



The NHC GOP Podcast

Episode 3:19 **Dane Scalise – Your County Commissioner**

Introduction and Campaign Update

Dane Scalise: I promise you, is the approach that I take to doing this work is I don't care what anyone else says, what anyone else does. The other four. It's I only am responsible for what comes out of my mouth and what I advocate for. We are absolutely the battlefield of the battlefield, and you don't get to just waltz on in because you know that you've got a whole majority of the people in your community that think, just like you. Her 24 year old daughter, Sophia, was at a friend's house and she was not a drug addict. She took a sip of water from a water bottle and somebody had put fentanyl in it, and she died. I think that these battles, these fights, the sleepless nights, the stress that I feel I am doing it because I love this community.

Reuel Sample: Welcome to the NHC GOP Podcast I'm Reuel Sample. My most important question of the night Dane. Who had more takes you or the dog?

Dane Scalise: Oh my goodness. Uh. Definitely me. There is no question that the dog is a better actor than I am. Well, it turns out that I'm just. I'm too darn sincere. I'm too honest, Reuel. And I'm not. I'm not cut out to be an actor. Uh.

Reuel Sample: You are cut out to be a county commissioner. I'm talking to Dane Scalise, the Republican candidate, or one of three Republican candidates for New Hanover County commissioner. Dane, welcome to the podcast.

Dane Scalise: I'm so glad to be here. Good to be with you, sir. Hope you're doing well.

Reuel Sample: I'm doing just great. I want to start off by talking about your campaign. How's it going out there? And how are you feeling? What? What are people talking to you about?

Dane Scalise: I am feeling great about the state of the campaign. We're inside of 90 days. And the enthusiasm that we're hearing from the community, the support that I'm getting in forms of text messages, phone calls, emails, give me an indication that we're on the right track, that we're fighting for the people on the issues that matter most to them. And it's New Hanover County, so gosh, you don't know what's going to happen. We're always going to be a scrappy dog fight to the end. And that's okay. I'm up for a scrappy dog fight, and I'm excited to see me and a bunch of other Republicans do well in November, and I think we're on track to do that right now.

Reuel Sample: We're going to get into some issues, but what are the things that people are talking to you about? Because you you are everywhere. I see you on podcasts. I see you out in the community. You've got your own business to run, you've got the county commission that you're at. What are people talking to you about?

Flooding and Infrastructure Challenges

Dane Scalise: Well, right now people are talking a little bit, as you might imagine, about the potential danger that we faced in connection with the tropical storm that just came through, as well as some of the impacts that, thankfully, could have been a whole heck of a lot worse still, did leave some some problems for folks to deal with. We've got up in the Porters Neck Ogden area, as well as in Kure Beach, some flooding that's occurred and it makes ingress and egress difficult, and we've got to figure out why that happened. Is it merely because we had so much rain over a period of just a couple of days? Or is it because our storm systems didn't act in the way that they were supposed to? I, upon learning about some of these items, immediately had county staff go out to various locations across New Hanover County and conduct evaluations to determine was there anything about our systems that didn't work the way that they were supposed

to? As best as we can tell, preliminarily, no, they work the way that they were supposed to. We just had a lot of rain, a whole lot of rain.

Reuel Sample: We had a lot of rain, Thankfully, I was able to stay home for those few days. But I got to tell you, the people who took care of everything from the fire to the police to the utility workers, they did a yeoman's job these last this last week.

Dane Scalise: You really can't say thank you to those folks who are on the front line enough. They're really out there in some of the most dangerous conditions that you can imagine, keeping the rest of us safe. We're very fortunate to have those people in our community as dedicated as they are, including a bunch of the staff people at New Hanover County, that as soon as they determined that there were some people that were in need, they got out to do the work that they could do to help mitigate against some of these flooding concerns that people had to determine whether or not there was anything that could be done to improve conditions overall. Again, I think we fared pretty well. There were some places inland that did not do nearly as well as we did. But I will note, as you know, Reuel, we're not through the season yet, so we've got to remain hyper vigilant through the end of the hurricane season to make sure that if there is something else that comes, we respond to it correctly. We prepare for it correctly. But at the same time, let's not get worked up. We we chose to live off the coast.

