

LWVCM- Environmental Action Team comments at BOCC Budget FY2020 May 9th hearing

Good evening:

Chairman Dunlap, Vice Chair Powell and Commissioners. I am Chris Danis , live in County Commissioner District 4 and I am here tonight as a member of the League of Women Voters Environment Action Team. As some of you know the League of Women Voters has been active in the Mecklenburg County for the past 100 years.

While we applaud your recognition and support of the importance of education, public health, social services as well as protection of persons and property, our concern tonight is the amount of proposed funding for the environment (air, land, water) and recreation (parks, greenways, trails, and pools) in the proposed FY 2020 County budget.

Since Mecklenburg County is one of the fastest growing areas in the Southeast (with over 50 people arriving daily), planning now before total build-out is possible, necessary, and good business. It doesn't take a PhD in Economics to realize that as more land is used for buildings and roads, land values rise to the point where it becomes VERY costly to allow land to be set aside for public use. The main fallacy in this non-action is that much of that public land is the same land that protects our water sheds and air quality, while providing for needed recreation areas for our growing population.

The quality and quantity of water is now and will continue to be a major concern in Mecklenburg County. We understand the storm water component of the Land Use and Environmental Services reflects only 0.47% (less than ½ a %) of the expenditures, or about \$6.5 million of the \$1.9 billion proposed budget. The potential situation was made worse in December 2018 when NC General Assembly passed legislation that eliminated the ability of local governments to address storm water from increased built up areas. This legislation, (NC Session 2018-145/ Senate Bill 469) made changes to the Post-Construction Storm Water Ordinance (aka PCSO) that had been in place in Mecklenburg County and Charlotte since 2007 and 2008.

The League of Women Voters Charlotte Mecklenburg has voiced the concern about the PCSO implications to all NC Mecklenburg County State Legislators asking for flooding and storm water protection measures for redevelopment to be re-instated. A copy of that letter may be provided.

Every stream in Mecklenburg has been impaired for years. The Post Construction Storm Water program was a successful example of how county and city governments cooperated to address flooding and erosion caused by excess water velocity and volume. However, the County's budget does not reflect the impact of the new state legislation on the County's taxpayers.

We can hope, that the state legislation will be changed, but we cannot wait for that to happen. We have to be proactive at the local level NOW.

We therefore ask that the Commissioners reconsider how to improve the less that 0.5% or about \$6.5 in the FY2020 proposed budget. The result would be better protection for our water quality/quantity, public health, private and public property, and other natural resources.

We further ask the Commissioners to accelerate and advance the storm water utility services, as well as parks and greenway services to align joint staffing expertise and project alignment. Storm water protection, greenways and parks, trails, and transit measures fit together nicely.