

Worman's Mill Civic Association Membership Meeting
Minutes Sept. 18, 2013 Homewood

President Allan Carlson called the meeting to order at 6:35 pm and explained the program for the evening.

Tom Gill announced the candidates for the 2014 Civic Association Board. The candidates are Carol Goldstein, president; Allan Carlson, vice president; Bill Levin, secretary; Allan Joseph, treasurer; Anne Arnold, at-large; Helen Maiwald, at-large; and Dedra Salitrik, at-large. Voting for the candidates will be held at the December membership meeting.

Allan Carlson introduced attendee Katie Nash, candidate for alderman. He also honored Alan Lehrman for his many years of volunteer service.

Allan Joseph introduced the mayoral candidates: Mayor Randy McClement, (Republican); Jennifer Dougherty, (unaffiliated); Karen Young (Democrat). He explained the rules for answering questions from a list that had been previously sent to the candidates. He then asked several of the questions.

*Question 1 What do you believe should be done to alleviate traffic congestion? In particular, how would you propose to resolve the traffic congestion that the planned Super Wal-Mart at the intersection of Monocacy Blvd. and Route 26 will create for Worman's Mill residents? This question was directed first to Mayor Randy McClement.

R. McClement stated that increased traffic shows growth. This is the good side. Developers are asked for traffic and school mitigation. There is no magic answer, but we need to try to make sure roads are manageable enough now and five years out.

J. Dougherty:

Monocacy Blvd. and Rt. 15 interchange is a 40 million dollar project supported only by taxpayers. I want an infrastructure bank where 2 ½ million dollars per year is set aside for road projects. I support development, but it is not only a good thing... NAC meetings should be given a planning report before traffic mitigation plans are approved.

K. Young:

Frederick will grow to 90,000 by 2030 and needs to plan smartly and concurrently with growth. Traffic is a big challenge. We can't attract economic development without planned infrastructure. Super Wal-Mart has not been approved. The last version of the plan, submitted in July, was deemed unacceptable because it did not demonstrate how traffic will be mitigated on the east side of Monocacy Blvd. or how southbound traffic on Rt. 26 will be mitigated.

*Question 2 The city police department is understaffed, yet more is expected of this reduced force. How will you address and pay for Frederick City's need for a greater police force presence?

J. Dougherty:

Crime was down when I served. The police staff was 126 then, but not now. There are fewer officers, but taxes are not lowered. We need two back-to-back trainings for new officers and a one year incentive for senior officers who stay. We need to make sure Thomas Ledwell has technology and a community service kiosk on Carroll Creek as well as other crime "hot spots."

R. McClement:

Municipalities have basic responsibilities to provide public works and safety. We have 23% less revenue. How to provide 141 police officers with less money? A full year passes between an application for a police position and that person becoming an officer on the street. We have no money to fund a second academy. We are searching for "laterals" who come from another police department. This only takes three months. We've hired five laterals this year. Last year we hired

six. Police officers have a stressful job. They work eight years and leave. Some have injuries and they are off duty while recovering.

K. Young:

Frederick City has an authorized force of 141 officers. Currently there are 121 on staff. Two reasons for the shortage are physically incapacitated officers and the hiring challenge caused by strict criteria. Police Chief Ledwell's frustration is hiring. One suggestion is to consider offering a hiring bonus. Also, our strategic plan is ten years old and needs updating. That plan estimated the need for 2.5 officers per 1,000 population. Is this adequate? Chief Ledwell says, "No." He needs to identify adequate staffing. Is an annex on the west side of town viable? It would be a good solution, but would need staffing such as a receptionist, etc. Staffing is also needed for academies. We don't always need back-to-back trainings.

*Question 3 Please explain how you propose to fund the pensions and corresponding medical benefits for our current and retired public city employees.

K. Young:

Pensions are funded at the 47% level. Bond rating agencies want them funded at 80%. We need a course correction. Don't touch retirees, only existing employees. Our pension trust is not invested wisely. It needs to be and after 20 months of talking, nothing has been done.

