

## Candidate's Name: M.C. Keegan- Ayer

### 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:** The Council has been addressing what we saw as flaws in the Charter on a systematic basis based on what we were experiencing as we worked within its boundaries. There are still discussions about other potential changes which some of us on the Council think need to be considered. However, I think each Council should choose to address these types of concerns or not as they work within the Charter.

At this point, I would be reluctant to consider appointing anyone who is not fairly knowledgeable about the Charter as it stands now, its history and why it was written the way it was, and how it has been functioning the past four years.

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:** I appreciate the opportunity to address this particular issue. While I have no campaign "commitments", I plan to examine more closely the zoning restrictions currently placed on the type of uses allowed under the MXD floating zone. We have heard from several developers that the current uses are not keeping pace with actual demand and might need to be tweaked. I would like to see if there are additional uses that could be compatible with other already allowed uses in the MXD zone, especially where there is already a residential component.

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:** I answered this particular question during the forum but will do so again. I sat on the Livable Frederick Committee and the Education and Economic Subcommittee, so I am somewhat biased about the process for developing this document. That said, it does not mean that the plan cannot be tweaked in order to address some of the concerns that have already be brought to the Council's attention by members of the public. Most of the concerns have to do with a basic understanding of the plan and how it was derived and how it will be used. These can be addressed through more public discussions and that will take place as the Council begins its public input process. I believe most of the concern with the plan right now is based on the fact that this is a new way of doing comprehensive planning and people do not understand the plan or the process for how the plan will be used in the future. Again, I believe these will be addressed more thoroughly through the public process as it moves forward.

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

**ANSWER:** At this time, I will leave that up to the Planning Commission and the staff.

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

**ANSWER:** I would use the same strategies I have used for the past four years, and as I have used successfully for many years advocating for our schools – I would talk to my colleagues. I have found that usually having a conversation with my colleagues and actually listening to them, we can find common ground on which to build consensus.

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

**ANSWER:** Again, I answered this in the forum. I have already begun to reach out to the farming community to get their input for a possible tweaking of the solar legislation to lift some of the sizing restrictions on solar arrays on ag properties in the county. It has come to my attention that there are some farmers who would like to see these restrictions reduced, particularly in certain areas of the county where the farmland is not as productive. But again, I work with the farm community to determine where and how this could be changed.

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:** I have always availed myself of the opportunity to speak directly with the CE about my budget priorities. This is how I was able to ensure that the money was included in the budget for the full build out of FHS, and the over-sized gym for Butterfly Ridge ES. I have also gone to her during off budget cycles for assistance with other budget issues arising in my district that are not strictly governed by the City budget. And yes, I will go to her again once this election is over to speak to her about the budget and the priorities for District 3 as I have heard them from my constituents, should I be re-elected.

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

**ANSWER:** I was the primary sponsor of the legislation establishing the tax credit for small businesses that expand or relocate to Frederick County and successfully advocated for the passage of that legislation. I sponsored and pushed through the Golden Mile Enterprise Zone that allows businesses along the Golden Mile to obtain low interest loans to renovate their facilities or expand their facilities as long as they remain on the Golden Mile. I will continue to look for ways to help our small businesses survive and compete and I will continue working with both the City and the County's Offices of Economic Development to address issues as they arise that inhibit the ability of small businesses to thrive in Frederick County.

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

**ANSWER:** I have no plans. I believe that bottom up legislation usually fares better than top down. This would also apply to any proposed legislation regarding policies and regulations governing businesses. But any proposed changes would have to be in the form of legislation NOT policy or

regulation, because the Council is the legislative branch of the Frederick County government. Policies and regulations are promulgated by the administrative branch.

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

**ANSWER:** I have attended numerous business openings around the City and County. I have heard many comments about “fees are too high”. At present, I am trying to determine whether it is the County or the City which is making it difficult for small businesses to locate here. My concern however, is that we not reduce these fees in such a way that the cost of providing the necessary oversight to the small business (meaning the processing and oversight of the application to ensure that the business will be operating safely) is not then passed on to the other taxpayers in the County. These fees have been established to cover the cost of providing the services to the business. The cost of providing service should not be picked up by the rest of the taxpayers who may or may not utilize that business.

