



HAYWOOD COUNTY TAX COLLECTIONS

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MIKE MATTHEWS
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To the Citizens of Haywood County

RE: The Haywood County Tax Office

Much has been said regarding the Haywood County Tax Office- most of it untrue. I would like the opportunity to present the facts. The figures presented below can be verified by the Haywood County Tax Office, Finance Office, or Manager's Office.

Prior to my election, the Office of Tax Collection depended on heavy handed tactics to collect taxes. I prefer to communicate and work with residents, making every effort to collect the taxes due through payment plans, letters, voluntary garnishments from payroll checks, automatic deductions from bank accounts, etc. Extreme measures, such as attachments, garnishments, levies, and foreclosures are used when all other measures fail. Having expressed these preferences in collection measures, I would like to present the collection numbers.

During my two years in office, the average total property tax collected for both years averaged more than **97%**! This tax collection rate is better than my predecessor's rates. The total delinquent tax balance has been significantly reduced to the lowest it has ever been since 2009. This has been accomplished with a reduced and relatively new staff.

In comparing the current year-to-date collection rate through October 31, 2016, the office is pacing well above any previous year's year-to-date figure since 2008 and on track to doing even better than the record high collection rate for the 2015 and 2014 tax years. (The 2008 tax year statistics are the last figures available to me.)

The only percentage that is down since I took office is forced collections. I am proud of that achievement. I am criticized by some of the Haywood County Commissioners and in the Mountaineer for not having a higher forced collection percentage. Working with the people of Haywood County to pay their tax bills produces better results than taking what is owed through the strong-arm tactics of attachments, garnishments, levies, and foreclosures. I am not opposed to these tactics when other measures fail. I am opposed to using these methods before other options are exhausted.

I want to thank the people of Haywood County for the opportunity to serve them in the Office of Tax Collector. And, I want to thank my staff, who serve the people of Haywood County with professionalism and integrity.

I welcome any questions or concerns the citizens of Haywood County may have.

Mike Matthews
Tax Collector