Careful Building and Development in the Community

Dane Scalise: This is always going to be one of the things that you're going to have to contend with some years worse than others, but we're in it together. We'll get through this thing together. So that's a that's a pretty big issue that I'm hearing from folks about. I'd say that another issue that we're hearing about pretty regularly just relates to making sure that we're being very careful about the how and where and why of building that we're doing in this community. Obviously, people recognize that this is a highly sought after location across the United States per capita. It's one of the most inbound cities in the United States, and that's a reflection of us being a good place. But at the same time, we're a very small county, the second smallest geographic county in North Carolina. And as a consequence, we have to be careful about where we're doing all of our building and developing to make sure that that's keeping pace with the people that are

here in New Hanover County right now. So that's something that I think is pretty top of mind for people, and it's something that I'm working very hard to be sensitive on.

Reuel Sample: Going back very quickly to the flooding that we just had. Is that one of the things that I've talked with others about is that New Hanover County has worked very, very hard to have a budget surplus in hand for these just these kind of emergencies as we go into New Hanover County, and you've been directly responsible for that. You all have managed funds without raising taxes in an amazing way that the city of Wilmington, they're raising taxes and reducing services. So how are you? How are you folks managing to do all of that?

Managing the County Budget and Inflation

Dane Scalise: Well, Reuel you have to prioritize core services, and you have to sometimes say maybe frequently say that's a want and not a need. So in our budget cycle, one of the things that was non-negotiable for me was maintaining that surplus money that you're talking about, our revenue stabilization fund that we have so that if and when something happens and we need to deploy serious capital in a big way, we need it to be there when we need it to be there. And we can't have that be the case if we're just going to look at it as a slush fund, that every time that we have a programmatic need, that we don't have enough money for, that we're just going to dip into those funds to pay for that many more services that many more positions in county government if there isn't a clear ROI. My view was that it didn't need to be included in the county budget, and so there were quite a few cuts that we made to the county budget in order to keep ourselves within the line. And I said this numerous times, I'll say it again right here.

Dane Scalise: Why should we be any different at the county than all the households in New Hanover County? There are plenty of people who have to do belt tightening. They're not able to afford all the things that they want. Inflation is out of control. Prices are out of control. And as a consequence, that means your dollar doesn't go as far as it used to. And you have to make decisions about what you're going to prioritize in your household spending. So if you have to do that, and I do have to do that in my family, I'm sure you have to do that in your family. The government must do that also. And that's the approach that I took to the budget season. And it's why I feel like we are in a good

position that if something happens when something happens, and I of course pray that we don't see anything this year, but if it does, we'll be ready. We'll have the funds to address whatever comes up, because we're protecting those funds zealously.

Reuel Sample: And you do all that without raising taxes, which is just absolutely amazing, is that you are good managers of of the money that you have to take in order for good governing. Taxes are all about good governing, but it's all about good management. Are there challenges in the budget ahead for your for the next, for the next four years that you're looking at?

Dane Scalise: I think that there will be I think that the inflationary challenge is going to remain a very serious one. I believe in spending on infrastructure, for instance, in getting clean water out to every part of the community that we can, getting as many people hooked up to CFPWA as we can so that they have access to PFAS, free water, clean water. Right. But that costs money. And I'll just give you a quick example rule that we had a quote from 2022 to build a rather substantial amount of infrastructure for pipes, sewer, etc. in the county. And that quote came in at, let's say I think it was about \$22 million. A lot of money, but this is expensive stuff. A couple of years later, we were unfortunately surprised to find out that that number, just because of all those inflationary items that we're concerned about, had risen to over \$35 million. So the same work over two years because of the out of control inflation that we're experiencing in New Hanover County in the United States has become that much more difficult. So unless we get a handle on these inflationary runaway items, we're going to keep seeing cost increases at the county government. And there will be a point where if we don't get it under control, we're going to have a hard time paying for everything, even keeping taxes at the rate that we're at.

