekly event brochures for distribution at the Hanging Rock Campground and local businesses, during this time she also developed brochures dedicated to each community in Stokes County.
- Attended the Outdoor Economy Conference held September 18-21 in Cherokee, NC at this conference was able to meet with and network with many companies located in NC who provide amenities or funding and support for outdoor recreation. Collaborated with other Piedmont communities and worked through

round table discussions about issues faced when developing and promoting quality of life activities available outdoors. Joined breakout sessions on trail and greenway development, and experienced the Sylva, NC social district in downtown Jackson County where many activity trails exist even for history. At this event we were able to meet up with Brice Mahoney of Pinnacle Outdoors to discuss opportunities.

- Site and Project Requests for Information on active project needs from EDPNC totaled 95 opportunities to submit. A key hindrance for Stokes County to submit a proposal continues to be distance to major interstate or highway, total square footage of available building needs requests of 100-200,000 sqft, infrastructure needs, or a site ready greenfield. Inventory of available vacant buildings remains low and areas of large tracts of land aren't zoned correctly for projects to move in and start as soon as they approve a request.

Board of Elections

Jason Perry, Board of Elections Director

The Stokes County Board of Elections consists of five Board of Elections members, two full-time employees (director and deputy director), and two temporary part-time employees.

Board Members

Mike Pell, Chair

David Burge, Secretary

Jennie L. Hemrick, Member

Kimble McEachern, Member

Jack Johnson, Member

The director and deputy director manage the day-to-day operations of the Board of Elections office and conduct operations for all elections in the county, including special, municipal, county, state, and federal elections. The five-member county board is, among other responsibilities, tasked with general oversight of the office, as are the North Carolina State Board of Elections and Stokes County administration.

SUMMARY OF 2023 PROJECTS AND TASKS:

- Conducted municipal elections for Town of Danbury, City of King, and City of Walnut Cove, including filing of candidates, pre-election and post-election testing and audits, management of the voting process (absentee by mail, early voting, and Election Day), candidate and voter inquiries, certification of elections, and post-election recounts of two contests; 1,082 ballots cast.

- Processed registrations for **1,670 new voters, 429 party affiliation changes, 445 county address changes.**
- Performed daily, weekly, and monthly list maintenance tasks (examples include removal of voters due to death, moved from county, or felony conviction); maintained computer database of **32,452** current voters and over **70,000** overall voter records.
- Performed biennial list maintenance of no-contact voters – removed **857** voters who have not had contact with elections office within time period of previous four federal elections, and did not respond to a mailing; sent a mailing to **1,284** voters who have not had contact with elections office within time period of previous two federal elections.
- Worked with county partners regarding renovations to the former bank building in Danbury, which is to be the new location of the Board of Elections office in 2024. Considerations at the new location include security, efficiency, and general needs of an elections office.
- Conducted security assessment of new elections office location with county partners and a Critical Infrastructure Specialist with the North Carolina Department of Public Safety
- Reassessed Election Day polling places, determining that current precincts are reasonably and efficiently serving the voters' interests.
- Conducted outreach and informed the public of role of Board of Elections at events such as King Rotary Club meeting.
- Implemented photo ID requirement, including ability to get an ID at elections office.
- Appointed five Board of Elections members to their 2023-25 term; appointed over 100 precinct officials to their 2023-25 term; worked on recruitment of new precinct officials.
- Conducted filing of 19 local candidates for 2024 elections
- Board of Elections director Jason Perry maintained state elections administrator certification. Board of Elections deputy director Cindy Turner began the process of earning certification.

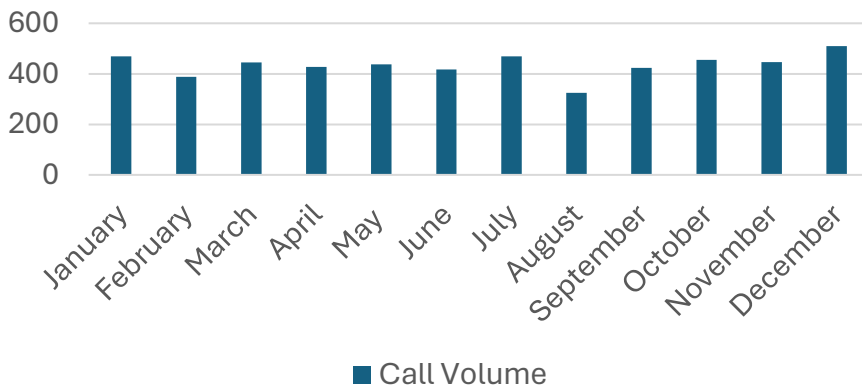
Emergency Services

Brandon Gentry, Emergency Services Director

2023 CALL VOLUME



Call Volume for Emergency and Non-Emergency Transports



Total Incidents – 11,065

Totals:

- Emergency – 473
- Non-emergency – 4,911
- Assist – 54
- Cancelled – 504
- DOA's – 74
- Refusals – 1,681
- Stand-by's – 3,067
- EMS Service - 301

68%

TRANSPORTS
Percentage of Patient Encounters

20%

NON TRANSPORTS
Percentage of Patient Encounters

9%

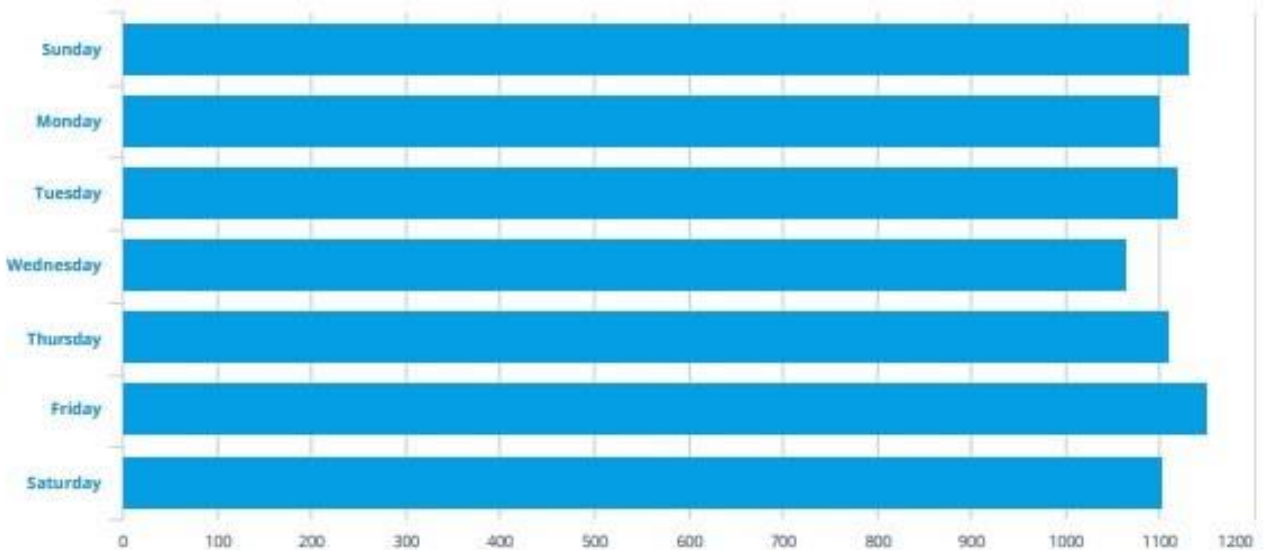
OTHER DISPOSITIONS
Percentage of Patient Encounters

7,777

RECORDS
In Selected Time Slice

365

DAYS
In Selected Time Slice



- Counts**
- % Rows
- % Columns
- % All

The above chart consists of patient contact tickets and excludes stand-bys.

