

# Jimmy Trout, Candidate for County Council District 4

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## COUNTY COUNCIL QUESTION

1. This Council will be tasked with appointing a Charter Review Committee, what charter changes do you support? What type of committee members will you be considering for appointment?

### ANSWER:

Currently the Charter is written to only allow the Council authority to decrease budget items. I would like to see the Council to also have authority to add items, and even present their own budget for discussion with the County Executive. In my opinion, the members of the Charter Review Committee should be appointed by both the Republican Central Committee and the Democratic Central Committee. If these two parties equally appoint the same number of members, the discussion and results derived will be bi-partisan and a good representation of the citizens.

2. [We didn't get to this question at the forum:](#) Based on your respective campaign commitments, what specific growth policies and regulations do you plan to introduce?

### ANSWER:

Eight out of ten constituents I talk to are worried about overdevelopment. My commitment is to capitalism and the free market and I believe if you allow the free market to work without over government regulation, the competitive side of growth will right itself. Developers will compete with each other by presenting more attractive packages that will exceed benefits gained through forced impact fees. At this time, I do not have specific policies or regulations to introduce, but rather feel a hard look needs to be had at what is already on the books and whether or not it is beneficial to what the constituents want.

3. Livable Frederick, now going on three years of preparations, has been both criticized and lauded for how it evolved. As a Council candidate, what is your perception of Livable Frederick, and what would you want to see in order to gain your support?

### ANSWER:

My perception is that Livable Frederick was done in a very partisan way and is simply a gateway to revoking more personal property rights. The Livable Frederick Plan, along with the Monocacy River Plan, should go back to the drawing board at the hands of a multi-partisan board representing all

stakeholders. The board should be nominated by the Democratic and Republican Central Committees and approved by the Council.

4. What areas should the County Staff/Planning Commission begin with their first Community and Corridor Plans, following Livable Frederick?

**ANSWER:**

The best impact for these efforts would be US 15 north and south between Rt.26 and Jefferson Street. After identifying what would result in relief, the county could then enlist financial help from the State to begin fixing identified areas. For instance, connecting the entrance ramp of one area to the exit ramp of another eliminates the motorist from merging and then un-merging from core traffic.

5. What approaches would you take to garner support for legislation that you are introducing?

**ANSWER:**

There will be no backroom deals on my behalf. I will not vote on another bill simply because a member agrees to vote on one I introduce. I will introduce and discuss bills in an open and clear format giving the members and listening parties as much information as possible. My commitment is to present legislation I feel will benefit the citizens of Frederick County. I will work to share the vision I have with others.

6. If elected and you knew you had full or enough support what one piece of legislation would you introduce day 1?

**ANSWER:**

I have no specific legislation in mind. Personally, I feel there is already too much legislation and regulation on the books, and if anything, as a Council, we need to review thoroughly what is law and see how it can be scaled back while being mindful of cause and effects. Council efforts should be focused on improving citizens quality of life, not imposing more government interference.

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7. The County Executive has the primary duty of preparing and presenting a balanced budget to the Council. The Council is restricted to reducing planned spending. Do you have priorities that you'd like to present to the County Executive for inclusion in future spending plans?

**ANSWER:**

**My priorities are: 1. Law enforcement 2. Fire and rescue 3. Infrastructure 4. Schools**

**Obviously, we spend county money on many other programs, but these top four must be funded to ensure quality of life for the community as a whole.**

8. What specific initiatives will you be pursuing to support our small businesses in Frederick County?

**ANSWER:**

Enhancing the CTC Center and curriculum is an area that should be reviewed. Many small business owners struggle to find employees who are educated in their respective fields.

In addition, we need to be more open minded about various types of businesses and in what specific zones they are approved or not approved to operate. If a business is not listed or does not fit into a certain zone, we should work to assist these owners to find a place instead of simply sending them to another jurisdiction.

9. When it comes to business-friendly policies and regulations, are there specific programs, services and regulatory changes that you would undertake?

**ANSWER:**

Frederick County does not charge personal property tax so I would propose we work with the State to eliminate the \$300 annual filing fee.

10. In your discussion with the business community what have you found to be the greatest challenges facing the business community constituents?

**ANSWER:**

Regulations, fees, taxes, permitting and finding employees. I will give you five examples of my personal experience of which I share with many business owners.

1. Regulations like minimum wage and sick leave. We may have to pay \$15 per hr. for a beginner to sweep the floor and provide sick leave.
2. Fees like the one I pay every year to be a hazardous material shipper. The best information I could get is the fee is used to enhance Indian Reservations in the mid-west.
3. Taxes. I pay \$8568.23 in annual property taxes for a 4288 square foot commercial condo. I also find the amount of taxes I pay on each employee to be outrageous.
4. When I moved my business from home, the county wanted me to lease a property before applying for the proper permits to operate. From a business perspective that's in reverse order considering I would have paid rent waiting on the permits.
5. Finding employees are extremely difficult for the hands on, blue-collar fields like electricians, plumbers, welders, and auto mechanics to name a few.