Dane Scalise: And I'm I'm not a tax increase guy. I'm not Reuel you're not going to hear me advocate for that. You're probably never going to see me vote for that. It's hard for me to imagine ever supporting a tax increase, but if we don't get this inflation under control, that's what we're going to have to look at unless we start making all kinds of serious cuts. And I'm talking cuts to the core services that people expect. As a for instance, one of the things that people talked a lot about this last budget cycle related to the school board and the money that the school board needed in order to fund their operations. Well, some of what happened there was really a consequence of some very

bad decision making in 2022, whenever a prior school board was in charge, they said, we're going to take temporary federal dollars, money that won't be recurring, and we're going to create permanent positions with it. And so what? We don't know where that money's going to come from. Later on. We'll let those people in the future deal with it. Right. Well, we're those people in the future and ultimately the current school board and the current county commission, the ones who voted in the majority, the Republicans said, we're not going to allow this to continue.

Dane Scalise: We're going to get a handle on this reckless decision making that was made previously. And it may appear to be painful in the short term, but it's actually the right thing to do. Turns out, really and truly, we were fine. There were a bunch of padded positions. They were sort of administered. The prior administration was, I think, padding things out rather considerably. And I want to point out that this gets lost in the mix. We provided record. The Republican County Commission provided record funding to the school board this year. They've never received more money than they received from the Republican county commissioners. This year, we broke all the records in terms of school funding. Yet at the same time, you've got people that say otherwise, but we believe in funding the schools totally. But we also believe we're not going to just give you a blank check whenever you've made some bad decisions in the past, and they need to be fixed. That's one of the most important roles that we have, and it will be a challenge into the future as well. We've got to make sure that we stay on top of that.

Reuel Sample: I think you've made a really good distinction there, because if you look at your opponents, if you go to the Democrat side, they're they're saying the same things in general that you are. They're talking they're worried about infrastructure, they talk about services and everything else. But there is a fundamental difference between how Democrats go about doing things and how Republicans go about doing things. Is that the Democrats will raise taxes no matter what's going on, is that they will fund useless programs no matter how hard people are. You take a different approach.

Dane Scalise: Yeah. Well, I'm I'm proud to take that approach, and I'm proud to put that record up against anybody. I think if the public, irrespective of Republican, Democrat, unaffiliated, most people, most people think we're going to see that consequence. Uh, the result of that, what I'm talking about in November, most people want government to

do better and to be more frugal and to be more prudent with the way that it spends its money. Everybody wants everything, I get it, but how do we pay for it? Reuel that's that's always going to be the challenge. That's why you need people like me on the county commission, because I don't just say, all right, fine, whatever you want. And it's easy because I don't really want to fight with you. I'd rather just give you whatever you want. No, I'm looking at it in the same way that I look at my household budget. I'm looking at it in the same way that I look at my business budget. I'm looking at it in the same way. There are a lot of different companies that I represent and help whenever I'm helping them. Part of what we're going through is we're saying money and money out. How do you how do you justify these various expenses? How do you well, you can only do it if you're taking in more than you're spending. And if you're spending more than you're taking in, that's not a sustainable course. This is just common sense. But you got to apply common sense to local government. So important.

Addressing the Opioid Crisis

Reuel Sample: You just had a sit down with David Rouzer and other elected officials and to to talk about a nationwide crisis that hits us hard here in New Hanover County as well. Yes. And that is opioids, fentanyl, illegal drugs pouring in through many avenues. What was that discussion like?

Dane Scalise: Very important discussion. Um, one that we really can't get serious fast enough over Reuel. So the meeting was convened by Senator Thom Tillis and a number of individuals attended, including chair of the New Hanover County Commission Bill Rivenbark. Congressman David Rouzer, as you already mentioned, myself, City Councilman Luke Waddell, and then a number of individuals from Law and Fire who basically wanted to share their perspective on how we got to this place as best as we can tell and what we can do to get better about it. One person that was there that was also really very significant was a woman named Barb Walsh, who is the director of the Fentanyl Victims Network. She has the most tragic story rule. Her 24 year old daughter, Sophia, was at a friend's house and she was not a drug addict. She took a sip of water from a water bottle and somebody had put fentanyl in it, and she died. It was absolutely tragic. And now she is devoting her time to making people aware of how serious this issue is, how profound it is to our communities, not just New Hanover, but across the United States. And, you know, letting them know about things like this right here. This is

naloxone. It's basically an aerosol spray that you can put into someone's nose and help save them if they're going into some sort of tragic state related to opioids. The law enforcement is carrying this. They're putting this into various places in schools.