Call Volume by Day of the Week	
Sunday	1,131
Monday	1,099
Tuesday	1,120
Wednesday	1,064
Thursday	1,110
Friday	1,151
Saturday	1,102
Totals:	7,777

EMS Stand-bys for Stokes County
(Out of County/County Transport Departments)

- Forsyth County EMS → 7
- Rockingham County EMS → 9
- Surry County EMS → 6
- Station 37 → 44
- Station 86 → 44
- Station 34 → 44

*This consists of other counties running calls within Stokes County and the in-county transport units with the fire departments.

EMS Stand-bys within the county

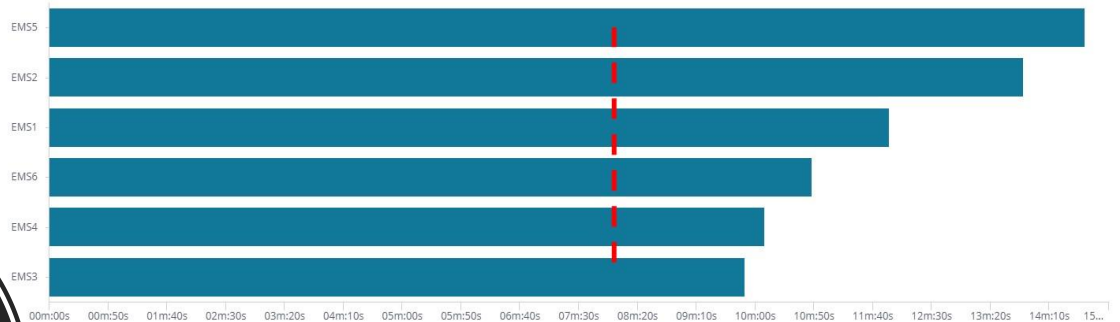
- Unit 1 → 637 (Walnut Cove)
- Unit 2 → 595 (Lawsonville)
- Unit 3 → 56 (King)
- Unit 4 → 53 (King)
- Unit 5 → 960 (Danbury)
- Unit 6 → 462 (Walnut Cove)

Average Transport Time to Hospitals – 29m:48s

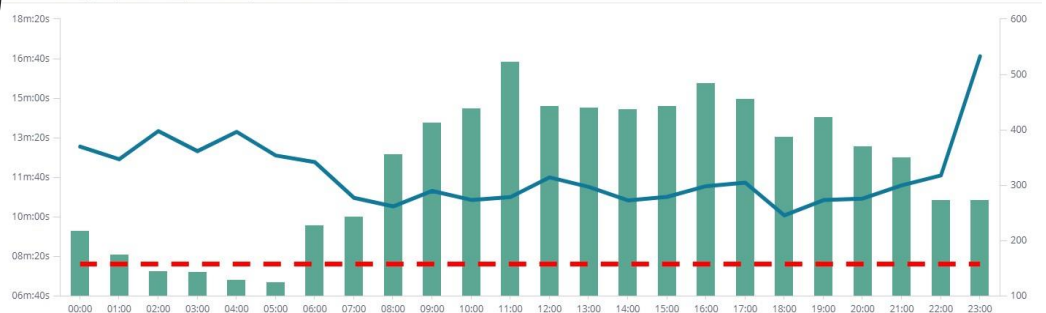
*This consists of units moving within the County to cover areas when units are depleted

Average Response Time within the county 11 m: 27 s

Rolling Response Time by Unit copy



Dual Axis Rolling Response Time by Hour of Day and Total Patients



FACILITIES EMS TRANSPORTED TO:

Count and Percentage of Incidents at each Destination

Destination Location Name	Count of Incidents	Percent of Incidents	Median Turnaround Time	Turnaround Time 90th Percentile
FORSYTH MEDICAL CENTER	2,858	52.93%	17m:26s	26m:39s
ATRIUM WAKE FOREST BAPTIST HEALTH	1,492	27.63%	17m:38s	29m:07s
LIFEBRITE COMMUNITY HOSPITAL OF STOKES	360	6.67%	13m:59s	23m:24s
Northern Regional Hospital	261	4.83%	14m:46s	23m:07s
KERNERSVILLE MEDICAL CENTER	200	3.70%	14m:53s	21m:27s
MOSES CONE HEALTH SYSTEM	54	1.00%	21m:58s	38m:14s
ANNIE PENN HOSPITAL	42	0.78%	19m:23s	35m:47s
CLEMMONS MEDICAL CENTER	34	0.63%	13m:09s	21m:25s
UNC Rockingham Health Care	27	0.50%	16m:59s	31m:45s
WESLEY LONG COMMUNITY HOSPITAL	17	0.31%	20m:00s	39m:20s
Walnut Cove HealthCare	7	0.13%	13m:03s	16m:24s
MOUNTAIN VALLEY LIVING CENTER	7	0.13%	09m:20s	14m:36s
HIGH POINT REGIONAL HEALTH SYSTEM	4	0.07%	19m:55s	28m:06s
Walnut Ridge Assisted Living	4	0.07%	08m:22s	11m:15s
Home	3	0.06%	10m:38s	12m:13s
WOLTZ HOSPICE HOME	3	0.06%	12m:49s	36m:39s
HUGH CHATHAM MEMORIAL HOSPITAL	2	0.04%	19m:27s	19m:57s
Village Care of King	2	0.04%	16m:02s	18m:18s
Residence	2	0.04%	07m:20s	10m:58s
Priddy Manor Asst. Living	2	0.04%	09m:44s	10m:39s
Forsyth medical center	1	0.02%	18m:26s	18m:26s
Private Residences	1	0.02%	34m:00s	34m:00s
Universal Health Care	1	0.02%	13m:29s	13m:29s
Walnut Ridge Assisted Living	1	0.02%	06m:33s	06m:33s
DAYMARK BEHAVIORAL HEALTH URGENT CARE	1	0.02%	12m:02s	12m:02s
Grand Total	5,400	100.00%	17m:01s	27m:18s

2023 EMERGENCY SERVICE STATISTICS

- **5,629** doses of medication given
- **113** patients for advanced airway intubations
- **91** patients that a ventilator was applied to
- **3,690** patients where advanced cardiac procedures were needed (includes cardioversion, cardiac pacing, defibrillation, and 12 lead EKG)
- IV and IO access: **3,567 patients**
- Whole blood administration – **six times**
- TXA Administration – **14 times**
- Ancef Administration – **21 times**
- Cardiac Arrest Survival:
 - 13 cardiac arrests with return of spontaneous circulation
 - All **13 returned home** or to a facility with minor neuro deficiencies.

