

Regional cooperation: *One county looks west, the other east*

by B.J. Weatherby

As our communities grow together and as issues become more complex, there has been a need for quasi-governmental bodies to tackle important problems that concern several governments, like water supply, airport management, and regional transportation. To respond to these needs, authorities have been created through legislation, usually at the state level but sometimes at the county level.

Readers are probably most familiar with the Piedmont Triad International Airport Authority. Another authority of importance is PART—the Piedmont area Regional Transportation authority. Yet another is the Piedmont Triad Regional Water Authority (PTRWA). This authority is involved with the construction of the Randleman reservoir.

In future issues, we will look at some specific authorities. For now, we note that all authorities must have some kind of enabling legislation.

It is also worth noting that the persons governing and administering these authorities are *not* elected by voters. Rather board members are appointed, often representing each of the authority's participating governmental units and/or municipalities, but some are community leaders and corporate executives.

For example, the PTI airport Authority has seven members, one each from Greensboro, High Point, Winston-Salem, and Forsyth County and three who are appointed by the Guilford Board of Commissioners (*Greensboro News & Record*, 1/26/03, E1).

When authorities are created, allowed methods of funding are included in the legislation. Usually authorities can issue tax-exempt bonds, and taxes can be levied as well. For instance, Greensboro water bills include a fee that goes to PTRWA to help pay for the Randleman Dam.

Forsyth County tends to look west and tackle regional issues with Davie, Stokes, Surry, and Yadkin counties, while Guilford County often looks east and partners with Alamance, Caswell, Rockingham, Randolph, Davidson, and Chatham counties. Both Forsyth and Guilford *are* part of the PTI Airport authority and PART. But Forsyth, in the Yadkin River Basin is not part of the PTRWA. Finally, Forsyth is not part of the Piedmont Triad Council of Government—PTCOG (called PT “cog”) a voluntary association of local governments to make and implement joint regional decisions.

More later! □
