From:	Amanda Durst
To:	Public Comments
Subject:	We demand action
Date:	Monday, July 20, 2020 4:55:20 PM

Dear Buncombe County Board of Commissioners,

My name is Amanda and I have lived in Asheville for nearly three years. Though I haven't been here long, I've been here long enough to see the damage racism has done to Asheville and Buncombe County's Black citizens: the damage it is long past time to address.

For too long, the County has prioritized tourism and police spending at the expense of its citizens. I am calling today to demand commissioners amend their budget and defund the County Sheriff's Office and Detention Center by at least 50% immediately. Covid-19 is causing exponential harm by killing our neighbors, family, and friends or leaving them with organ damage to last a lifetime. Furthermore, even the County Health Board acknowledges that racism is a public health crisis. Now that the diagnosis is official, we need you to effectively address the local pandemic and to fund reparations for our Black, Brown, and Indigenous neighbors.

Covid-19 cases in Buncombe County continue to rise at an alarming rate, largely due to tourism from hotspots such as Florida, South Carolina, and Tennessee. As a start, please 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. All city and county schools must choose Plan C, and refuse to return to in-person learning. The county must provide accessible, free testing for all who need it, free masks available for everyone who doesn't have one, and funds for increased pay and support for frontline medical and emergency workers. We must address the influx of tourism and that means the County must shut down all leisure travel and abolish the TDA and its advertising. The County must open hotels for the unhoused community to prioritize their health and wellbeing. The Buncombe County sheriff must also halt enforcing evictions during the COVID pandemic. Durham County's sheriff has made this commitment. Buncombe's must too. And finally, the pandemic response MUST direct funds towards communities hardest hit and most at risk, especially immigrant communities.

The pandemic management must center the needs of communities of color. 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.

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Amanda Durst