

Introduction:

My name is Hayden Duke, Republican candidate for Alderman, and I can see the future. I say this because I am a substitute teacher working towards my certification in Elementary Education and every day I walk into a classroom here in Frederick I see our future, the children of Frederick. It is for the future that I am running, to ensure that when those students are graduating high school or college and looking to begin their adult life that they look here to Frederick. Will they be able to afford to live here? Will they be able to find high quality jobs here? If they choose to open a business will they find a business-friendly climate here? Or, will they have to look elsewhere? The decisions we in this election will determine the answer to those questions.

I would also like to take this opportunity to introduce myself to you. In addition to being a graduate student studying education I am a proud homeowner on Carrollton Drive. I have volunteered with the Frederick County Ethics and Human Relations Commissions as well as having taught Citizenship at Centro Hispano and serving as a Coordinator of my NAC.

I look forward to sharing my vision for Frederick with you over the coming weeks and months. I envision a transparent City government that promotes responsible growth, tackles blight, embraces and unleashes the entrepreneurial spirit, that values the job creator and the worker and honors each tax dollar collected by spending it wisely.

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, and must be received by COB August 8th, 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.

Remember that a reader will only give you a limited amount of attention, so brevity will help ensure readership. We will NOT edit your responses, either, so use care with your work! If you write it, Chamber members will read it!

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?

The Hargett Farm presents a challenge to the City's budget and we will have to be creative in our thinking and our budgeting. But, it is clear that inaction is not an option as the debt will continue to accrue whether we move forward or not. In January the Aldermen voted on a scaled down plan from the \$98 million dollar proposed plan. I would suggest that we may also want to look at a lease back option for the creation of some multipurpose fields, allow a private business to build the fields, have the City lease them back and then start collecting revenue on the use of those fields. I know of several organizations that are always looking for a good open space to practice in. This would only dent the massive debt we owe in regard to this farm but it's a start and it will show that we must use ingenuity and creative thinking in order to make this profitable for the City and the taxpayers.

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?

It has been an irritant and it is frustrating for merchants and residents alike. The Blighted and Vacant Property Ad Hoc Committee was formed and made several recommendations to deal with this. Then another committee was formed, only this time it did not have the word "Blight" in it. One thing is clear, we are not going to solve the problem by more committees.

The initial committee came up with a report and I would suggest that we follow those recommendations. There was a Blighted Property Watch List that was created but has not been updated since December 1, 2016. Residents and business owners are right to be irritated, both at the blight and the response to it. Having a property like the Asiana shuttered – in the middle of the business district – not only costs the City potential revenue but also keeps City residents from the potential of employment at such a location. This is unacceptable. We need to take a firm line and follow the recommendations up to and including the Public Nuisance Receivership Program.

We must ensure that we are consistent in application and that we are not content to let blighted property continue to plague our City.

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?

As residents of the City we pay taxes to both the City and the County often for the same services. Our taxes can hinder our City being competitive in attracting business and residents. I have had more conversations than I can count with people who say that they would love to move to Frederick but that they just can't afford to – and they usually point to the property taxes, it can be expensive to live and own a business here. Just this past First Saturday I had a young couple tell me that "maybe, someday" they can afford to move to Frederick.

We have services that we need to pay for but we need to constantly understand that people have choices, they don't have to move to our City, we need to make this City as affordable as possible for our current and future residents and business owners. But, we cannot forget that City taxes can also be a hindrance to keeping our longtime residents. To have a longtime Frederick resident priced out of the City that their tax dollars, over the decades, have helped create is unconscionable. We need to look at a senior citizen tax credit among other tax relief for our residents.

This question will also allow us to continue the dialogue to see how we can work more closely with the County regarding any duplication of services.

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?

During the school year I commute up to Mt. St. Mary's in Emmitsburg for classes several nights a week and experience the traffic bottleneck as do so many residents and business owners. We can look at supporting the idea of making Route 15 more of an Expressway through town. We can support the idea of expanding lanes where possible.

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.