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11. If elected, what would you do to improve/enhance the relationship between the County and the Frederick County General Assembly delegation?

**ANSWER:**

I am not aware of relationship issues, but feel the simplest solution is to communicate respectfully and civilly with each other.

12. Are there any specific solutions or ideas you have identified to support accelerating the needed widening of US 15 and I-270 projects.

**ANSWER:**

At the County Council level of government, we have limited leverage to fix either road. However, I will petition the State Assembly and work with our Delegation to get the roads on a higher priority and widened. As mentioned in question #5, what we can do is work with the county staff to prioritize the high congested, problem areas of county corridors.

13. The first County Council has been seated for almost 4 years now, and has had to maneuver through establishing certain 'norms', 'processes' and 'rules of order' to administer their agenda. What is your observation of the first council and if elected what would you propose to further refine the legislative process in the County?

**ANSWER:**

While establishing norms and rules of order are never easy with new administrations, a major fallacy with the last 4 years is that public interaction and comment was reduced by 75%. It is the responsibility of the Council to act on behalf of the community. If the community is not allowed to express thoughts or concerns, how can the Council act on their behalf? Hence, I would restore council and public comments to all meetings.

The Yes or No Questions: Please take this opportunity to go beyond the simple answer of Yes or No.

One of the key initiatives the Chamber learned from the Greenville SC trip was a Citywide TIF, that was purposeful, and led to strategic investment of longer-term infrastructure needs for all types of development.

1. Do you support Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) mechanisms to support infrastructure necessary to bring forth...*Residential Opportunities...* (YES/NO)... in Frederick?

**ANSWER:**

Yes. I believe anything the government can do to ease the tax portion of building a home should be granted. This could be the start to building an "affordable house" in Frederick. We need to curb the layering effect of all the fees attached to building a new home. The fees are a huge burden on the buyer, let alone the builder, and everyone else involved in selling a new home.

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2. Do you support Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) mechanisms to support infrastructure necessary to bring forth...*Employment Opportunities (Yes/NO).....*in Frederick?

**ANSWER:**

Yes. We need more employers in Frederick County. The loss of East Alcoa, Fedders and Hartz alone were devastating and soon Triumph is leaving. The county should do everything possible to get some large employers back.

**3. Do you support Tax Incremental Financing (TIF) mechanisms to support infrastructure necessary to bring forth... *Mixed Use Opportunities (YES/NO)*...in Frederick?**

**ANSWER:**

**Yes. We have a nice mixed-use center on Route 26 and Routzahn Way and I have heard only positive responses.**

Related to financing of Infrastructure, but not utilizing a TIF as described for prior questions:

**4. Do you support broad-based taxes and fees to pay for school infrastructure needed as a result of enrollment changes?**

**ANSWER:**

**No. I would like to see a transfer fee attached to the sale of all homes to curb some of the layering effect that new home builders experience. After all, an older home can be purchased by a family of four from an elderly couple and there could be an impact on the school in that district yet no impact fees are collected.**

**5. Do you support broad-based taxes/fees to support constructing specific transportation projects?**

**ANSWER:**

**No. I am a proponent for paying for what you use. Similar to sales tax, you pay for what you buy. I like the idea of toll roads but only to get the project funded then stop the toll.**

Relative to County Operations/Separation of Powers

**6. Do you support a completely separate staff for the County Council in order for the Council to have independent-or-autonomous review and analysis of legislative initiatives that come before them?**

**ANSWER:**

**Yes. Though I am not fond of growing government even more, the last 4 years have demonstrated a need for the separation of operations and powers.**

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Over the last four years the County Executive has introduced as much legislation as the Council. Further if you look at the Council bills, many are as a result of an administrative policy or issues that required the Council to take up as a result of administrative actions.

**7. Do you think the Executive Branch is attempting to address too many legislative initiatives as opposed to running the administrative arm of the County, or is this the right approach?**

**ANSWER:**

**Yes. The Executive should concentrate on day to day business and determine the best way to run the county without increasing our budget.**

The Frederick County Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO) has been in existence for nearly 30 years. During that time, there have been specific adjustments to how it is administered with the most recent significant changes occurring in 2008. Now, **in 2018** with a rapidly changing economy, demonstrated shifts in county demographics, and housing choice preference from both existing/resale and new home buyers, combined with programmatic decisions affecting capacity in different ways throughout the County.

**8. Do you support a comprehensive review and analysis for best practices and enactment of a better approach that will lead Frederick County's Growth Management into the next decade?**

**ANSWER:**

**Yes, but we cannot simply add extra fees to an existing APFO like bill # 18 -13 introduced by our Executive. In some cases, this bill can increase fees to the builder by 75%. Considering a builder only makes 3 to 5% per unit, this trend of adding layers as enacted by the current Executive and Council cannot continue.**

The council addressed a number of bills brought forth to them affecting business development and land use;

**9. Do you support a more targeted approach to updating certain code/zoning changes, rather than dealing with issues on a piecemeal basis?**

**ANSWER:**

**No. I think we need to keep an open mind when a business wants to operate in a certain zone that it is not approved simply because the county has not seen an application of that type before.**

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