Dane Scalise: And this is the sort of stuff that if people are educated about. And it was one of the things that we talked about in this meeting, actually is trying to get. Do you remember those? Um, this is your brain. This is your brain on drugs ads from the 1980s. There's an egg. And, you know, they cracked it into the pan. But what are we doing enough to educate people on this issue? That is this is an incredible statistic. But do you know that more people in North Carolina die from overdoses than die in car crashes every year. I mean, we've got so many people that are dying in North Carolina because of this scourge, this illegal drug that's coming, basically. And here's the flow of the sequence. You've got a bunch of material that is being formulated in China. They're shipping it sort of uncombined unmanufactured to Mexico. You've got Mexican drug cartels that are creating fentanyl, and then they're moving it across our border, our unprotected border, and they're taking it out throughout the United States, and they're selling it directly as fentanyl. They're mixing it in with various other drugs heroin, cocaine. They're spraying it on marijuana. They're doing all of these horrible things because the potency of the drug that people are getting enhances, and they don't care that the result of this is that there are people that are dying because they're just selling this product, and they're selling it like hotcakes. And one of the things that we talked about was, how do we stop this?

Dane Scalise: How do we stop the Chinese from shipping the fentanyl precursors? How do we stop the cartels from manufacturing it? How do we stop it from getting across the border? And then once it's here, how do we help the people who are unfortunately in the throes of drug addiction? Because I think we do need to differentiate between those things. We need to have compassion for the people who find themselves in drug addiction. And I'm not saying that they get no consequence, but we need to have a different approach with the way that we go to people who are addicted to drugs versus people who are distributing and dealing these drugs. And in my estimation, and this is one of the things that I said during our roundtable, we have got to enhance the criminal penalties for these dealers and these distributors so that whenever they're caught, they're you, buddy, you're going away. You're going away for a long time. Senator Tillis called this a weapon of war, and it really is. It's a it's a weapon of war. It's

a it's a weapon of mass destruction that's impacting our community in such a huge way. Councilman Luke Waddell pointed out that I believe we're three times the national average of overdoses in New Hanover County. So that's not a good that's not a good statistic to have. That's a very bad one. We got to take this seriously.

Stronger Penalties for Drug Dealers

Reuel Sample: And this is a multi-layered problem. And some of them we can handle here in New Hanover County. Some of them we can't. It's that we can't really do much about the border, except for voting for Republicans who will close that border. Uh, we we can't do much at the state level other than vote for Republicans who will pass tough, tough bills. But what we can do here in New Hanover County is we can empower our police and we can empower our DA. We have a wonderful, wonderful DA running who is just just nominated to that position Uh, Jason Simmons. Uh, Jason Smith.

Dane Scalise: There's another Jason Simmons, and he's, uh, I think the director of the North Carolina GOP.

Reuel Sample: That's right. He is sir. Jason Smith. Sorry, Jason. We'll get you on the podcast soon. But Jason Smith, uh, is running. We've got, uh, we've got, uh, Dan Bishop who is running for DA at the state level.

Dane Scalise: That's right. Our attorney general.

Reuel Sample: And we are, we are we are facing an uphill battle against Democrats who they on the on the surface, they they give lip service to fighting drugs. But in reality, these same Democrats will let these drug dealers out with a with with a slap on the wrist and tell them not to do it again.

Dane Scalise: Reuel, I just want to reemphasize these points that you made in the terms of the words of the law enforcement individuals who are in the room at that roundtable discussion. One of the most frustrating pieces for them is they said, we're making these arrests. And then somehow or another, the legal process is letting us down, and we're not able to prosecute these people in the way that we should be able to, or we're not getting the support that we need, because people are not taking it as

seriously as they ought to. If you think about just a little small container of fentanyl, I think that there was basically the equivalent of, I don't know what's what's left in this glass right here. And essentially that amount of fentanyl in granular form could kill every person in New Hanover County. Think about that. Think about how serious that is. And and we're just being casual in the way that we're approaching the people who are distributing or dealing in connection with this. And the people that are dying know we've got to we've got to change the way that we're doing this. We we have to also to your point, and I think it's a really well-made one, we've got to see that this is something that trends from the bottom all the way up to the top. We need good support at the federal level, and then we need it at the state level.

