

## Questions for Candidates for Mayor and Board of Aldermen for the City of Frederick

Full verbatim answers (without any editing for syntax, spelling or grammar) will be provided on the Chamber of Commerce website as a part of our effort to inform our members in preparation for the upcoming election.

Please provide a 250-word introduction in addition to your specific responses to the questions below.

Responses can be in the form of a word processor program attachment or embedded in an email. Email responses should be sent to [rweldon@frederickchamber.org](mailto:rweldon@frederickchamber.org), and must be received by **COB August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2017.**

The Frederick County Chamber of Commerce recently led a fact-finding trip to Greenville South Carolina. The trip included Chamber staff, Board members, Chamber Partners-in-Trust, the County Executive, senior staff from the Mayor's Office, economic development staff from both the City and County, along with others. The purpose of the trip was to study the experience, strategies and partnerships that have led Greenville to an economic renaissance in housing, job creation and urban revitalization. Several themes emerged, but Greenville Mayor Knox White often remarked that a visionary, focused local government was essential to their success. It is within that context that we offer you the following questions. Unlike some questionnaires, we understand that **some of these responses will require more than a 100 word answer.** Therefore, we encourage you to express yourself fully on each question.

### **Introduction:**

**Bruce Blatchley;**

**Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to be introduced to your Chamber members.**

I have lived, worked, played and built homes in Austin, Texas for about 22 years. When I moved to Frederick City, I found myself comparing Frederick to Austin. I have seen what a partnership between business, residents and government can do. It is time we start doing more of that, in Frederick City. I want to use my experience and knowledge to improve this treasure in Maryland.

1. 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?

- **Review our options, having the City in charge is not the most cost effective way**

- **Explore who will be using the Hargett Farm and what cities such as Greenville and other counties, have done**
  - **Determine what is really needed and find a Developer that will assist in meeting that goal**
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?
- **Create special “tax areas” that would increase R/E taxes on properties such as Asiana**
3. 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?
- **Tax/Equity is frequently reviewed, my intention is to ensure competent, knowledgeable, people are appointed to review this**
  - **Taxes in the City are too high. Reduce them through increasing efficiencies**
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?
- **Traffic as we now have in the City is a deterrent to business, grown and keeping our City vibrant**
  - **Create a volunteer committee, dedicated to meeting with State and Federal offices, until we get funding for widening our roads and improving our infrastructure**
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.
- **Do as the ARC does, get them to work. Make work projects for them so they can increase their self-respect and dignity and feel like a needed and accepted part of our community**
  - **Everyone has rights, the homeless as well as the tax paying residents and business owners, if we have lost or moral compass due to personal freedoms, we may have to create laws to enforce at level of decency**
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6. Assuming you had the support, what one measure would you implement almost immediately upon being elected to office?

- **Lower property taxes, fees and over burdensome regulation and the size of the government**
7. What can the City do that it is not already doing to attract new businesses to enhance the assessable base within the City?
- **Lower taxes, and fees, reduce regulations, review the city's zoning and growth plan, improve the road system**
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?
- **I am in favor of The East Street planning effort because it will create jobs and enlarge the tax base, creating revenue for the city allowing taxes to decrease and services to our residents**
  - **I am not familiar with what has been done so far**
  - **For it to get moving**
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?
- **Work with the County to make sure public transportation serves these areas**
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?
- **Develop a committee of volunteers that can review and make hard recommendations to improve these agencies and their regulations**
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?.
- **People want to feel safe, have the needed, modern infrastructure, adequate mix of Commercial, Residential development and jobs**
  - **Seniors need to know that they will be able to afford to live here in years to come**