TRAINING HIGHLIGHTS

- Cardiac emergencies
- Rapid sequence intubation
- Trauma Bag in-service
- Ventilator training
- Wilderness training at Hanging Rock State Park
- Active shooter training



- Active shooter multiple agency training
- EMS Olympics at FTCC King Campus – Fire tower evolutions
- Each employee had **nine hours** of on-duty training this year
- Each employee receives **32 hours of continuing education training**



COMMUNITY PARAMEDIC PROGRAM DATA

Data 2019-2023

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total
Behavioral/Psychiatric	267	254	347	371	307	1,546
Overdose/Substance Abuse	116	172	222	218	148	876
Suicide Attempt/Suicidal Ideation	27	26	46	43	41	183
EMS Narcan	53	108	114	150	119	544
POV Narcan	-	-	381	150	414	945
Referrals	231	450	337	381	335	1,734

High Utilizers of EMS System
 ≥ 4 utilizations/month = 12

Number of total refusal calls = 1,681

Number of total refusal calls reviewed by Community Paramedic = 360

Number of active cases currently managed by Community Paramedic = 35
 (458 Referrals in 2023)

Number of home visits by Community Paramedic = 68

Number of transports to alternative destinations by Community Paramedic = 3

Number of public education events delivered by Community Paramedic = 51

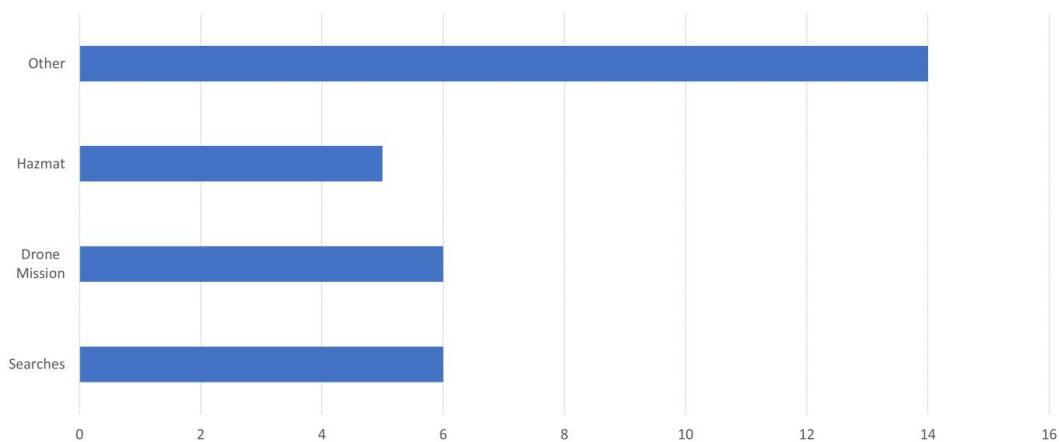
EMS REVENUE

For 2023, **\$2,618,844.70** was collected in revenue from EMS with \$751,927.69 of write-off, non-billable amounts.

329 transports were started in Stokes County for LifeStar calls. This number does not include number of transports that were brought back to Stokes County from out of county hospitals.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

EM responses in 2023.



Emergency Management Grants 2023

- **DPR Fuel Caddy Grant 4,000.00** Placed portable fuel tank on EM truck. This grant is complete.
- **LEPC Grant for 3,000.00** This was used to help buy tables and chairs for the new EOC. This grant is complete.
- **The department was awarded the 2023 CBCG grant to upgrade the EOC with a total of 294,000.00.** We are still working to complete this grant with a deadline of July 1, 2024.



Stokes County Emergency Management Assets



Capacity Building
Competitive Grant



Awarded
\$306,578.24

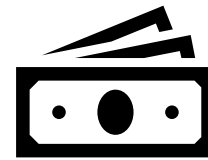


2022



Finance

Lisa Lankford, Finance Director



STAFF:

Lisa Lankford, Finance Director

Tracy Aaron, Assistant Finance Director

Lisa Joyce, Payroll Specialist

Michele Mabe, Finance Accounting Technician

Debra Nall, Finance Accounting Technician/Accounts Payable

MISSION

To provide sound, financial oversight of the county's transactions handled in accordance with laws and standards. To provide timely and accurate information and ensure fiscal accountability.

RESPONSIBILITIES

A few duties performed by the Finance Department are listed below:

- Maintain detailed account records by fund for all county departments including assets, liabilities, budgeted and actual revenues and budgeted and actual expenditures.
- Supervising receipts, deposits and investment of cash.
- Reconciliation of all county bank accounts.
- Approving all invoices and contracts prior to payment.
- Maintaining expenditure records for all county grants.
- Preparing financial reports for Federal and State agencies.
- Facilitating the annual county audit.
- Compilation of the annual county budget under the direction of the Board of County Commissioners and County Manager.

2023 HIGHLIGHTS

- Managed numerous awards and grants.
- Issued **7,694** Accounts Payable checks.
- Entered, along with county departments, **22,087** cash, checks, and credit card receipts.
- Posted **1,825** General Journal entries.

2024 GOALS

- Continue improving processes for better operating procedures.
- Finish completing the new Finance software conversion with a target date of November 2024.
- Extend training to departments on the new Finance software conversion.
- Continue to improve cross-training within Finance for increased efficiency.

Fire Marshal

Scott Aaron, Fire Marshal

The Fire Marshal's Office has continued to be proactive in the County. We strive to streamline operations while providing the best service we can to the citizens of Stokes County. While transitioning reporting systems, we noticed some of the former reports were no longer available, so we are changing our documentation process. I have included a report that shows a breakdown of responses. See data and information below referencing our office's functions and response.



INSPECTIONS

- Inspections performed: 170 Initial Inspections
- Re-inspections: 96
- Not counting Inspections performed in the Town of Walnut Cove prior to July 2023.
- Total Violations: 252
- Total Fines Collected: \$2,525.00
- Permit Fees: \$1,500.00
- Fire Report Fees: \$140.00

FIRE RESPONSE

- Emergency Responses: 230

PLAN REVIEW

- New Construction and Existing Plan Review
- Electronic Plan Review

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

- Scene Responses: We responded to multiple calls with EM for assistance from logistical needs to Incident Command roles.
- Grant Writing: We assisted EM Director Brandon Gentry with writing and completing grants from Emergency Management.
- Equipment Maintenance: We perform weekly and monthly preventative maintenance on all EM equipment.

TRAINING HOURS

- Fire: We attend and assist with training at the local fire departments, and other training opportunities.

- EMS Con-Ed: We attend quarterly con-ed with EMS
- Arson: We attend training and take online courses monthly to maintain hours for our Arson Certifications.
- Inspections: All employees are required to attend continuing education to maintain certifications. Atherton Jessup completed his level 2 Fire Inspector, obtained his Probationary Level 3 Inspector
- Conferences Attended:
 - 40 hours NC International Arson Investigators Training seminar
 - 40 hours International Arson Investigators Training seminar

FIRE DEPARTMENT SUPPORT

- Fire and Rescue Association Meetings.
- Fire Commission Meetings.
- Research and Development of a new County Contract.
- Study and propose a plan to help with staffing needs of Fire Service.
- Provide information and support in ISO rate reduction processes.