The Importance of Local Government and Elections

Dane Scalise: And then we need to work in Congress with them at the local level. But because local issues are most direct, we're seeing it. And this this is actually a really important point. I want to make a quick aside rule. You see a huge drop off in people who are on the ballot and they're voting for the president, they're voting for the governor. And then you get down to the district attorney, the the county commissioners, the register of deeds, the school board. And it's like 10 to 15% of people that aren't completing their ballot. And we're leaving all those votes on the table. These are people that would support our policies, and they're not finishing their ballots. One of the education pieces that we need to be engaging in is we need to be reminding people, while it's very visible, what's happening at the federal level, because you see that on TV and X and all these various places, more than anything else. The people who are really and truly, most directly impacting your life are the people who live alongside you, and you elect to be your local representatives. It's the Michael Lee's of the world. It's the Dane Scalise's of the world. These are the individuals that ultimately are there making policy that most directly impacts you. You better complete that ballot, please. You've got to.

Reuel Sample: Your fellow candidate for County Commissioner John Hinnsny suggested. Start on the back. You already know who you're going to vote.

Dane Scalise: That's a great suggestion. It's such a good idea. It's such a good idea.

Reuel Sample: Folks, there's no question about it. We have one heck of a long ballot. There's a lot of people that were voting for this time around. Uh, you know, local politics are the folks that affect you the most. Turn that ballot over, start at the back. You know who you're going to vote in front or vote for on the front. So as you wrestle with these issues, Dane, how are you going to fix them here in New Hanover County. What are you looking at? You're you're certainly going to make sure that the police departments are funded properly. And the other law enforcement issues are departments are funded. What else needs to be done?

Investing in Schools and Existing Infrastructure

Dane Scalise: Well, we've got to just stay laser focused on the infrastructure item, including the clean water piece. I'm going to continue to work to hold the polluters accountable. I think we talked about this a little bit the last time that we were together, but there were a number of people, including Chemours the river in Fayetteville, who polluted the Cape Fear River for years. And we're suing them. We're suing 3M. We're suing a bunch of people. And it's my view that a lot of these infrastructure costs that we're going to have to bear, ultimately should be the responsibility of these bad actors. So we're going to stay really aggressive on pursuing litigation against the bad actors who put us into the position where we're needing all this infrastructure, but we're going to have to get that infrastructure done one way or the other, and then stay the course on the litigation to hopefully get reimbursed. And I think we will. I think the odds are very much in our favor because they did wrong. They're going to have to settle the case or lose big in a jury verdict. And I think that we're ultimately going to end up seeing some money come back our way in connection with that. As you already pointed out, I will never, never, never, never allow anybody to stop us from fully funding law enforcement. There are talks all the time about how this is really not the best use of our resources. We ought to explore these experimental concepts like Port City United, and hire gang members so that we can allow them to interrupt violence.

Dane Scalise: No, the tried and true, the tested methods where we go to law enforcement and we hold them accountable. Definitely. They're not going to just be able to do whatever they want to do, but these are the people that keep us safe, and they're going to continue to keep us safe under my watch. We also have got to make sure that we continue to look out for our school system. I, as I already mentioned, was proud to

support the largest budget ever for the school here in New Hanover County, and we got to make sure that they get the resources that they need, including as a for instance, we need to make sure that schools like New Hanover High School, beautiful school, one of the gems of our community. It has fallen into disrepair. They've got bricks falling off of the facade, and it has been neglected for a long time because everybody just kind of kept passing the buck. Nobody wants to deal with this. Well, I'd rather, if possible, repair a beautiful old building and get it working the way that it's supposed to, rather than go build a multi hundred million dollar new building. And I think that that's the more prudent option obviously. But it also is something that is adaptive reuse. It's recycling. It's all the right things that we should be doing with existing infrastructure. Here's the other point about New Hanover that's really important.

