**Name as it appears on the ballot:  Greg Ford
Campaign website:  www.gregford.com
Phone number:  919-218-0378
Email:  Greg@GregFord.com
Years lived in the district: 19**

**Questions:**

1. **What inspired you to run for the Wake County Board of Commissioners and if elected what do you want your legacy to be after you leave?**

First of all, thank you for this opportunity to share aspects of my campaign with your membership. I am very familiar with the good work of the Junior League of Raleigh and truly appreciate all that your members have done, and are doing, to make such a positive difference in our community.

I am running for an open seat on the Wake County Board of Commissioners; the incumbent (Commissioner Betty Lou Ward) is not seeking another term after her 28 fantastic years in office, and I am proud to have earned her endorsement. It is an at-large seat, which means all Wake County voters may cast a vote in this race.

Wake County has been my home for nearly two decades, and in that time I have served our community as a teacher and principal in Wake public schools for over 18 years. I now have 3 children in Wake schools: a freshman in high school, and two twin girls in Kindergarten. Given that the Board of Commissioners provides nearly 30% of the annual budget to our school district, clearly I am passionate about young people and ensuring that our schools have the support they need to provide all children with an education that makes them competitive and successful in the future.

My experiences as a principal and community volunteer have provided me with many unique opportunities to work with various public agencies, businesses, private organizations, civic groups, local universities and elected officials, and I believe those relationships will be valuable as we focus on meeting the needs of current and future citizens amidst great growth.

I believe in public service. My entire career and adult life have been dedicated to the idea that people can make their communities stronger by fostering relationships to get things done through education, action and advocacy; and to improve our quality of life with win-win solutions whenever possible. I hope people will agree that I lived up to that promise and responsibility.

1. **In your opinion what is the biggest issue on the minds of Wake County citizens right now and how do you believe you could have the biggest impact?**

Infrastructure. Wake County is the second-fasted growing county in the United States, and with that growth comes a great need to ensure that we are providing the services and environment that will help us thrive into the future. This includes supporting our schools, as I mentioned above, not only for our children’s sake, but also because we know that strong schools spur economic development, as businesses and employees look to our education system as a factor in moving or expanding here.

We also need to ensure we have a viable transit plan, which is why I support the Wake Transit Plan to connect our community locally and regionally. Those proposed transit corridors will also help guide future development. Many Wake County citizens are suffering from poverty, and we have affordable housing and public services access issues to address. We also need to ensure public safety by providing law enforcement, environmental protection and health and human services departments with the support they need to meet the needs of our citizens. We also have work to do in providing water sourcing and conservation efforts, an increasingly important issue in recent years. And we need to make sure that we are preserving open spaces for parks and expanded greenway systems for future generations to enjoy.

I have experience in all of these areas personally as a community volunteer and professionally as a school principal, and I think those skills and experiences will prove valuable as we work together in meeting the needs of our citizens.

1. What policy areas are the most important to you and if elected what changes would you make?
2. Infrastructure. In order to ensure that our quality of life improves for all citizens now and into the future, we need to make sure we continue to support our public schools through increased funding beyond simply keeping up with growth; that we are ensuring public safety by ensuring our county staff are paid fairly and equipped to get the job done; that we are providing much-needed health and human services for our population by expanding patient care facilities and substance abuse programs; that we pass and implement the Wake Transit Plan to provide more options for people and help guide future growth; that we ensure water security for future generations through sourcing and conservation efforts; and that we are expanding environmental protections by expanding county inspections staff and preserving open spaces.

These are values that we all can support, and the Board of Commissioners has established clear goals and outcomes to address them. I will work to help us achieve them by focusing on action steps, keeping to timelines and ensuring measurable outcomes so the public can monitor our progress.

1. Economic Development. As we continue to grow, Wake County needs to remain competitive in attracting and retaining businesses and a talented workforce. A large part of this comes from ensuring that we are addressing infrastructure needs in order to accommodate growth. It also means ensuring Wake County offers incentives that stimulate economic expansion.

If elected, I will support the continuation of Wake’s competitive business development grants; water and sewer grants; in-kind resources; and providing businesses with workforce development and training support in partnership with Wake Tech and our local universities. I will encourage increased collaboration among Wake Economic Development, our local chambers of commerce, municipal incentive programs, and state-level programs - such as the One North Carolina Fund and the NC Job Development Investment Grant – to ensure that we are all working together toward the same goals. I will also encourage collaboration with our neighboring counties in branding our region as a hotbed for entrepreneurial growth and as a center for emerging industries like cleantech, life sciences, IT/Tech and advanced manufacturing.

1. Supporting Vulnerable Populations. The first responsibility of government should be to provide for the safety and security of the people it serves. As a principal and teacher in Wake County schools for over 18 years, I worked to garner resources and provide support systems for many children and families who are struggling in our community.

Wake County’s most vulnerable citizens are suffering from generational or situational poverty, unemployment, homelessness, food scarcity, lack of affordable housing, and/or mental health and substance abuse issues. Progress is already underway in addressing these issues - as evidenced by promising trend data aligned with the Board’s goals and annual budget allocations - but there is more work to be done as we focus on solutions that are most impactful.

Specifically, I will continue to support the expansion of early childhood education programs like Smart Start, which serves children from a proportionally larger segment of lower income families. I will also support expanding county-provided prenatal care services.

We need to work with our Board of Education and identify ways to incentivize and reward community-based partnerships and mentoring programs that address the school-to-prison pipeline. We need to make sure our county-funded social workers and nurses have reasonable caseloads so relationships with clients are most productive. There are many other action steps in this area, and those are just a few examples.

1. As a large community organization we don’t always agree with each other on the best way to accomplish many of our projects, but we always work together to get the job done. In what way do you believe you will be able to work together with members of the opposite party to work together?

Disagreement on strategies - even vision – within any organization is normal, and healthy. What’s most important in those times of disagreement is to first actively listen to what people say. Seek to understand, and be understood. Then build momentum by agreeing on the values that serve as the basis for whatever action plan will be developed. In my experience in leading diverse school communities, finding that common ground and those shared values, honoring different viewpoints and opinions, and involving stakeholders in the processes and outcomes almost always leads to win-win solutions. And at times, compromise is needed to move things forward. That is how trust is built and maintained, and how political partisanship can be minimized.

1. Just for fun: North Carolina doesn’t have an “official State dessert”, but if we did what would you want it to be?

So I really had to think about this one! My vote is for ice cream. It comes in many different flavors, and you can put as many – or as little – toppings on it that you like. You can also eat it however you like – in a cup, or cone, or cake, or right out of the carton. It’s personal to you, so in a way it honors the diversity of each of our unique tastes and preferences. Ice cream is a feel-good dessert, too – whenever I’m around a group of people eating ice cream, there’s always an atmosphere of fun, with lots of smiles and laughter.