OSHA/SAFETY

- Safety and Accident Review Committee meetings.
- OSHA Consultative Program saving the County thousands in possible OSHA fines.
- Assist county departments with training needs.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

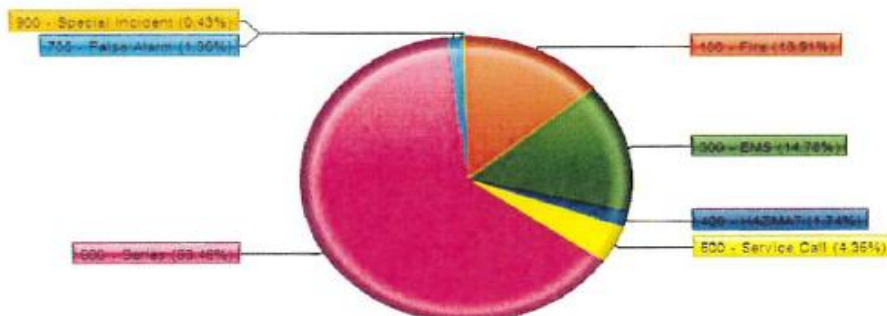
- Fire Extinguisher Trainings for local businesses.
- Public Education events across the county.
- Fire Prevention training for schools and materials for Fire Prevention Week.

Fire - Incident Types Date: Tuesday, January 30, 2024
Time: 8:12:11 PM

Alarm Date between 2023-01-01 and 2024-01-01

Fire Incident Type Breakdown

Incident Type Group	
100 - Fire	32
300 - EMS	34
400 - HAZMAT	4
500 - Service Call	10
600 - Series	146
700 - False Alarm	3
900 - Special Incident	1
	230



Health Department

Tammy Martin, Health Director

MISSION

"To promote health and safe living, prevent disease, care for the sick, protect the environment and provide essential services to meet community needs."



Board Members

Amber Hairford, Licensed Physician
Steven Jones, Licensed Engineer
Tim Mabe, Licensed Dentist
Beverly Essick, Registered Nurse
Ross Kiser, Licensed Pharmacist
Ashley O'Steen, General Public
Keith Lawson, General Public
Chad Jarvis, General Public
Sonya Cox, Commissioner
Amber Brown, County Manager
Tammy Martin, Health Director
Hayley Shelton, Recording Secretary

The Health Department hired Dr. Cassidy-Vu in a full-time capacity as a provider and is also the Medical Director. With this we were able to offer MAT (medication assisted therapy) for patients that may not have many options as to where to seek treatment. There has been an increase in patients with our having two providers.

We had new BOH (Board of Health) members appointed throughout the beginning of 2023. This BOH has taken on an active role in advocating for more resources as well as education opportunities for the department. Our department along with EMS and the community paramedics have begun the process to offer a MAT Bridge Program for Stokes County. There was a lot of discussion around Opioid Settlement funds with possible avenues that could be taken to help the citizens the most. With the MAT services being offered here, we have started dispensing Narcan to those that are in the program. There is discussion of the need for a mental health provider in our clinic.

In November of 2023, our Employee Health Clinic began for county employees and their families. We offer care to those with our MedCost plan for a \$0 copay. There has been a tremendous increase in our patients with this change as well. The Health Department along with the BOH are looking at more ways to advertise and promote our services to the community.

Human Resources

Jamie Clark, HR Director

STAFF

Jamie Clark, HR Director

Donna Rogers, Assistant HR Director/Risk Management Coordinator

To summarize, 2023 was a year of change for the Human Resources department. New procedures and software were implemented to increase productivity and efficiency for HR staff and for county employees. Tasks were assigned by the Board of Commissioners that resulted in changes in the new-hire process as well as future changes pertaining to employee evaluations and possibly merit-pay. Lastly, the department underwent many personnel changes at the end of the year. We foresee more changes in 2024. We are setting goals with hopes to decrease response times, boost employee morale, modernize employee new-hire and exit processes, increase streamlining, minimize risk, save time, and much more.

Background Check Policy – The HR department drafted a Background Check policy that was approved by the BOCC. We have partnered with the Background Investigation Bureau (BIB). Once a final candidate is selected for a position, they are sent login information to the BIB portal where they agree to a criminal background check and provide all the information needed to obtain the background check. BIB sends the results to the HR department within 24-48 hours.

Employee Performance Evaluation – The HR department drafted an Employee Performance Evaluation policy, Support Form, Evaluation Form, and a Checklist for managers to review Employee Performance Evaluations that was approved by the BOCC. The County Manager is currently working with Department Heads to complete their Support Forms. It is our understanding that the Evaluation Process will begin for all employees in 2024. We plan to work closely with all departments during the evaluation process.

Group New Hire Orientation – To decrease the amount of time that our staff met one-on-one with new employees, we began a group new-hire orientation process. Department Heads were sent a list of dates that orientation is offered throughout the year. The orientation agenda includes filling out all new-hire paperwork, a 401K informational segment, employee handbook review, a live webinar with Cypress Benefit Solutions to go over employee benefits and issuing of employee ID badges.

Employee Exit Questionnaire – This year the HR department revamped the Employee Exit Questionnaire. The data collected from this questionnaire is entered into a spreadsheet so that we can better track and understand the reason for turnover within each department.

Paylocity – The major task taken on by the department this year is the implementation of the new payroll and HR software, Paylocity. We have attended numerous online webinars and training courses to prepare for this undertaking. We meet with the implementation team 2-3 times a week via Zoom. We went live with employee punches on December 23rd and the first payroll through Paylocity was on January 26th. We felt like everything went very well. We are excited to learn all the things Paylocity will offer. We hope that the system will streamline many of our processes and provide reports that we have never been able to easily access in the past.

Employee Health Clinic – We have been working very hard over the last couple of years with MedCost, CBS and the Stokes County Health Department to open an Employee Health Clinic for our employees and their families. We began November 1st, 2023. All county employees, and their families on the county's health plan can visit the clinic with a \$0 co-pay!

Personnel Changes – 20+ Year veteran, Gayle Tucker retired from the position of HR Director. Jamie Clark, previous Assistant HR Director, was promoted to her position. Donna Rogers, who was the previous Assistant Register of Deeds, was promoted to the Assistant HR Director position. The team is adjusting well to their new positions and to the new payroll/HR software.

Employment Law Class – Director Jamie Clark completed the Employment Law class with Diane Juffras through the NC School of Government in November.

STATISTICAL DATA

- **2023 Workers Compensation Data:**
 - 32 Total Employee Incidents (11 refused medical treatment)
 - 21 OSHA Recordable Incidents

Why are employees leaving Stokes County?

