

## 2010 SPPACE Questionnaire

**DAN RAMIREZ**

### **Candidates for the Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners At-Large**

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

The top three issues affecting Mecklenburg County are:

- Jobs,
- Foreclosures and
- Gang violence.

I will work to encourage companies to relocate in Mecklenburg County to create new jobs to prevent further foreclosures.

In the case of gang violence I will work with fellow commissioners to use the Sheriff's department to complement and help CMPD in patrolling and interdiction of gang violence.

- 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 do not support any of the taxes approved by the general assembly; Mecklenburg County already has one of the highest sales tax rate in the State and as to the land transfer tax it will cause a high impact in the cost of housing at a time when we have a tremendous amount of foreclosures and particularly in a devaluated housing market.

- 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?**

This year the County Commission is facing the shortfall mentioned in your question, the obvious answer for the majority now in the County Commission is to raise taxes, but I do not think they will raise taxes in an election year; they will use the fund balance (savings) to pay for the deficit this year. There will be another thing next year when some Commissioners will try to increase taxes. There is nothing I can do this budget year (2010-2011) because I am not in the county Commission yet. However, next budget year (2011-2012) I will hold the line on the attempt to increase taxes and if possible use upcoming reevaluation to maintain a revenue neutral tax rate. I think that like all businesses and families we need to cut costs in County government and live within our means, government is the only sector that is expanding while we in the private sector are

shrinking and cutting expenses asking the questions “*can we afford it?*” and “*is it a priority?*”

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

I do support Public-Private partnership for the construction of schools where the private sector builds the schools and then lease them to the public sector, eliminating the initial construction cost that is normally funded with either Bonds or COPS. This method helps keep the AAA rating of the County Bonds and debt and it is easier on the budget to handle lease payments.

**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?**

I have been an ardent proponent of “Pennies for Progress”, with two caveats: the voters need to have the list and cost of the projects and it has to have a finite period of time of 5 to 7 years. At the end of this time period we will have another referendum whereby the voters can decide whether the previous projects were satisfactory or not

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

Yes, Mecklenburg County approved park bonds that could be used to purchase land to dedicate to a park areas as well as reserved forestry areas that can help mitigate somewhat air pollution and the protection of our water resources.