

*This is a statement I read to the County Commissioners on 2-19-07 regarding rescinding a resolution on annexation approved by the previous board in May.*

Mr. Chairman, Commissioners:

My Name is Chris Smithson. I live at 920 North Saylor St. in Southern Pines.

Last May, the Board voted in favor of a resolution which stated the County was opposed to the legal right of municipalities to annex areas under certain conditions.

I think we all know this is mainly about Pinewild, a community in Pinehurst, but not IN Pinehurst.

There are around 70,000 people in the county who DON'T live in Pinewild or Pinehurst. Among those are people living in communities like Jackson Hamlet, Midway, and Waynor Rd. These are communities abutting municipalities and communities who need, sometimes desperately need, public services such as water, sewer, trash pickup, and better police protection.

The previous resolution, stated among other things, "...it no longer seems necessary for municipalities to undertake involuntary annexation in order to provide local public services." If this is true, why is the County not providing these and other basic, life-enhancing and sustaining services to these areas? I know my business has been located just outside Southern Pines for 45 years and the County still hasn't run a water line up to my property. The County should not attempt to keep municipalities from serving these communities without any plans for the County itself to provide the municipal-level services these people need.

I'm sure you'll hear from some others tonight who don't agree with me. They'll likely have interests in Pinewild and start talking about a case involving a little town called Marvin and how they think it is exactly the same situation as Pinewild. If they had their way, NC annexation laws would be scrapped. If they had their way, they'd avoid Pinehurst taxes but also deny the best chance other, less well-to-do communities have of ever getting much-needed municipal services.

I ask that you not only think about what Pinewild has to say, you think about residents in other ETJ areas who have failing septic systems, contaminated wells, and other problems not being addressed by the County. These are areas the municipalities can help, but not if the long-standing annexation law in North Carolina is shackled by those who are thinking only about themselves.

Let's not let Pinewild vs. Pinehurst affect the rest of the County any more than it needs to. Let's keep open every opportunity there is for providing badly-needed services to underserved areas.

I urge you to rescind the previous resolution and show your support for those communities who need help more than anyone else- certainly more in need than those who live behind fences and guardhouses.