- The data below was collected by Employee Exit Questionnaires, completed by 46 employees who voluntarily resigned in 2023.
 - 11 - Better Pay
 - 11 - Retirement
 - 7 - Family Circumstances
 - 7 - More Affordable Family Insurance
 - 6 - Better Work Conditions
 - 5 - Dissatisfied with pay/hours/type of work
 - 4 - Return to School
 - 3 - Due to Upper Management
 - 1 - Moving out of the area



EMPLOYEE TURNOVER

Department	YTD Term EE's	Approved Full-time	Approved Part-	Total Employees	Turnover Rate
Administration	2	2	1	3	66.67%
Human Resources	1	2	0	2	50.00%
Finance	1	4.5	0	4.5	22.22%
Purchasing	0	1.5	0	1.5	0.00%
Tax/Mapping/GIS	2	16	1	17	11.76%
Elections	0	2	0	2	0.00%
Register of Deeds	1	4	0	4	25.00%
Public Buildings	2	18	2.5	20.5	9.76%
I.T. Systems	2	3	0	3	66.67%
Vehicle Maintenance	1	2	0	2	50.00%
Sheriffs Department	13	58	14	72	18.06%
Jail	12	32	10	42	28.57%
DRC	1	4	0	4	25.00%
Emergency Communications	6	14	10	24	25.00%
Emergency Managment	0	1	0	1	0.00%
Fire Marshal	1	3	0	3	33.33%
EMS	25	42	37	79	31.65%
Animal Control	8	9	0	9	88.89%
Solid Waste	11	8	40.5	48.5	22.68%
Planning	2	6	0	6	33.33%
Economic Development/Tourism	0	2	0	2	0.00%
Natural Resources/Soil & Water	0	2	0	2	0.00%
Health Department	2	29	4	33	6.06%
Social Services	15	81	0	81	18.52%
Veterans Services	0	2	0	2	0.00%
Senior Services	1	9	0	9	11.11%
Art Council	0	3	0	3	0.00%
Total	109	360	120	480	22.71%

2023 Job Postings:

- Administration – 1
- Animal Control – 7
- Emergency Communications – 2
- Senior Services – 3
- DRC – 2
- Environmental Health – 1
- Fire Marshal – 1
- Information Systems – 3
- Human Resources – 2
- Veterans Services – 1
- Vehicle Maintenance – 2
- EMS – 9
- Social Services – 20
- Health – 5
- Planning – 3
- Public Building – 2
- Solid Waste – 1
- Register of Deeds – 1
- Tax – 2

**Total Job Postings:
68**

EMPLOYEE TENURE

We currently have 38 employees eligible for retirement with 20 + years of service. 22 eligible with 25+ years of service, and 8 with 30+ years of service.

	Department Description	Tenure (In English)
1	Senior Citizens	31 Year(s) & 10 Month(s)
2	Social Services	29 Year(s) & 5 Month(s)
3	Tax	32 Year(s)
4	Sheriff's Department	35 Year(s) & 11 Month(s)
5	Tax	31 Year(s) & 1 Month(s)
6	Public Buildings	28 Year(s) & 7 Month(s)
7	Mapping	36 Year(s)
8	Social Services	26 Year(s) & 4 Month(s)
9	Sheriff's Department	36 Year(s) & 9 Month(s)
10	Social Services	25 Year(s) & 2 Month(s)
11	Register of Deeds	24 Year(s) & 10 Month(s)
12	Natural Resources	28 Year(s)
13	Social Services	27 Year(s) & 4 Month(s)
14	Sheriff's Department	31 Year(s) & 11 Month(s)
15	EMS	26 Year(s) & 8 Month(s)
16	Tax	25 Year(s) & 1 Month(s)
17	Tax	27 Year(s)
18	Social Services	20 Year(s) & 3 Month(s)
19	Social Services	33 Year(s) & 3 Month(s)
20	Emergency Management	22 Year(s) & 1 Month(s)
21	Tax	29 Year(s)
22	Tax	23 Year(s) & 11 Month(s)
23	Jail	23 Year(s) & 8 Month(s)
24	Finance	23 Year(s) & 7 Month(s)
25	Social Services	23 Year(s) & 7 Month(s)
26	Environmental Health	22 Year(s) & 5 Month(s)
27	Mapping	22 Year(s) & 5 Month(s)
28	Health Department	22 Year(s) & 5 Month(s)
29	EMS	21 Year(s) & 4 Month(s)
30	Solid Waste	21 Year(s) & 7 Month(s)
31	Sheriff's Department	20 Year(s) & 7 Month(s)
32	Environmental Health	20 Year(s) & 3 Month(s)
33	Purchasing	20 Year(s) & 1 Month(s)
34	Health Department	20 Year(s)
35	Health Department	20 Year(s)
36	Emergency Communications	33 Year(s) & 5 Month(s)
37	Mapping	27 Year(s)
38	Sheriff's Department	26 Year(s)

Information Technology

Ken Farmer, IT Director

STAFF

Ken Farmer, IT Director

Mike Schaper

Lee Edwards

2023 was a year of new change and growth in the IT Department. During the Summer of 2023, two long-term highly experienced employees retired after both serving 30+ years. Ken Farmer was selected as IT Director and was tasked with keeping the department afloat and bringing the County up to date with technologies and services that could be provided to employees for better service of citizens. Department employees Lee Edwards and Mike Schaper have hit the ground running and continue to be a great asset for the County during the transition and moving forward.

In addition to the 30 +/- routine tech support issues IT deals with daily, the below items were accomplished since late summer of 2023:

- Hired and familiarized two new employees.
- Removed/palletized 30+ workstations/displays.
- Laserfiche upgrade to entire Department of Social Services
- eFileCabinet upgrade to Revver for Sheriff's Dept.
- Assisted HR/Payroll with upgrade to Paylocity
- Setup small wireless network in Health Dept.
- Setup wireless and wired network at Autumn Square
- Researched and negotiated contract with Panasonic for 10+ laptops
- Researched and negotiated contract for for Cisico ASA upgrade
- Researched and negotiated contract for Fatpipe upgrade (installing next week)
- Researched and negotiated contract Southern upgrade
- Migrated local Active Directory Distribution Groups to Microsoft Entra

Planning and Inspections

Eric Nance, Planning and Inspections Director

In 2023 we issued 1,118 permits which translates to \$284,180.79 in revenue for the year. Comparing 2022 revenue at \$236,873.74 with 2023 revenue there was a difference of \$47,307.05.

I relate the difference being due to the increase in fees as of July 1, 2023. Since the increase it seems our contractors and public are accepting the fees, which allows us to pursue upgrades and positive changes in our Planning and Inspections office.