Dane Scalise: We talk about school overcrowding. And there is some of that. That's true. But New Hanover High School is only at 80% capacity. There's a lot of shifting that could occur. And people, I think, would want to voluntarily go to New Hanover if it was in better shape. So it's one of the ways that I think that we can address some of the, the, the crowding issues that we're experiencing in our schools. But it's only going to happen if we take a deliberate approach to the way that we do this. It's no different from everything else that we've been talking about. The last thing that I'm going to do is support a blank check with no plan. What I keep saying to everybody is if we need to make improvements to our school infrastructure, then we need a comprehensive plan. We need to know what we need exactly and how much it's going to cost, so that we can then talk about how it's going to get paid for. And until we do that, I don't think people are taking this issue as seriously as they claim that they are, because it's not a plan to just say, write a check and then let's see what happens. We actually have done that in the past. We wrote the schools a very large check to do a bunch of work, and they didn't use very much of that money, if any of it. Uh, and it was just sort of sitting around earmarked, could have been used for something else, could have, you know, gone this way, gone that way.

Dane Scalise: It's no one's fault. But there wasn't a plan. I'm not blaming anybody in particular, other than perhaps the folks who decided that they were just going to write a blank check before. So I'd like to avoid doing that moving forward. And quite frankly, I'll just say that one of the things that we need is a steady hand. We need ideally three steady hands. But what I can promise you is the approach that I take to doing this work

is I don't care what anyone else says, what anyone else does, the other four, it's I only am responsible for what comes out of my mouth and what I advocate for. And I'm going to continue to advocate for the things that make sense for people in New Hanover County. And I'm going to make sense. I'm going to make the most sense, I think, because ultimately, whenever you think these things through you, you don't have to say to yourself that I'm doing this because of some partisan reason, because I'm a Republican. I'm, as you know, a very proud Republican. I do things because they make sense for our community. Yes. That's why I think I'm getting a lot of unaffiliated support and a lot of support from Democrats, because I'm saying things that make sense to people in the the kitchen table sense. That's what county commissioners should be talking about, kitchen table issues. And that's what I try to keep my campaign focused on.

The Western Bank: Preserving Green Spaces and Addressing Flooding

Reuel Sample: One of the proverbs of Harry Knight, who is our executive director, he constantly tells Republicans in general, candidates and elected officials, be the adult in the room. And you have been you have been the adult in the room, and you will continue to be as we talk about the the infrastructure and we also talk about development. One of the things that came up just recently is talks about the Western Bank. Yes. New Hanover County is one of the, as you said, is the second smallest county in New Hanover in North Carolina. It's one of the most populous, though I would I would suggest. Top ten.

Dane Scalise: Yeah.

Reuel Sample: So every square inch of our county would seem to count. But the western bank has always been sort of one of those weird areas of our county.

Dane Scalise: Well, I'm going to just repeat back to you a little bit of what you just said, because it was a quote that I made at our last hearing. We don't need to develop or rezone every square inch of New Hanover County. There are some parts of it, absolutely, that we have got to work to maintain as green space, to make sure that we're concerned about the flooding issues. As we already said during this conversation, there are some places that are susceptible to flooding, and that includes the Western

Bank. You go over there after a big storm, after a big rain, and there's significant standing water over by the battleship. And how do you make sure that if you authorize development over there, it doesn't end up costing the taxpayers more in the long run? Because if, for instance, our infrastructure gets impacted because it can't really be sustained in that environment, that's just another check that we're going to have to look to the people of the future to. Right. And we have to be vigilant about that. So let me back up and say, because it's very important. I am king of property rights. Property rights are sacrosanct to me, Reuel. But there is a difference between me saying to somebody who owns a piece of property, yes, that's your piece of property. You're zoned to do this industrial application. You are allowed to do that industrial application. That's one thing for me to say.

