My Name is Derek Shackelford and I was born in Frederick, MD. My mother is from Frederick and my father is from Montgomery, Alabama. My father served in the military and I was able to travel extensively at a very young age. We moved back to Frederick while I was 7 years old and I was educated in Frederick County Public Schools graduating from Walkersville High School. My early involvement in athletics taught me some valuable lessons about the importance of education, leadership and relationships. These values I have carried throughout my life and using what I learned from these principles in facets of my life experience that include athletics, community service, family and ministry. These various experiences have taught me how to be a good listener, thoughtful learner and an effective leader. My educational background include graduating from Frederick Community College with an Associates in Arts Degree, a Bachelors of Arts Degree in Political Science, a Masters of Divinity and Doctorate of Ministry Degree from Wesley Theological Seminary. I have served on various boards and was appointed to Frederick County Democratic Central Committee in 2013 and elected in 2014. I am currently married with 2 children. I’m an ordained minister who also own a small publishing company and have given my life to public service. I hope to utilize these attributes and skills to be an effective Alderman in the City of Frederick.

With the significant annual carrying costs, totaling over $1 million, and the immense price tag put on the costs to fully develop the property as a regional park, how do you propose to make the Hargett Farm property an asset to the taxpayers of the City of Frederick and where do you expect to raise the money to improve the property with an estimated price tag approaching $100 million?

This property should be parceled out so that private investments can occur. Possible parcels of land could go towards community gardens, housing and recreational facilities/stadium. This cannot happen without some partnerships. Also, including the county and state should be initiated. The corridor of I 270, US 340 and I 70 could make the property a gateway to the Western part of our city. The City has spent too much money on this project and it is of vital importance that a return on investment should be occurring.

2. Blight has been an irritant for downtown residents and merchants for many years – how do you propose to address the situation to deal with examples like the Asiana building and other underutilized properties in the retail district? Unaddressed blight threatens to undermine the morale of property owners trying to keep and maintain a momentum for progress. What is your position?

The AD HOC Property Revitalization Committee are currently looking at this issue and will offer recommendations. Those recommendations should be implemented immediately. This is the 3rd committee that has looked at this issue. A few steps should be considered: When a property is considered blighted the owner should be given an opportunity to bring the property into compliance within a specific timeline. A statistical analysis should also be available so that the public can see the updates on any blighted properties. Increase in resources and personnel for code enforcement.
Use the code enforcement through legal means: hearings, fines, receivership
Demolition of property
Include a Community Revitalization Development Program for housing, non-profit, resale.

1. Do you consider the tax/equity – sharing equation between the City and the County to be one which is fair to city taxpayers and if not what do you intend to do about the situation? What is your position on the level of City taxes relative to services, and do you agree or disagree that City taxes are a hindrance to being competitive in attracting business, and residents, why or why not?

The tax equity – sharing equation should always be examined to make sure that the city is not getting the short end. Advocating for city residents should be of vital importance to ensuring that residents are receiving the proper service in return. The city should advocate and continually examine the formula that is utilized in coming up with the equation. The city should not be charged twice for the same level of service. The city should continually be transparent in identifying what residents receive in terms of what they are paying for. The City did vote to reduce the business personal property tax and a business friendly environment is necessary for the attraction of jobs and skilled workers. What is important in keeping in mind is that residents should not be on the short end of the financial deal and paying more than necessary.

4. Route 15 continues to be a traffic bottleneck which impacts all City residents and our businesses – what steps do you propose the City should take to address the problem? There are several innovative ways the City can address this issue. Expand Route 15 which is currently happening. Connectivity of how and where the roads and bridges lead to. The city can utilize a real time data time traveler information system which can help travelers find the shortest route. Also, utilize the aspect of Telecommuting by encouraging employers to allow employees to work from home or other locations that could prevent traffic congestion.

5. Please provide one positive concrete idea to address the groups of homeless or disenfranchised who loiter for hours at a time around some of our more valuable public assets (Carroll Creek Linear Park, Baker Park, and the public library to name a few). What can be done to ensure our residents and businesses continue to use such assets or locate there.