Since I came on board with the Planning and Inspections department in February 2023 we have implemented a fee increase that has not happened in approximately 20 years, we have established a computer at the front counter with a monitor for the public to view when we look at properties for zoning as well as creating permits, established a new temporary RV ordinance and permit to allow the public to live on the property while their building permits are in effect. We have rezoned several properties to allow for business, one being a mini farm truck business, another being a building for a snack cake business, as well as a glamping campground to help serve as a place for vacationers to stay and spend money in Stokes County. We also rezoned a property to give a homeowner the means to have their own workshop and allow for farm animals. One of our goals for the year has been to make upgrades to our permitting system and technology to make it easier for our contractors and taxpayers to get their permits and to increase office efficiency for personnel. This new system will give Contractors and taxpayers an online portal with which to apply for their permits, it will guide them through the process from start to finish sending them updates on their permit status, and to let them know if there is more information to be provided to the permit office. With inspectors having the means through a tablet in the field to automatically upload inspection reports with automated messaging to the contractor/homeowner, it allows for quicker response time and less time updating files in the office. This process allows better communication and does away with outdated paper filing and the need for space which increases efficiency and accuracy in permitting. It is my understanding that we have gone through the financing process for the package and are ready to go ahead with the purchase. Along with the permitting software we are in the process of upgrading our plan review process with new technology through the savings of our permitting software package. We recently added a new Office Manager/Permitting Technician and a new Permitting Technician with Julie Potter (Office Manager/Permitting Technician) and Kathy Landreth (Permitting Technician). We are very happy to welcome Julie and Kathy to our team! We will soon be implementing a monthly departmental meeting to help keep our team on track with our goals and to expand on any concerns or ideas to make the department run smoothly as we want to make sure that our department serves the Stokes County community to the best of our ability.

Public Works/Solid Waste

Stewart Easter, Public Works Director

PUBLIC BUILDINGS

- Replaced HVAC units and control system for the Department of Social Services
- Installed and finished new floors, painting, and cabinets for the Health Department
- Mr. Danny Mabe retired after many years in Maintenance.

SOLID WASTE

- Green Box sites were remodeled at both the Pinnacle and Walnut Cove locations which has increased safety of sites and efficiency in operations.
- The Transfer Station at Sizemore Road was paved to provide easier access.
- Addition of concrete around Green Box sites
- Purchase of new Garbage Truck
- Mr. Harry France, a long-term employee, retired from the County in Solid Waste as the supervisor.
- Employee Mr. Kenny Bullins was promoted to Solid Waste Supervisor with Mr. France's retirement.

EARLY COLLEGE

- The flooring was replaced in Pod B at the Early College
- The fence surrounding the garbage container was rebuilt.
- A State inspection was performed on the water system and there were no violations found.

MORATOCK PARK

- A new guardrail was installed around the park lot areas.
- Six new picnic tables were added to the park.
- New Dan River access was opened with cooperation between Stokes County and the NCWRC

STOKES COUNTY WATER AND SEWER AUTHORITY

- Land was purchased for the use of a new water tower.
- Progress was made on water projects with easements and engineering.
- Several new customers were added to the services.
- State inspections were performed, and no violations were found.
- New excavators were purchased and are being used for water repairs.

DANBURY WATER

- Limited progress was made on a water main replacement through the engineering firm.
- Generators were added to both well locations.
- State inspections were performed, and no violations were found.

Purchasing & Project Management

Glenda Pruitt, Purchasing/Project Manager

The purchasing department has had a busy year with several departments receiving grant funding. There have been several equipment and supply purchases, as well as several renovations and relocations.

Issued PO's **614**

Tax Surplus Property Revenue **\$19,905.84**

Surplus Property Revenue **\$1,406.04**

Enterprise was able to locate replacement vehicles for Animal Control and Public Works. We continue to work on ordering possibilities for the Sheriff's fleet.

Below are the construction projects that I continue to work on and the status:

- Design Build project for the renovations on Main Street Danbury- The contractor has been awarded.
- Renovations for the Board of Elections- Colt Simmons Construction is working on renovations.
- Courthouse addition & renovations- Relocation of the helipad is taking place. Once relocated NCDOT has been contracted to complete the new parking area. Peterson/Gordon Architects are working on bid documents.
- Animal Shelter- Invitation to Bid for demolition has been posted. Public Works Director Stewart Easter and I are working with various departments that have items stored at the old prison for a plan of action for removal.

Register of Deeds

Brandon Hooker, Register of Deeds

- We began electronically filing maps. With that addition, we now accept every type of real estate document electronically, setting us up for the future. We have had 3 local surveyors sign up to take advantage of this new recording method.
- We finalized an 18-month back-indexing project with Courthouse Computer Systems, which will improve access to records from 1993 back to 1979. I am hopeful that we'll have the new index data integrated into our database soon.

- We digitized all highway project maps, which date back to the late 60's. They are one of the last set of records that were not digitized. We should have these available online soon.
- We also preserved and digitized marriage licenses from 1880-1883 and the 1884-1886 box is currently at the preservation lab. We have about 30 years of these licenses left to complete the digitization of all marriage licenses we have. Once these are complete, all marriage licenses from 1900 back to 1839 will also be preserved in new sleeves and binding...keeping them from deteriorating.
- In August, I hosted a genealogy workshop with great attendance.
- We had some personnel changes. Losing Deputy Judy Puckett and Assistant Donna Rogers. I hired Mrs. Cynthia Collins and Ms. Kim Overstreet for those two positions, respectively.

2023 Financial & Transaction Figures

Total Revenue: **\$649,299.50**

Total Transactions: **11,900**

of Land Records Indexed: **6,212**

Total Maps Recorded: **267**

Notary Oaths Administered: **154**

Certified Vital Record Copies Issued: **2,864**

Recorded Birth Certificates: **9**

Recorded Death Certificates: **410**

Marriage Licenses Issued: **256**

Military Discharges Recorded: **33**

Assumed Business Names Recorded: **321**

Electronic Filing Percentage: **76.88%**

Senior Services

Vicky East, Senior Services Director

WALNUT COVE SENIOR CENTER

- Grants Received- Senior Center General Purpose - \$10,901.00. This funding pays for programs and activities.
- Senior Center Operations (Home Community Care Block Grant Funds)- \$45,202.00. This funding pays for the salary of the county employee working here.
- Senior Center Expanded Services Grant (ARPA)- \$40,000.00. This funding pays for programs in outlying areas of the county such as Francisco, Lawsonville, Sandy Ridge, Pine Hall, and Danbury. ARPA Ends September 2024.

- Number of clients served by Walnut Cove Senior Center in 2023 → **205**.
- Walnut Cove Senior Center received their 5th Re-certification as Senior Center of Excellence on February 16, 2023.

SENIOR SERVICES

- Grants received- Home Community Care Block Grant (HCCBG)
 - Congregate Meals – \$25,867.00 – 63 clients served – 3,662 meals served.
 - Home Delivered Meals – \$199,334.00 – 208 clients served – 32,156 meals served.
 - To serve a client meal for one year the cost is approximately \$1,900.00.
 - Transportation – General – \$26,722.00 – 47 clients served – 1,167 trips.
 - Transportation – Medical – \$89,348.00 – 67 clients served – 1,014 trips.
- ARPA Grant: Congregate Meals Frozen Pick - up Program Sandy Ridge & Francisco – \$24,328.00 – 143 clients served.
- ARPA Grant – Home Delivered Meals – \$56,692.00 – 21 clients served - YTD 310 meals.
- SHIIP (Senior Health Insurance Information Program)
 - SHIIP Base Grant – \$4,333.00
 - SHIIP MIPPA (Medicare Improvements for Patients & Providers Act - Grant – \$3,178.00
- Insurance Counseling provided by our County SHIIP Coordinator during open enrollment October 14, 2023 – December 7, 2023.
- February 2023- The Area Agency on Aging Monitored Stokes Senior Services on all Services paid for by ARPA Grant and Home Community Care Block Grant. Stokes County Senior Services was compliant on all Services.
- June 2023 - Senior Services served 50 Clients with the Farmers Market Voucher Program. Each client received \$50.00 in Farmers Market Vouchers to purchase fresh produce, from local Farmers Markets.
- July-August-2023. 20 clients were served with Operation Heat Relief. Purchased 20 fans with funds provided by The Area Agency on Aging, a grant from Duke Energy Carolinas.
- Provided Legal Assistance to 36 clients from July – December 2023 through a partnership with YVEDDI.
- September 2023, Senior Services had an employee to retire after 20 years of service to Stokes County, Ms. Linda Fulscher.
- Senior Services currently has eight employees, with one job vacancy.