Dane Scalise: There's another thing for me to say. If they come to me and they say, I want you to let me build a huge casino over here, I do not have to say yes to that. And I am not planning on saying yes to that. It is my estimation that this particular area of New Hanover County has to be better guarded. It has to be better protected against expanded development opportunities. And there are some people that that don't like me saying that, and I respect their right to disagree with me. But I also have very deeply studied a bunch of information related to the western bank, and it is very susceptible to flooding. It is unfortunately polluted in many places and it needs to be remediated. I asked a question during the last county commission hearing to the staff, and I said, thanks for this proposal to allow us to expand all of the development opportunities in the Western Bank. Before we go any further. Have you explored grant opportunities from the state or the federal government for us to purchase this property voluntarily at a price that they agreed to, that we agreed to and remediate it and preserve it? And the answer to that question is no, we haven't done that.

Dane Scalise: And I said, well, why don't we do that? There are a lot of federal and state programs that are out there that allow governments to purchase property voluntarily. This is this is not a taking that we're talking about here. We're talking about going to these individuals who are property owners and saying, hey, look, let's make a deal. We think that this is going to be better suited as preserved space in our community, and we're willing to pay you a fair price in connection with it. They don't have to accept it, but I think that they'll see the wisdom in it, in all likelihood, and then we can do the work of remediating it and making it into a conservation area. And so until

we fully explore that option, I was hesitant for us to go ahead and say, let's go ahead and open up the floodgates. Uh, I guess that's a bad pun, but I didn't actually intend it. Pun not intended, but, um, top of mind, I guess. Tip of tongue. And, you know, ultimately we'll we'll see what happens with that before we take the next steps in some other direction. We should do that. We should always explore options like this first before we go in some other direction. Like this. And I'm glad to have led the charge on that item.

Reuel Sample: We had a conversation on this on this podcast, not you and I, but with somebody else, uh, about the Western Bank. And there was some concerns that Brunswick County, it was a great county. There are a lot of great people in Brunswick County could forcefully annex that, that that part of our county, if we didn't do something with it. Is that is that still going on or I want to I want to make sure that we're getting the right information out.

Dane Scalise: Reuel, all that I can say is that I am um, if you go to my website, you'll see that my number one priority is protecting New Hanover County and its people. And I will be on the front lines of the battlefield if if New Hanover and Brunswick are about to get into a land war. Uh, they're they're not getting our land. Absolutely not under any circumstance. Are they getting our land? We're taking the efforts that we need to preserve our portion of the property that's over there. And again, one of the things that I think that we need to do that we haven't done yet is exploring these voluntary purchase and preservation options. I, I will have to look into that a little bit more, but I'll just go ahead off the cuff and tell you, Reuel, I'm not going to abide by any kind of land grab from Brunswick County. You can tell that to Frank Williams. Okay.

Leadership and Community Needs

Reuel Sample: You have been on county commission for two years now. Has it been two years?

Dane Scalise: About a year and a half. April 2023.

Reuel Sample: So in that year and a half, you have been really a big voice in fighting for things. You, you were you you you went to the mattresses. That's a Godfather

term. You went to the mattresses over the Moseley School. You went to the you you you effectively shaped how the bridge was going to be repaired and going forward.

Dane Scalise: Can we talk about that real fast?

Reuel Sample: By all means.

Reuel Sample: You know, whenever we talked about the bridge issue. Yes. One of the things that I tried to explain to you and your in our listeners was I said, look, y'all, we got to play a game with the prioritization system that exists with DOT in order to get into the framework, in order to get access to federal grants. If we don't play this game, we won't be able to get access to money. And in fact, because we played the game and I wish politics wasn't a game, but you got to be a savvy operator and know how the world really works, because we played the game through the advocacy efforts of a number of people. But especially I have to give him a huge hat tip. Senator Tillis delivered 202 \$242 million to New Hanover County to pay for that bridge and that money. Look, it was already earmarked. It was going somewhere. It was either going to Indianapolis or it was going to San Francisco, or it was going wherever else, but it's coming here. And that made the possibility of making this bridge happen and making it happen with no toll up to here. I mean, we're pretty much there where we're going to be able to get this entire thing funded and never have a toll, which is what I kept telling people, please believe that if we don't get the money, then we walk away. But let's at least try to get this money. And if we get this money, then we can ultimately pay for it with no toll. And that's that's what happened. So I'm really proud to have advocated for that. That was a lot of people that advocated for that, but I was certainly one of them.

