

2008 SPPACE Questionnaire

Hal Jordan

Mecklenburg County Commissioner Candidate – At Large

What is the number one issue facing Mecklenburg County?

Fiscal responsibility. The county is challenged with underperforming schools, increasing crime, and exploding growth, but is failing to make the tough choices to spend our limited tax dollars as wisely as possible. We must examine how to deliver more for the large expenditures we make on schools, social services, law enforcement, parks and libraries. The discipline of zero based budgeting is long overdue -- requiring us to regularly review and justify spending in every category. Without implementing this discipline, our taxes will become an even higher burden, while the flight of families to surrounding counties will increase.

In 2007, the North Carolina General Assembly authorized counties, subject to voter approval, the ability to impose an additional general fund revenue source (a .4% land transfer tax or a .25% sales tax). Do you support a .4% land transfer tax? Do you support a .25% sales tax?

I do not support a land transfer tax. I might consider a sales tax of limited duration targeted for a specific use. However, my strong preference would be to reallocate our existing tax revenues based on our priorities, which means some lower priority budget items should be scaled back. Mecklenburg County already has the highest per capita combined property and sales taxes in North Carolina and more taxes cannot be justified.

How should Mecklenburg County address the region's EPA non-attainment designation for air quality?

The county government and local businesses can and should encourage use of transit, carpooling, and telecommuting. We should also work with city and state agencies to more quickly implement existing plans to relieve traffic congestion.

What should Mecklenburg County do to protect and ensure we have an adequate supply of water to meet our current and future water demands?

We should continue to secure and protect local watersheds along the Catawba River and area streams. This includes encouraging water conservation.

The General Assembly recently authorized Counties to participate in the building and maintenance of roads. Do you support or oppose Mecklenburg County building and maintaining roads?

Roads are primarily in the domain of our state and city government. Unfortunately, Mecklenburg County is not receiving an equitable share of our state's spending on roads, and we must work more closely with our General Assembly to secure adequate road funds. The county's investment in roads should be minimal; otherwise, the negative impact on our local taxes will be substantial.

If the General Assembly authorized Mecklenburg County to hold a "Pennies for Progress" referendum similar to South Carolina's, would you support putting the measure before voters? If yes, for what infrastructure projects (i.e. roads, schools, parks, libraries, courts, jails, etc.) would you advocate using the money?

I would strongly prefer to see existing revenues redirected to handle urgent priorities such as crime fighting measures or local roads. I might support a very limited "Pennies for Progress" program with a narrow purpose and strict timeframe, but only if the county embraces stronger fiscal discipline.