From: Karuna Rockwell
To: Public Comments
Subject: Amend Budget
Date: Sunday, July 19, 2020 5:11:08 PM

To Whom It May Concern:

County Government must commit to amending its budget NOW.
On June 16th, following mass demonstrations, locals from across the county called for the defunding of the County Sheriff and the Detention Center and for the County to pause its budget vote and evaluate its priorities. Commissioners refused to listen and chose instead to push through its budget that increased funding for the sheriff and the jail by more than $3 million, while defunding the Health Department.
Since then, the pandemic has taken control of the county, spurred on by Commissioners voting on June 24th to allow hotels to reopen at full capacity. THIS is UNACCEPTABLE.

Informed by Black Asheville Demands and others demanding reparations, WE DEMAND the County:

1) Effectively address the local pandemic.

a) The County must STOP THE REOPENING! Only essential businesses should be open, with a requirement that businesses provide all workers with protective gear and that the mask policy is upheld.
b) All city and county schools must choose Plan C. Refuse to return to in person learning.
c) Shut down all leisure travel and abolish the Tourism Development Authority (TDA)
d) Provide accessible, free testing for all who need it. Free masks available for everyone who doesn't have one. Funds for increased pay and support for frontline medical and emergency workers.
e) Open hotels for the unhoused community to prioritize their health and wellbeing.
f) The Buncombe County sheriff must halt enforcing evictions during the COVID pandemic. Durham County's sheriff has made this commitment. Buncombe's must too.
g) The pandemic response MUST direct funds towards communities hardest hit and most at risk, especially immigrant communities.

2) Pay Reparations.

The County MUST invest in the economic wellbeing of Black and Brown residents, deeply affordable housing, land provisions, equitable education outcomes, mental health services, rent subsidies and eviction diversion, free public transportation, and restorative justice services.

The Buncombe County Health Board recently pronounced racism a local health crisis. It's time. County Government MUST cut the Sheriff and the Jail budgets by at least 50%, end the pandemic, abolish gentrification promoting and virus enabling organizations such as the TDA, and invest in Black, Indigenous, and People of Color in the new economy free from the grips of over tourism.

Sincerely,

Karuna Rockwell