Reuel Sample: So with all these things that you have been out on the front lines for, did you expect that you would have to fight this hard or play the game this well in order to govern here in New Hanover County? And should you have to?

Dane Scalise: That is a really good question. I certainly had a sense that the work would be hard, that the work would be challenging, but it would not be accurate or fair for me to look back on my expectations and say that they've matched up with reality. It is significantly harder. It is significantly more time consuming. It is especially in a place like New Hanover where right, wrong or indifferent Reuel. We're a purple county. We

are absolutely the battlefield of the battlefield. And you don't get to just waltz on in because you know that you've got a whole majority of the people in your community that think just like you. And on your county commission, there's just going to be variations of Republicans or variations of Democrats every single election cycle. You see a back and forth with our county commission, with our state House races, with our state Senate races, and it's because of the nature of our community. And as a consequence of that, you've got to be on your A game 24 over seven. You've just got to be the public expects it and they will not vote for you. They will not support you if you're not delivering. So I take it very seriously. I think that if I can and I don't think that you'll begrudge me this, I believe that I am doing something that I have been called by God to do. I think that these battles, these fights, the sleepless nights, the stress that I feel I am doing it because I love this community and I love my children, and I love my wife, and I love all of the other families.

Dane Scalise: Everybody who is in this community deserves to have leadership that actually gives a darn, that actually is doing the right thing for the right reasons. And I am far from a perfect person. I am an imperfect person, absolutely, but I care, and I put the work in and it's my honor to put the work in, and I hope that the voters will recognize that and allow me to continue doing this work on their behalf this November. It's been an honor. And gosh, I, I just I can't say enough how much I appreciate the opportunity to come and talk about all this stuff. I'm getting kind of teary eyed over here. But, I mean I love I love this work, I do. It's very, very validating for me personally, and I'm not embarrassed to say that. Shouldn't it be validating? Shouldn't I ultimately walk away saying I did a good thing? There are some days where I feel that more strongly than others. But this, this is the good stuff. And I'll tell you, it would be a whole heck of a lot better if I got all the support that I needed on the county commission. If we put all the right people in Raleigh, if we put all the right people in DC, because the same thing about that opioid discussion, the more that we can have the full complement of leadership from top to bottom, the easier and better the work gets for everyone.

Reuel Sample: We are approaching very quickly November and probably for you, it can't come quick enough. This is this has always been about a marathon, but now you're in the sprinting stages.

Supporting Dane Scalise's Campaign

Dane Scalise: Real fast on that Reuel. I'll tell you, I did discuss that with my wife just yesterday and I said, you know, every now and again I get myself saying, I just wish it was November and we were over and done with. But then I immediately checked myself. Every time that I say that and say, don't rush your life away. This is your life. You're in the moments. Some of them are good, some of them are bad. You got to just enjoy them all and take them for what they're worth. But you're right. I mean, I'll be I'll be happy on November 5th. November 6th. Especially if there's a victory.

Reuel Sample: Well, there's no question that, uh, money wins elections. Is that the Democrats are pouring so much money into our county because it is really a battle battleground county. How can people support you? How can they get in touch with you? And, uh, uh, how can they help support what you are doing?

Dane Scalise: Well, I would very much encourage everyone to check out my website electedsane.com. Elect Dane dane.com. You'll get to see all my policy discussions. You'll get to see a bunch of videos of me and a Great Dane. I've got some commercials out there. Hey, look, I'm not that witty, but my name is Dane. There's a dog called a Great Dane, and I just basically said to some folks who helped me make a commercial, I said, how about we just put me in a Great Dane together and just say, Dane a whole lot of times so. It matters Reuel. It does. Yeah, there will be any number of ways to get in touch with me, and all of those are listed on my website. So go to electedane.com, see what it is that I've been working on. See what it is that I plan on doing. Watch some videos of me and a dog and if you're inclined to give, there's a donate button that's there.

Reuel Sample: Dane Scalise, I'll give you the last word. As before, we cut out for the evening.

Dane Scalise: To victory.

Reuel Sample: Well, that's a great last word. Dane Scalise, thanks for joining us on our podcast tonight. All the best to you.

Dane Scalise: All right. Thank you.