



COUNTY COMMISSION QUESTIONNAIRE – PAGE 2

Responses on this page will be published on the REBIC webpage for review by our members and the general public.

Candidate’s Full Name: Matthew Ridenhour	Office Seeking: Mecklenburg County Commission, District 5
---	--

- 1. Why do you wish to serve or continue to serve in public office? There has been much good accomplished since 2012; we have hired a new Tax Assessor and County Manager, we have increased funding to CMS, and we are now on good financial footing. However, there is much work to be done. I believe we can further eliminate wasteful spending--as we have begun to do--better our schools, and ensure that taxes are affordable.**
- 2. What are the top three issues facing Mecklenburg County and how do you plan to address them?**

 - a. Tax rate—our tax rate is putting us at a disadvantage for jobs and resident compared to surrounding counties. We are seeing wealth move to the surrounding counties from Mecklenburg, as well as businesses choosing to set up shop across our borders. To be competitive, we have to rein in spending, and make taxes affordable.**
 - b. Jobs/Unemployment—our unemployment rate is high, and I refuse to accept that this is the “new normal”. We do a fair job of recruiting new companies to Mecklenburg, but we can do better. I am exploring the idea of “enterprise zones”, where we drastically cut taxes to corridors in order to encourage new development. Additionally, the process for opening a new business in Mecklenburg is tedious, which is exacerbated by a cumbersome county website. We need to streamline government, encourage growth through affordable taxes and enterprise zones, and provide an educated workforce. We do this, and we’ll see the unemployment rate drop.**
 - c. Increased demand for services—Mecklenburg County is getting poorer—the data shows this. In tandem with that, we have a growing need for public services such as school lunches, affordable housing, and health services. Too often, folks have to apply to several agencies, visiting several offices, in order to receive benefits from the county or our community partners. Serious conversations need to occur to umbrella these services to save money, but to also improve the efficiency of providing the services.**
- 3. What can the County Commission do to encourage job growth and stimulate the local economy? As I mentioned in question 2B, we have to lower the tax rate to be competitive with the surrounding counties. We also have to have an educated workforce. We are not going to attract top companies which can bring hundreds of jobs, if we do not have a trained workforce that can meet their demands. Lastly, we have to get creative. Business Incentive Program “tax rebates” cannot be the only tool in our toolbox to recruit companies and encourage growth. I believe something like enterprise zones will help us increase the number of tools we have, and thus stimulate job growth and small business/entrepreneurial investment.**

4. What can the Board of Commissioners do to keep housing affordable in Mecklenburg County? I hate to sound like a broken record, but we can lower taxes! Lower taxes will not just benefit folks buying a house, but it will also positively affect renters. Additionally, we need to lower the unemployment rate through job creation and recruitment. It's easier to afford housing when one is employed.

5. What changes, if any, would you make to improve the county's permitting and inspection process? I have worked hard to advocate for improving the permitting and inspections process, as many developers and stakeholders have noticed. We need to improve the communication between the county and the city, contractors and developers must not fear retribution for lodging complaints, inspectors must be consistent in their work both with themselves and with other inspectors, and the county must have a "get to 'yes'" attitude.