Sheriff's Office

Joey Lemons, Stokes County Sheriff

- Our office responded to or initiated **37,399 calls for service** from January 1, 2023- December 31, 2023.



- Our office served **1978 civil processes** issued by the courts, to include summons', Writs of Execution, and Domestic Violence Protection Orders.
- We were granted two additional Detention Officer positions by the Board of County Commissioners.
- Increased salary of Detention Officers to be in line with that of a Deputy Sheriff by budget ordinance passed by the BOCC.
- Generated **\$491,340.94** in jail revenue through housing other counties' inmates, participation in the State Misdemeanant Confinement Program, and commissions. (**Please note that this number does not fully reflect the month of December 2023 as we are still awaiting payments which should be in by the end of January 2024.)
- Collected and secured **1,193** articles of new evidence in criminal cases.
- Created and held first ever Citizens Academy.
- Created an Internet Safety Presentation for parents and children.
- Implementation of In-Car Video systems, along with internet access in all patrol vehicles.
- Replaced all service pistols for full-time personnel through a state grant.

Social Services

Stacey Elmes, DSS Director

Board Members

Jan Spencer, Chair

Darlene Bullins, Vice Chair

Greg Collins, Member

Sonya Cox, Member

Sandy Smith, Member

ADULT SERVICES

- 86 Adult Protective Services (APS) reports received.
- 40 APS reports were evaluated.
- 30 visits were made to offer services to families experiencing a need for adult social work services.
- 100% of APS reports were initiated timely.
- Court appointed guardian for 33 individuals to ensure the individual's health and safety needs were met.
- Representative Payee for 7 individuals to ensure their basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter were met.
- 6 assisted living facilities were monitored to ensure compliance with state and federal rules.
- 59 elderly and disabled adults received In-Home Aide services enabling them to remain in their own homes.

- 60 individuals received Special Assistance In-Home services to assist with advanced needs, enabling them to avoid out-of-home placement.
- 60 adults received services from the Community Alternatives Program for Disabled Adults (CAP/DA), enabling them to remain safely in their home.
- 275 families received benefits in Crisis Intervention/Emergency Assistance funds to meet a life threatening or health related heating or cooling emergency.
- 404 families received a one-time benefit in Low Income Energy Assistance (LIEAP) funds to assist in meeting heating or cooling needs.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

- 266 Child Protective Services (CPS) reports were received.
- 141 CPS reports involving 256 children were accepted for investigation or assessment.
- An average of 18 cases per month were open for Case Management services.
- 19 new children entered Foster Care.
- A total of 98 children were served in Foster Care.
- 3 new Foster Homes were licensed.
- 15 foster homes were supervised.
- Adoption Services were provided to 30 children and their biological and adoptive families.
- 6 adoptions were finalized.
- DSS Staff and affiliates stayed with 21 different children for a total of 179 days.

FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES

- \$992,230 was collected in Child Support payments for 960 children.
- Paternity was established for 30 children.
- 25 new court orders for support were established.
- An average of 148 children received monthly Childcare Subsidy payments enabling their caretakers to work outside the home.
- \$27,092 was recouped by our Program Integrity program from individuals who had received incorrect benefits.
- An average of 42 individuals received Work First Family Assistance services per month, including a monthly benefit check to participants who met program requirements.
- An average of 5,929 individuals received Food and Nutrition benefits each month.
- \$5,512,528 in Food and Nutrition benefits were issued.
- An average of 152 individuals per month received Non-Emergency Medicaid Transportation services totaling \$266,949.
- 62 individuals received assistance from the Substance Abuse/Mental Health Liaison.
- 6859 people came to the agency for services.
- 27 individuals completed Voter Registration forms.
- Gift baskets were provided to 7 newly diagnosed breast cancer patients by our staff led Breast Cancer Support Group. Each person also received a check for \$100.

- Agency Blessing Booth (a small food bank) helped individuals with \$3,500 in food products.

Soil and Water Conservation District

Janice Pack, Director



DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

The Stokes Soil & Water Conservation District administers state and federal cost share programs that provide cost assistance to landowners for the installation of best management practices (bmp's) that improve water quality and reduce erosion. We also oversee maintenance of 24 watershed structures and offer free technical assistance to landowners providing them with the knowledge and tools needed to conserve, maintain, and restore the natural resources on their property. Throughout the year we also provide conservation educational programs to schools, community organizations, and land producers to promote conservation awareness. Our staff consists of 2 full-time permanent employees. In the 2023 calendar year, our department exceeded goals by completing several large contracts and paying out over \$363,000 to contractors and landowners for successfully completing contracts that will provide water quality benefits for all of Stokes County.

COST SHARE PROGRAMS & GRANTS

In addition to receiving our annual cost share allocation to implement bmp's from the NC Division of Soil & Water Conservation and USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service in 2023, we also applied for and received several grants.

- State Cost Share Programs
 - Wrote 5 contracts obligating \$63,739 for the installation of bmp's (landowners have 3 years to install practices)
 - Paid out \$77,484 to landowners who successfully completed their contracts.
- Federal Cost Share Programs
 - Paid out \$76,652 to landowners who successfully completed contracts to install bmp's
- Grants
 - NC Streamflow Rehabilitation Assistance Program (StRAP) – *flood prevention grant*
 - Paid \$100,500 to local contractor for stream debris removal on 7 stream segments; total amount of debris removed – 3,767 cubic yards
 - Little Snow Creek Stream Renovation Project – *water quality grant obtained to repair in-stream practices of former restoration project destroyed by flooding in 2019/20*

- Paid contractor \$108,978 to repair in-stream practices
- TOTAL PAID OUT THROUGH DEPT. IN 2023 CALENDAR YEAR - \$363,614

CONSERVATION PLANNING & STAFF DEVELOPMENT

- Completed 24 conservation plans identifying landowners' conservation objectives and assessing the natural resource issues on their property.
- Conducted 112 site visits at the request of landowners.
- Leased seed drill out to Stokes Co. citizens to reseed and establish 234.6 acres of hayland, pastureland, and wildlife plantings.
- Attended 10 training courses offered by the NC Association of Soil & Water Conservation and the NC Division of Soil & Water Conservation in an effort to become more proficient in our duties and provide better service to citizens.

