From: m
To: Public Comments
Subject: July 21 Meeting Comments: People Over Profit
Date: Monday, July 20, 2020 4:06:35 PM

Good Afternoon,
My name is Marissa and I live in Asheville. I am writing today to demand commissioners amend their budget and defund the County Sheriff's Office and Detention Center by at least 50% immediately and reallocate those funds to social, educational, and public health programs serving local Black residents and communities of color. Covid-19 is causing exponential harm by killing our neighbors, family, and friends or leaving them with organ damage, insurmountable economic detriments, and severe mental health effects. 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 pandemic locally and to fund reparations for our Black, Brown, and Indigenous neighbors.

As a start, please reinvest funds taken from the sheriff and jail in ways that effectively alleviate the effects of the pandemic in Buncombe County. 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. If schools reopen with any kind of in-person instruction, the CDC guidelines must be followed strictly, and in fact be used as the MINIMUM safety protocols for ensuring children care able to access the benefits of being in school while keeping them and our ENTIRE community safe.
The county must provide accessible, free testing for all who need it, free masks available for everyone who doesn't have them, and funds for increased pay and support for frontline medical and emergency workers. We must address over-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 response 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.

Thank you for your time.

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