

2010 SPPACE Questionnaire

HAROLD COGDELL, JR.

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 facing Mecklenburg County Government is not necessarily the top three issues facing Mecklenburg County. The number one issue facing Mecklenburg County Government is balancing a budget that has seen substantial revenue reductions in the past 24 months while the demand on county services has seen an on average a 25% across the board increase in service demand. In our current economic climate we must make difficult decisions that target resources on the most essential of County government services and reduce service levels in non-essential areas in order to operate within current revenue realities. I would add that: job creation and growth, maintaining a highly skilled and educated workforce, enhanced performance in public education and long-term regional land-use and transportation planning are also very important issues facing Mecklenburg County. In addressing the budget shortfall I would: (1) consider organization-wide compensation decreases for county employees; (2) identify and eliminate funding for overlapping services; (3) reduce non-core service functions of county government; and (4) consider liquidation of unutilized or underutilized county assets to pay down outstanding debt. In addressing other identified important issues facing Mecklenburg County, I support development and implementation of a performance based funding model for CMS, merging fragmented MPOs into one regional MPO and continuing to working closely with the Chamber, State and City/Towns to engage in aggressive recruitment, retention and expansion of diverse business sectors in Mecklenburg County.

- 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? No Do you support a .25% sales tax?**

Not in this economic climate. I can not say that as economic circumstances improve, I would never give consideration to supporting the .25% sales tax for transit, transportation or education. I would be extremely reluctant to support any additional sales tax increases for general governmental purposes.

- 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?**

Redefine what are the most essential of County government functions and services (Public Health, Mental Health, Education, Senior Services, Jail etc...) and reduce service levels in non-essential areas in order to balance our budget within current revenue realities (see #1). This may result in reductions in library services (ie... days & hours of operation), park and recreation services, and reduction in force in some county departments.

- 4. Do you support Public-Private Partnerships for the construction of schools? Please explain your answer.** We are in a new economic era that requires government to be innovative and creative in meeting a community's service and infrastructure needs. I am open to innovative Public-Private Partnerships that demonstrate true public benefit that reduce or defray cost of capital projects or dedicating Synthetic TIF district revenues to service capital debt. We must continue to identify collaborative opportunities that leverage public dollars with private sector investment.

- 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 can not take a position regarding a hypothetical authority granted by the state without more specifics. Affordability in our overall tax structure must always be considered. However, I am familiar with the South Carolina initiative and applaud their motivation and openness in identifying a dedicated revenue stream that specifically informs the public about the options of where road infrastructure dollars will be used, in what priority and the timeframe for the improvements; and then allows the voters to decide to self-impose a tax that includes a sunset provisions. I would note that transportation (transit & roads) and education would be my highest priorities.

- 6. Are you in favor of the Mecklenburg County playing a role in incentivizing environmentally sustainable development?**

YES

Please explain your answer.

It is not a novel concept for governmental policy to incentivize citizens or the private sector to engage in undertakings that it believes to be of public benefit. We must be careful to both limit and clearly define what that role could be and there must always

be an actual “*but for*” component to any incentive program. However, there is clearly great public benefit in environmentally sustainable development.