WATERSHED MAINTENANCE

- Staff routinely inspects all 24 watershed structures multiple times throughout the year, especially after major rain events. Official annual inspection occurred on October 18, 2023, with Stokes Soil & Water staff & board members, NC Division of Soil & Water staff, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service staff, and Stokes Co. Manager, all participating. Toe-drain pipes were cleaned out, risers were checked for debris, and the front, top and backside of dams were checked closely for any eroded areas, leaks or scouring holes. The following watershed maintenance was completed in 2023:
 - Reseeded front side of dam and emergency spillway at LY-6 watershed – 3/15/23
 - Cut trees from dam abutment area on TFC-13 watershed – 4/13/23
 - Spread lime on all 24 watershed dams and emergency spillways – 4/25/23
 - Mowed all 24 watersheds – 5/2023 & 9/2023

EDUCATION & OUTREACH

- Reached 1,404 students/citizens through conservation educational programs.
- Office newsletter distributed to 2,300 citizens in March 2023 and September 2023
- Displayed fair-booth at Stokes County fair in September 2023 highlighting conservation programs

Tax Department

Richard Brim, Tax Administrator

The Stokes County Tax Office is pleased to report a successful year for 2023. The Tax Office was able to operate at a high level of efficiency and fulfill taxpayers' needs in a timely manner, while promoting a taxpayer friendly environment with an emphasis on customer service and public relations.

The total annual 2023 property assessed tax valuation was approximately 4.98 billion dollars. The total valuation is composed of four different categories: Real Property, Personal Property (Business and Individual), Motor Vehicles and Public Utilities. The following chart illustrates the allocation breakdown by property type for the County:

County (General County, School Operating Expense and Education Debt/Building Fund)		
Property Type	Valuation	% of Valuation
Real Property	\$3,325,813,562	66.73%
Personal Property	\$241,077,218	4.84%
Motor Vehicles	\$521,360,073	10.46%
Public Utilities	\$895,396,690	17.97%
Total	\$4,983,647,543	100%

The chart below provides **total deferments and exemptions for 2023:**

Deferment/Exemption Type	Valuation
Land Deferred (Present Use Value Program)	\$397,848,300
Tax Relief (Elderly/Disabled and Disabled Veteran)	\$53,502,449
Exempt (Government, Religious, Etc.)	\$271,952,754
Total	\$723,303,503

The chart below indicates the **total number for each category** for Stokes County.

Tax District	Real Property Parcels	Personal Property (Business and Individual)	Motor Vehicles	Public Utilities
County, School Operating Expense, Education Debt/Building Fund	30,971	9,817	55,031	35

RECAP OF 2023

Appraisal/Revaluation (Real Property)
New construction continues to remain strong. Based on preliminary estimations Stokes County has added approximately \$65,000,000 in new construction property valuation during 2023. Appraisers should complete new construction data entry by Mid-February.
Appraisers have been conducting field reviews on all improved qualified sales in preparation for the 2025 Reappraisal.

Discovery and Garnishment				
Type	Audit Date	Number of Accounts	Total Value	Amount Due
Personal Property Discoveries	2023	245	\$2,726,605	\$32,295.52
Type	Date	Number of Accounts	Original Levy Amount	Collected Amount
Garnishments	2023	777	\$411,494.35	\$206,889.62

EMS Billing and Collections January - December 2023			
Transports Billed	Total Charges	Total Paid (Current and Prior)	Non-Billable
5256	\$3,736,056.70	\$2,618,845.02	\$751,927.69

GIS/Mapping/Land Records
Processed 1842 Deed Transfers
Created 256 new parcels
Creation of Dan River Mile Marker Layer
Created an Accommodation Layer

CONCERNS

The Tax Office is very fortunate to have such a great group of trained employees. One of the reasons is due to experience. I reported to the Board early last year that the median number of years worked in the Tax Office was 24. Since that report, we had a Real Property Appraiser retire with 30 years of experience. On April 30th of this year our Business Personal Property Appraiser is scheduled to retire with 23 years of service. Also, we have nine (9) employees that are currently eligible for retirement or will be within three (3) years. Experience is not something that can be replaced overnight. Currently, we are long range planning for the office. While we place an emphasis on cross-training within each unit of the Tax Office (Administration, Appraisal/Revaluation, Assessment/Listing, Collections (Tax and EMS), GIS/Mapping/Land Records), it is difficult to cross-train between units for multiple reasons. We will continue to evaluate employee performance; and, hopefully, a system can be implemented to reward employees who go the extra mile.

The Tax Office is looking forward to another great year in 2024. We will continue to place an emphasis on customer service and serving taxpayers to the best of our ability.

Vehicle Maintenance

Danny Triplett, Vehicle Maintenance Supervisor

Vehicle maintenance continues to stay busy with the current fleet. Ambulances are a challenge to keep them going due to the issue of not being able to receive new ones that have been ordered. In August, we hired a new mechanic, James Cook. He is doing a great job so far and we look forward to what he will accomplish in the upcoming year.

The brake lathe has been installed and is functioning properly.

Completed **706** work orders in 2023.

Veterans Services

Larry Hunsucker, Veteran Service Officer

“Serving Those Who Served”

2023 was a watershed year with the number of Veteran contacts sharply increasing. This increase was largely due to the passage of the PACT ACT by Congress and signed into law by the President on Aug. 10, 2022. This law expanded presumptive benefits for

veterans who were on active duty from the Vietnam War Era to the most current veterans that are presently leaving active duty. The VA has reported a 75% increase in both disability claims and health benefit claims nationwide, and this number would likely be true for Stokes County as well. A review of the number of claims that were filed is documented in my PC under documents and submissions to the VA. I also keep a daily log on a blue line pad to record all phone calls. Most of the contacts were face-to-face appointments with the veteran or a surviving spouse.

Another aspect of the PACT ACT was the re-opening of previously denied claims which has resulted in a significant increase in appeals for veteran disability benefits as well as benefits for surviving spouses. Appeals are time consuming and require working with claimant to get needed medical records and in some cases statements from physician. In addition, review of governing regulations contained in USC 38 and CFR 38 is necessary in order to ensure that these appeals meet legal standards.

The aging Vietnam Era veterans are filing more claims linked to agent orange and other toxic exposures that result in the onset of cancers, heart disease and other conditions.

2023 was also notable for the number of veterans who have moved into Stokes County, many from out of state. While many had already been awarded 100% permanent and total compensation, they came into my office to get the forms filled out for the property tax exclusion form (NCDVA-9), the MVR-33A form to get DV (disabled veteran) NC license plates or other special plates, as well as form for lifetime hunting and fishing license. Many also wanted to change their VA representation to NCDMVA so that I would be able to access their VA claims file in the event that they might need to file additional claims. 100% permanent and total is not the final top rating, many may develop additional disabilities that would allow them to file for Special Monthly Compensation (SMC) additives above the 100% level.

To maintain my accreditation, I also had to find time to do online courses, annual training conference or regional training to get the required 16 hours of CEU's.

2023 was a year of incredible growth, resulting in claims that were successful which brought large sums of money into the County. It is likely this volume will continue into 2024 and many years thereafter.