

Good Evening,

01/17/24

My name is Ben Tacka, I am a resident of Mecklenburg County, & Charlotte as of September 2018 and am officially a home owner in this fine county as of June of last year.

Thank you to our board of Commissioners for hosting this opportunity to speak in front of you and consider the budget in front of you.

I've lived in a half dozen cities in the U.S. and even a few international, but Charlotte is the first one I've decided to make my place to put down roots.

There's many great things about this city and many things it still needs to work to improve but I'm here today to praise the Parks & Recreation Department for what they've already accomplished with the parks, greenways & nature reserves that enhance daily life for all of us calling Mecklenburg home. I'm here also to encourage this fine & wise Board to approve the budget that department has submitted. We need them to continue and expand the incredible work they do.

Specifically I'm asking you to...

- Support all recommended FY'29 capital projects ^{with emphasis on connectivity}
- Support funding for new staff positions as identified in the MeckPhyask & requested by staff for FY'29
- Sustain the momentum for land acquisition to increase Parks, Greenway & nature preserves

- Increase funding for maintenance of the same

Ever since I moved here, I've logged hundreds of miles of walks and bike rides w/ friends and loved ones from Latta Plantation to Pineville at the end of Sugar Creek Greenway (when I first saw the improvements in that greenway I was blown away). I also remember the incredible transformation of the Stewart Creek Greenway on my daily walks while I was living in the Elderly Park neighborhood.

Greenways can connect us all and they should connect us all! I just learned from Hope that less than 40% of our citizens have reasonable access! We must improve that. As this city and county continue on the path to becoming world-class in all categories, I can think of few better investments than to grow the green spaces that provide us all with a way to connect and share in the experience of our natural space in this beautiful county. Thank you.

- Ben