

## Endorsements for county commission

**Apr 20, 2008**

The Durham Board of County Commissioners has a major, and sometimes misunderstood, role. The county has fiscal oversight of social services, court facilities, public schools and the sheriff's office. The county also works closely on issues including taxation, elections, and growth and development.

The May 6 election is a primary, but only Democrats -- 10 of them -- have filed to fill the five seats, so the primary may well be the final vote. County Commissioners serve four-year terms, and the new board will oversee matters such as construction of a new courthouse, human services complex and schools, and deal with jail overcrowding and consideration of new taxes and other revenue sources.

### **Support for Reckhow, /b>**

**Of all the candidates, our strongest endorsement goes to Ellen Reckhow, a county commissioner for 20 years and board chairwoman for the past six. Reckhow is the hardest-working member of the board, but in addition to sheer hours logged, she has shown unparalleled leadership.**

**Reckhow sees the importance of partnerships and the role of county government as a bully pulpit. Her work has been wide-ranging, including leadership on the Crime Cabinet, on "systems of care" to insure that youth and families are connected with services they need, and on results-based accountability to gauge government progress.**

**Reckhow is also a leader on the environmental front, pushing for green building practices and local efforts to reduce greenhouse gases. She also backs a new program, Durham Connects, which will send nurses on visits to all families with newborns.**

**Durham is fortunate to have Reckhow's leadership, and voters should give her another term to continue work on these and other issues.**

### **Page, Heron endorsed**

**To continue to make progress, she will need good colleagues, and we think the other two incumbents, Becky Heron and Michael Page, also deserve re-election.**

**Page is a former chair of the Durham Public Schools Board of Education, which is valuable experience since the County Commissioners approve the school board's budget. Page, who has served four years as a commissioner, is a pastor for a church in Northeast Central Durham. He says his emphasis on the board will continue to be as an advocate for the disenfranchised.**

**Page has served on the board of the Department of Social Services and Operation Breakthrough. He has been involved in the 10-year plan to end homelessness, as an organizer of job fairs, and in helping former prisoners**

reintegrate into society.

Heron is a 25-year veteran who remains enthusiastic about serving on the county commission. She is a strong supporter of County Manager Mike Ruffin, and she's right when she says that under Ruffin's leadership, the county has seen a period of increased stability and financial health. She applauded the recent tax revaluation, which, as she said, was one of the smoothest in memory.

Heron is an expert on growth and development, planning, zoning and highways. Her institutional memory of the history of many issues is a great asset to Durham.

**Moffitt, Parker chosen**

Beyond the incumbents, voters will have a choice among seven challengers, several of whom would make excellent commissioners. Of the challengers, we recommend Don Moffitt and Josh Parker.

Moffitt has been in Durham since 1991, when he came to town while working for Whole Foods. He left the company 10 years ago, but has put down roots in Durham. In addition to his background in business, which includes current coursework toward an MBA, Moffitt has also served on the board of the Eno River Association, providing him with an important education in preserving natural areas.

He also has four years on the Durham Planning Commission, two as its chair, and two years on the Joint City-County Planning Commission. That gives him experience in growth and development issues, one of the most important areas of county influence. We approve of his emphasis on density for mass transit and on helping to protect and enhance water supplies.

Parker has made himself a student of local government, and would bring a youthful energy and a fresh approach to the board. He has business experience and a developer's outlook through his work with Blue Devil Ventures and Capital Development. We like Parker's big picture approach, for example, his advocacy of an overarching economic development strategy emphasizing businesses of all sizes, and updating the county's strategic plan. We also like his advocacy of early childhood education, vocational education centers and his plain-spoken support for a common sense idea – city/county merger.

Moffitt and Parker would be solid members of the county commission team.

We couldn't endorse everyone, but two other candidates – Brenda Howerton and Doug Wright – are also good choices. Howerton has experience in elected office as the Soil and Water Conservation District supervisor, as a community organizer for Durham CAN, and in business as the owner of a consulting firm.

Wright has been active with the Durham Center, having served as chair of the mental health agency's area board. As a county commissioner, he says he would be a fiscal conservative and advocate for zero-based budgeting.

Whoever you choose, remember to get out and vote, either on May 6, or at one of the early voting locations. For more information, see: [www.co.durham.nc.us/departments/elec/](http://www.co.durham.nc.us/departments/elec/)

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