Institute Housing First, Services Second. There have been effective models across the country that have strategized to solve the homeless situation. Statistics have shown that it is more expensive to pay for services that affect the homeless population than housing would. This would also require agencies, partners and residents working together. Substance abuse, mental health services and job training programs need to be also be part of the overall plan as well.
6. Assuming you had the support, what one measure would you implement almost immediately upon being elected to office?

Recycling pick up once a week and bring back Bulk trash pickup. Implement a Zero Waste strategy which in some cities have brought down waste reduction by 30-40% and helped with sustainability measures.

7. What can the City do that is not already doing to attract new businesses to enhance the assessable base within the City?

Technological advances over the last few years have really engaged the entrepreneurial spirit. The Bio-Tech industry and cyber-security are two examples. The fact is that innovation should be encouraged with Frederick being the triangle of connection between Washington D.C. and Baltimore. The city can enhance its own technology by bringing its website with easier navigational information models and marketing the Economic Development Department of how Frederick is a wonderful community with a great educational system. Another attraction can be a small business incubator network that prepares entrepreneurs in strategic actions for business and connecting with our local educational institutions for preparation and training.

8. What is your position on the East Street planning effort? How familiar are you with the corridor planning efforts currently underway? What would you like to see done differently with regard to the future of East Street?

The East Street Planning effort is encouraging in particular with citizen participation. Developing this corridor will only help the City in its attraction for businesses, future citizens and tourists. I'm relatively familiar with efforts that have been discussed and being planned. As the development and projects move forward we must ensure that the connectivity remains in place as far as walk ability and traffic considerations.

9. The State of Maryland recently decided to relocate the Department of Social Services out of the William Donald Schaeffer Building on All Saints Street. Moving those critical human services and programs may hamper client’s efforts to access them. What can the City do to help ensure continued access to critical services? What is the City’s responsibility in this regard, if any?

The City can do a number of things to ensure that residents have access to these critical services. Outreach efforts and partnerships should be available in various parts of our city so that residents can have reasonable access. Also, with the location change the availability and access of transportation models should be utilized. The city can also continue with neighborhood strengthening programs and implement best practice models to address poverty across our city which can include affordable housing and job/skill development.

10. How do you as a candidate for office feel about the role of the City regulatory agencies (permits/inspections/planning/zoning/historic preservation)? Do you believe that City departments have an obligation to accommodate citizen and business owner requests that are
legal, legitimate and appropriate? Do you think this is something that is already in place, could use some guidance, or needs a lot more focus and vision from the City elected leaders?

We can streamline our process by using the technological aspects. Filling out documents can be made available online and the response of this will in turn present a high model of customer service. City Departments most certainly have an obligation to accommodate citizen and business owner requests that are legal, legitimate and appropriate. The city should always be trying to enhance the response time, customer service approach and accessibility to the citizenry of our city. Ideas such as developing strategic approaches that include customer/citizen focus, transparency and a development review process. Also, the employees of these various divisions should have input on how effective and best practices that enable them to deliver the level of efficient service.

11. With the vibrant growth of downtown in recent years, Frederick has become a weekend destination for people from across the region. What types of investments do you feel the City should make to attract businesses and skilled workers to relocate to the City of Frederick permanently? Are there internal processes that you feel the City can improve upon to position it to be more attractive to prospective businesses and residents?

The attraction has to initially start with the intentionality to market the City and what it has to offer through a variety of means. Social media, print and continual personal contacts. We should continue to ensure that our city is safe and the sense of respect and safety is to the highest standard. The ability to offer Affordable housing initiatives that can help people in particular young skilled workers and a small business incubator network that promotes creativity. The diversity of our city should also be celebrated and used as an advantage of what it is and will continue to be in celebrating this as strength. We have to maintain walk ability and connectivity within the downtown framework. Infrastructure improvements and sidewalks that enable for safe travel are beneficial investments.