

2010 SPPACE Questionnaire

BILL JAMES

**Candidate for the Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners
District 6**

- 1. What are the top three issues facing Mecklenburg County and how do you propose to address them?**

Top three issues are: reprioritizing services, eliminating unnecessary and patronage handouts in the County Budget, and reigning in excessive bond spending. To accomplish the first two will require telling individuals who have lived off of government largess 'no'. To accomplish excessive bond spending will require agreement to stop building certain school, park and library projects.

- 2. 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? Please explain your answer.**

I would vote 'No' to both taxes. A .4% land transfer tax takes the equity for existing homeowners; individuals who have worked hard and paid their property taxes all their lives. Now in 2010 someone wants to tax the equity in their homes? It is governmental theft. Individuals pay property taxes based on the value of their homes. They should not also have to pay again on that value when they sell the house. I do not support a .25% sales tax because we have enough sales taxes in Mecklenburg and are already the highest tax County in NC. Now if someone wants to cut one of Mecklenburg County's existing sales taxes and replace it with this one, I will discuss that.

- 3. It has recently been reported in the local media that Mecklenburg County faces an estimated budget shortfall of \$16 to \$60 million dollars in FY 2010-2011. How do you plan to address this issue?**

I plan on proposing that we cut the budget by over \$140 to \$150 million. The County has a CURRENT year (ending June 30th) budget shortfall of \$35 million. The County has a NEXT YEAR budget shortfall (starting July 1st) of \$65 million. Together we have a budget shortfall of \$100 million before considering the additional dollars the State is likely to shift onto us. In addition, I favor a 2 to 4 cent tax cut to stimulate the Mecklenburg economy. Since one Penny is roughly \$9.2 million a 4 cent tax cut would mean cutting the budget an additional \$36 million. I estimate to do all of this will require \$140 to \$150 million cut.

4. Do you support Public-Private Partnerships for the construction of schools? Please explain your answer.

That depends on what 'public-private' means. I am not opposed to the use of lease agreements to construct schools however our current capital problems make the use of such leased facilities as unlikely. CMS seems to not like them and in any case, the lease payments must be included as a surrogate debt service which ultimately because of the 'debt diet' limits their usage.

5. 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?

No. Tax are too high. We need to cut taxes to stimulate the local economy in much the same way that JFK did with his Federal Income tax cuts during the early 60's.

6. Are you in favor of the Mecklenburg County playing a role in incentivizing environmentally sustainable development? Please explain your answer.

That is a 'loaded' question. I am not in favor of paying developers to design and build eco-friendly facilities. I am in favor of adopting regulations that phase in requirements for eco-friendly development but since the County doesn't have any zoning authority most of our changes would be to air quality, flood control, and land use in concert with the Towns and City. I am wholly opposed to 'incentivizing' if that means government money going to outside parties (developers included).