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April 5, 2023

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ETSU Graduate Students Experience Government in Action at Washington County Commission Meetings

(Jonesborough, Tenn.) — Several ETSU graduate students in mental health professions as well as some of their faculty mentors attended both the Washington County Commission’s March committee meetings and the monthly, full commission meeting March 27.

“As future mental health professionals I invited them to see how local government impacts the health and welfare of our communities,” said Washington County Commissioner Jodi Jones who instructs the students at ETSU in her role as Director, Institute for Integrated Behavioral Health. “Students prepared for the meetings with readings on democracy and government.”

Observing Washington County Commission committees in action proved enlightening to the students. “It was an opportunity to see the inner workings of government including the complexities of economic development,” said Kim Crowder, a Masters in Social Work (MSW) 2 intern. “It was interesting to hear the importance of keeping young people here in our region,” she said after observing a Chamber of Commerce presentation to the Commerce, Industry & Agriculture Committee. After attending the full commission meeting Crowder observed, “the brevity was a byproduct of all of the work that preceded it.”

The students commented on the feeling of goodwill among commissioners. “Going to committee meetings you see the discussions,” said faculty member, Mina McVeigh. “That helped to understand the full commission. I liked the civility. People can make sound decisions without trying for 15 minutes of fame,” she said.

“As a social worker I want to be involved in policy advocacy that affects our clients,” said Brooke Jones, an MSW2 student who works in family restoration.

Morgan Treaster, a faculty psychologist who is active with local Girl Scouts and the Elizabethton Main Street program, said she believes mental health professionals should take part in activities that support resiliency in their communities. She said studying local government is a great start.

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Photo Captions:

ETSU masters in social work graduate students and mentors pose with Washington County Commissioners prior to the March 27 commission meeting.

Washington County Commissioner Jodi Jones listens to student comments in between committee meetings. As their professor and a commissioner, Jones invited them to learn about local government.