From: Lilly-Anne Merat
To: Public Comments
Subject: We are counting on you.
Date: Monday, July 20, 2020 4:10:10 PM

Hi, my name is Lilly-Anne Merat and I have lived in Asheville for 7 years. I am proud to call this city my home, and was made even prouder thanks to the national headlines our city made this week with the commitment to reparations for BIPOC. However, I fear that this commitment will not be upheld. I hope you will prove me wrong.

I demand commissioners amend their budget and defund the County Sheriff's Office and Detention Center by at least 50%. We need you to effectively address the local pandemic and to fund reparations for our Black, Brown, and Indigenous neighbors. Covid-19 is causing exponential harm. Our numbers have skyrocketed, our visitors are numerous and our lives are at stake.

I demand that you reinvest funds taken from the sheriff and jail in ways that effectively address the local pandemic. This plan should include an end to 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.

As a teacher, it pains me to say that city and county schools must choose Plan C and refuse to return to in-person learning. Though there is no question that in-school learning is crucial, the Covid numbers we're reporting are not safe. We put our children, teachers, staff, and families at risk.

The county must provide free testing, free masks, and funds for increased pay and support for medical and emergency workers.

We must address overtourism. We must shut down all leisure travel and abolish the TDA and its advertising.

The Buncombe County sheriff must also halt enforcing evictions during the COVID pandemic.

Finally, the pandemic response MUST direct funds towards communities hardest hit and most at risk, especially immigrant communities.

Going forward, the County MUST invest in the economic wellbeing of Black, Brown, and Indigenous residents, commit resources to eliminate the racial opportunity gap, and provide deeply affordable housing, land provisions, mental health services, rent subsidies and eviction diversion, free public transportation, and restorative justice services for all.

Thank you.
Lilly-Anne Merat