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

**ANSWER:** Communication. There is little to no communication between the delegation and the County government. From the Council perspective, we had to scramble constantly to try and figure out what they were doing and when we needed to weigh in on legislative issues. The Council is willing to work with the delegation and send our input on the issues, but we have to know what they are and when to give that input. In addition, it is frustrating to hold public hearings to get the public perspective, send that information and perspective to the delegation, only to seemingly have it ignored.

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:** Unfortunately, these projects are under the jurisdiction on the state and the federal governments. We are working with each to address the needs as quickly as possible but there is only so much money available and there are many projects all competing for the same pot. Currently, neither of these is at the top of the priority list for Frederick County with either the state or federal government.

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:** Wow, there are so many directions I could take this. I think the process for moving the legislation itself is fine. It is open, transparent and gives the public ample time in which to give input on any proposed legislation. I think the personalities of some of the current members have hampered

the Council's ability to look cohesively at any proposed legislation and to work together to pass the best legislative product. But again, from speaking with other elected officials from other counties around the state, this is the normal process which counties undergo when changing forms of government and it does settle down as people get more comfortable with the change and the elected members begin to better understand their roles as legislators only.

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: No.**

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

**ANSWER: Possibly.** It depends on what infrastructure improvements would be necessary for the development and whether or not those improvements would also provide an additional benefit to the surrounding community. In addition, it would depend on whether or not that particular improvement was one that was already needed in the area, or whether it was only needed because of the proposed development.

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

**ANSWER: Again, it depends.** Please see the answer above. Added to the answer above, would be the input of how many possible jobs the proposed development might be providing and also possibly whether or not those jobs would actually allow a large percentage of the actual residents to live and work in the same community, thus reducing congestion on the roads in the area.

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: Again, it depends on what sort of "broad-based taxes and fees" you are referencing.** I don't make blanket statements about what I will or will not support without having additional information.

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

**ANSWER: Again, it would depend on the type of tax or fee and what project would be supported.**

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:** No. I do not feel this is needed or necessary for the best result. In the past four years, I have encountered very little problems working with “administrative staff” once I made clear the legislative component of my request. Part of the problem is that we are still going through the transition period for this Charter government and we have some Council members who want to be giving staff directions (that would be an administrative function). That is not our role as the legislative branch of government. To have an entirely separate staff would mean we would need our own planning and zoning division, our own legal department, our own budgeting team etc. This would prove extremely costly to the tax-payers of the County and would in essence just be providing duplicative services and information. It is my belief that we can get the information we need, as long as it is related to legislation on which we are working. And I have been able to do just that with very little difficulty. However, the ability to effectively communicate even when we don’t necessarily agree on the issue is critical.

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:** No. The Council has had some difficulty finding its footing as we changed over to this form of government. The County Exec. has already had 12 years of experience as a commissioner, and as such has had experience as a legislator. In addition, as the manager of all the different divisions of the County, she sees and hears from the divisions where changes may need to be made in order to have the government function better and be more responsive to the needs of our residents. In checking with other counties around the state, this is not unusual for the first term or two when a county changes from a commissioner form of government to a Charter form (or even a Home Rule form). It is my belief that as we continue this transition, the legislative branch will become more productive in introducing legislation, and more of that legislation will make it through the process as the members get more adept at refining their legislation to address countywide issues.

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. I do believe that any legislation that has been in effect for that length of time should be looked at again to ensure that it is still working the way it was intended. But I will not commit to supporting the enactment of any legislation without first knowing what it is. How do I know that “it” is a better approach? I believe it would be irresponsible to commit to something of this magnitude without more information.

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:** Yes, I already talked about this from the MXD perspective above. Any zoning change needs to be looked at first from the 30,000 foot range to see its potential impact on the county as a whole rather than a specific area or development. It is sometimes easy to get caught up in the attempt to “fix a problem” for one area without considering the impact of a proposed change on the rest of the county. This is the problem we encountered when legislation was being proposed to address a problem with the MXD zoning for only one development or addressing a zoning violation for only one business. Any change in zoning must be looked at countywide to ensure that the change will be fair for all.