

## **Candidate for Mecklenburg County Commission at Large – Ray McKinnon**

**RAY McKinnon** is a 38-year-old Democrat running for County Commissioner at-Large. He serves as a pastor at the South Tryon Community United Methodist Church and is a Charlotte Housing Authority commissioner and a member of the Leading on Opportunity Council. He is a co-founder and vice president of the New South Progressives and has held state leadership roles in the Democratic Party.

### **ON SCHOOL CHOICE:**

McKinnon believes that magnet schools can be valuable resources but opposes charter schools or other proposals that would weaken the school system. In addition, he believes that we must desegregate our schools.

### **ON MEASURES TO INCREASE SCHOOL SAFETY:**

McKinnon favors an increase in school counselors and social workers who can identify children at risk. However, he opposes any proposal that would put guns in classrooms, including plans to arm teachers or staff.

### **ON MEASURES TO ADDRESS STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES:**

McKinnon favors increased funding to ensure CMS has qualified staff at all levels from teachers, psychologists and social workers to cafeteria workers and bus drivers.

### **ON POPULATION GROWTH ISSUES:**

McKinnon is focused on equitable growth to fight poverty and close the opportunity gap.

### **ON MEASURES TO ADDRESS POPULATION GROWTH ISSUES:**

McKinnon believes the county should partner with other municipal bodies and county agencies such to develop a comprehensive plan for the metropolitan area.

### **ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING:**

McKinnon favors a partnership between public and private sectors to move people from shelters to permanent housing.

### **ON 287(G):**

McKinnon is in favor of a resolution calling on the Sheriff's Department to discontinue its enforcement of federal immigration law.

### **ON PANTHER STADIUM FUNDING:**

McKinnon does not favor public funding of stadium improvements.

### **ON OTHER ISSUES:**

McKinnon favors paying a living wage to county employees including teachers and social workers. He believes the County Commission must be responsive to citizens on issues from affordable housing to criminal justice, equality and a budget based on equity.

1. **Name-** Ray McKinnon
2. **Age-** 38

3. **District-** At Large

4. **Party Affiliation-**Democrat

5. **Political background or other civic engagement endeavors-**

I serve our community in various capacities: I'm a pastor, Commissioner at Charlotte Housing Authority, member of the Leading on Opportunity Council, Co-Founder and Vice President of New South Progressives, SouthEnd Board member, Democratic National Committeeman representing NC, and a member of North Carolina Democratic Party's State Executive Council.

6. **What are your qualifications for this office?**

My lived experiences, my relationships across the County, and my passions for justice, equity, and inclusion make me the best candidate for one of the three seats. I'm a pastor, Commissioner at Charlotte Housing Authority, member of the Leading on Opportunity Council, Co-Founder and Vice President of New South Progressives, Democratic National Committeeman, and a member of North Carolina Democratic Party's State Executive Council.

7. **Do you support the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School choice plan and other options such as charter schools and magnet schools?**

I believe that for us to move forward as a community and close the opportunity gap, we must desegregate our schools. Magnet schools and other schools that give students more curriculum choice can be a great resource for our community and our students. Charter schools and proposals to break up CMS are the wrong approach because they weaken our public school's system.

8. **What measures do you support to increase school safety?**

We must build safer schools without making our schools feel like prisons. I support an increase in counselors and social workers who provide a great benefit to the school and can help identify children who are at risk. No matter what we believe is the best course of action for improving school safety, I will vote against any proposal that puts more guns in classrooms, including any proposal to arm teachers and staff.

9. **What measures can Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools take to address student mental health issues?**

We need qualified teachers, psychologists, social workers to educate and guide our children. They shape the lives of students and their families in several ways: Counselors ensure that students are taking the courses they need to succeed, graduate and get into college or a trade, bus drivers and cafeteria workers provide safe transportation and healthy meals to our children while in school each day. Increased funding for these positions should be included in the budgeting process.

10. **What problems do you believe that Charlotte/Mecklenburg population growth creates?**

The County will not prosper unless we have equitable growth. I want to focus the County on closing the opportunity gap and fighting poverty. Finally, we must ensure we are closing the gap in our schools by providing a quality, public, sunrise to sunset education from Pre-K through community college.

**11. How can the county address those growth problems?**

The county should do more to break down silos in local government. We can do more to coordinate with CMS, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Staff, NCDOT, CDOT, and our partners in our municipalities to ensure we are better prepared for growth. We also need a comprehensive plan for Charlotte and Mecklenburg County that does not currently exist.

**12. Do you support the use of County funds to build a domed stadium to guarantee that the Carolina Panthers remain in Charlotte?**

I want to focus the County on closing the opportunity gap and fighting poverty, because we don't need to think about putting a dome on the stadium until every member of our community has a roof over their heads. Finally, we must make sure we are closing the gap in our schools by providing a quality, public, sunrise to sunset education from Pre-K through community college.

**13. What measures can the Board of Commissioners take to increase the stock of affordable housing in the County?**

There is no one solution to this crisis, but we must work with County, City, private sector, non-profit and Faith community stakeholders to develop a plan to address Affordable Housing. We can't do this without our partners in government, so we should work with the city & school board to identify possible affordable sites when public land comes up for sale. We should be more proactive about moving people from shelters into permanent housing, and we can't turn our back on those who are housing insecure.

**14. Are you in favor of a resolution calling on the Sheriff's Department to discontinue its enforcement of federal immigration law (287(g))?**

Yes, as a leader in the community, County Commissioners have a responsibility to call out injustice, when fellow leaders are participating in voluntary programs that make our county less safe and while immigrants who contribute to the prosperity of our city and county every day, still live in fear.

**15. What other issues do you believe the Board of Commissioners should address?**

I'm running to build a county that is committed to justice, mercy, humility, and equity. We need to talk about classrooms before we talk about soccer stadiums. We must pay a living wage to county employees, including our teachers and social workers. We must have a county commission that listens to its citizens on issues from affordable housing to criminal justice. Finally, we must see every member of our community as our equal and invest in a budget based on equity.