

Pat Cotham, Matthew Ridenhour, Bill James and Jim Puckett have been unsupportive of Mecklenburg County's participation in Major Leagues Soccer (MLS) since it was first introduced to us in closed session in January. It is our belief that the county has no business participating in professional sports in general, and particularly in this MLS deal. Economists have well-documented the failure of publicly funded stadiums to produce much-hyped economic development, and this is reason enough to prevent the county from investing taxpayer dollars. However, in this case allocation of property tax dollars is not just an unwise investment, doing so supplants the county's commitment to build out the park and greenway projects approved overwhelmingly by voters in 2008. The four of us feel we have a moral obligation to the voters to complete the 2008 bonds. These are just two of the many reasons we feel the County Commission should not actively participate in this financial project for soccer. We like soccer, but not this proposed deal.

That said, there are many who wish MLS would take a serious look at Charlotte Mecklenburg, and to that end we are offering a compromise that allows negotiations to go forward with MLS and the city of Charlotte. It protects the county taxpayer, fulfills our commitment to the voters, and prevents us from selling off valuable assets. Members of the Charlotte City Council have expressed uneasiness over investing their dollars into a stadium owned and controlled by the County. Thus, we are willing to work with the City towards a path that allows them to control the stadium. We would even consider deeding the structure to the city if that were their only option forward. Unlike Mecklenburg County, the City of Charlotte has a tax revenue stream dedicated to entertainment and sports development therefore not requiring taxes to be taken from Mecklenburg property owners and transferred to a for-profit business. Clearly the city is best positioned to develop and manage this project.

Memorial Stadium has a proud history, and is an important structure to the residents of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. A memorial to WW1 veterans, constructed under the WPA during the administration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, it has been the host to countless concerts, Shrine Bowl games, and community events. We, and we believe the community, wish to see American Legion Memorial Stadium continue to play a role in the future of our community.

Mecklenburg County is human services, not sports and tourism. People want different bodies of government to collaborate to improve the quality of life for the people we all serve. We feel this is a very generous offer from the county to the city, and demonstrates our willingness to collaborate with the city in an attempt to land MLS, should they decide to take that path.

With the county removed from the stadium project we ask \$49 million be appropriated to the current CIP for the full build-out of the remaining 2008 Park Bonds as directed by the Park and Recreation Commission working in conjunctions with Park and Recreation staff. This action would reassure our citizens that the Board of County Commissioners respects the wishes of the people.

Pat, Matthew, Bill and Jim hope our fellow board members will seriously consider accepting our compromise, and join us in collaborating with the city for the benefit of the people we serve. Moving forward in completing the greenways and parks from the 2008 bond package is our obligation. At the same time, we feel this path forward will return Memorial Stadium to her place as a "jewel in the crown" of the Queen City.