It is not unreasonable for a resident or merchant to expect that the City will enforce laws regarding loitering while ensuring that Carroll Creek remains a welcoming place to all. We cannot afford to lose business on the Creek (either in the form of visitors or residents who bypass the Creek and continue on Market Street or business owners who decide not to locate there) and have residents be frustrated with lack of action regarding this problem. We must not tolerate chronic loitering in our Parks or on our Creek.

We must not be afraid to enforce our laws but that doesn't mean that we should not be compassionate. For the homeless we should ensure that they are aware of the services available through organizations here in Frederick. We can also look at other localities and see how they have worked with the homeless population in such programs as Housing First that has decreased chronic homelessness in Utah by 91%. Let's be creative, let's bring our most creative minds together to work on this problem.

Frederick is a welcoming and compassionate City, one of the reasons that many of us have chosen to call it home. Let us use that compassion to help everyone in our City but let us also firmly and unapologetically state that we will not tolerate chronic loitering that negatively impacts our residents and our merchants.

6. Assuming you had the support, what one measure would you implement almost immediately upon being elected to office?

There are many changes that I would like to implement from Election Reform to tax reform but I would propose a Senior Citizen Tax Credit comparable to the one passed by the County. Many of our seniors have lived here the majority or all of their lives and with rising costs, increases like the 3% sewer and water fees per year until 2019 they are struggling. They are the ones who have paid taxes over the years to make Frederick the City it is today. They were there when Frederick needed them, the least we can do is help them in return.

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

Our Department of Economic Development works hard to bring business here to the City of Frederick. Is there something more that we can do? Absolutely. We can streamline the permitting and regulatory process to make Frederick more attractive, we can lower the cost of doing business in Frederick, businesses have enough going on without having to worry about the government. I would ask the businesses that have moved here what has worked well and what hasn't and I would ask the businesses who are considering moving here what Frederick could do to help seal the deal?

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 regarding the future of East Street?

I take my old dog around Frederick often, you've probably seen him, he's the red Chow Chow who rides in a wagon, and when I walk around Frederick I am awed not only by what exists but what potential exists. That potential in the East Street Corridor is unlimited. Having served on the inaugural board of the Golden Mile Alliance I can say that I am very much in favor of the East Street planning effort.

I am very familiar with the planning efforts currently underway and with the small area plan. I like how the plan is more detailed oriented than vast, we need concrete steps to move forward. East Street Rising has my support.

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?

When the DSS was moved from All Saints Street out to 1888 N. Market Street this did indeed hamper access to services and programs. Ease of access to this location was very important, clients could walk or take a short bus ride. With the office now being on the northside of Frederick those same clients may have challenges getting there to access these services.

As has been discussed I would look at increased bus service to the new location with a stop at the building. Previously the State Secretary of Transportation had mentioned that the state could help with the cost of the increased bus service.

We can also consider what organizations still in the Downtown area can work with the DSS to help provide access to the services. We can also ensure that we take advantage of any and all grants that would help us with funding.

The City does have a responsibility to help and advocate for all its residents, especially those who are in the most need, in a cost effective and compassionate manner.

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?

The City regulatory agencies do have a role but I think some roles may need clarification from the City's elected leaders. For example, the Historic Preservation Commission's guidelines need to be updated, in fact an article in the FNP states that the "guidelines have not been looked at recently and copies are not readily available." Any regulatory agency should always have updated guidelines, residents and business owners should know exactly what to expect and be able to see those guidelines at any time. There should be no question or ambiguity under any circumstances.

I absolutely believe that City departments and all of City government has a duty to accommodate citizen and business owner requests that are legal, legitimate and appropriate. The City works to serve its citizens and not the other way around. As I've said, you shouldn't have to fight City Hall, City Hall should be fighting for you.

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?

Frederick has been fortunate to have had leaders who had a vision for the future, a vision that is now coming to fruition and that we are enjoying today.

It is important that we continue to attract businesses and skilled workers to relocate here, we can do this by working to lower our taxes and make Frederick more affordable as well as streamlining the process for business to come here. But, we also must remember that we must

continue to reinvest in our existing City infrastructure. It will do us no good if we are working to attract new business and residents and we have residents and business leaving. While I see the future I cannot ignore the past or the present so I want to work hard on behalf of both current and future residents and business owners here in Frederick. We have a lot of hard work ahead of us to continue to move Frederick forward.