R. McClement:

Pension fund is balanced. Promises were made to existing employees and retirees. We lost pension investments like everyone else did, and we're trying to make that deficit up. Want to be at 80% in 5 years. New employees are in a new plan.

J. Dougherty:

Group in charge has met 40 times. Haven't yet fixed the pension deficit. I would propose exempting current retirees. Those within 5 years of retirement can opt into the current plan. Also, impose a post retirement hiring cap.

*Question 4 Describe the process you would use to balance bringing in potential revenue with a hotel/conference center with the multi-million dollar cost to the city.

R. McClement:

Define the hotel-it will have a large meeting space. Feasibility study done in 2009 showed downtown is ripe for this. Second feasibility study showed the numbers are good for a downtown hotel built as a partnership with tourism and the City of Frederick sharing. I want it to happen without taxpayers paying for it. The city is not building the hotel.

K. Young:

Not a convention center (space for 1,000 or more), but a conference center with space for 200-300. Working with an outside consultant to determine where to put it and how to fund it. We're the second largest city in the state. The cost includes a \$10 million gap. Taxpayers should not pick this gap up. Could get the funds through parking fees. The land for the conference center was sold at a fire sale price under the previous administration. Could use a public-private partnership and state funding or a land exchange.

J. Dougherty:

Public-private partnership equals public money. I support the conference center. It is not necessary for the government to do it. Baltimore and D.C. show that government money doesn't equal success. Essential services of government don't include building hotels. Private sector needs to accept responsibility.

*Question 5 Do you believe the city should provide funds to support the arts? If so, how will you justify the cost, and where will the money come from?

K. Y.

The Weinberg costs the city \$135,000. per year plus HVAC and sound system cost another \$400,000 over the past 4-5 years. This amounts to \$3.45 per resident and is a valuable, quality of life expense that makes Frederick unique with national recognition. The Weinberg contributes to local education by offering programs to 5,000 students per year. The economic return is great with \$25.00 spent per person on retail. Yes, the city should invest in the arts.

J. D.

Art is valuable and adds value to downtown. The investment needs to be finite. I want a return to a grant application process to help make money go farther. I like the idea of a public arts commission. It would create a sense of community. I created the arts district. We need public safety and economic development so the arts should have a finite amount of money distributed through a process.

R. Mc.

Served on tourism council for 12 years. Art brings tourists into town. John Healy is excellent. We're attracting people from all over. Bridge is a big attraction as a piece of art. We have a Way Off Broadway Theater. We need to encourage arts. We've been designated one of the top 10 arts communities in the country. Craft artists are here. It's profitable for them. Bechtel is here as well as arts, baseball, great housing and the Weinberg.

*Question 6 How would you incorporate the existing blighted and underutilized area of Frederick (such as the Golden Mile and downtown condemned buildings) into your plans for a vibrant city?

R. Mc.

In Fredericktown Mall there is a property owners' side and a city side. We need comprehensive rezoning of areas. West End and the Golden Mile Alliance need to have a vision for the future of their properties. We need a balance. East Frederick Rising and the Carroll Creek project, a hotel and conference center will help.

J. D.

We're selling ourselves short. We need to hold property taxes down. How can we make an area strong? With employment, not necessarily retail. Frederick Memorial Hospital is landlocked. Don't need just more competition for retail. Eastside-mixed use is essential. Commercial base needs to be up front, not at the end of development.

K.Y.

The best way to grow is infill. Would you go to the Golden Mile for medical treatment? Do you use conditional rezoning? We voted to do this-to develop mixed use areas such as Frederick Rising: 2,000 acres that offer technology, a park, and that is 5 times the size of the Carroll Creek area. We need to use receivership more aggressively with blighted storefronts.

This ended the first part of the candidates' forum. Questions were now taken from the audience.

*Dr. Leadbetter asked about traffic concerns due to the Wal-Mart development.

K.Y.

It is not up to the government to choose winners and losers. Government rezones and makes sure APFO requirements and section 411 rules are met. This allows projects to proceed if developer has made sure traffic and safety issues are addressed.

J.D.

Traffic is already a nightmare with Wegmans.

R. Mc. Felt that he had previously answered this question.

*Joanne Seaman asked if there is a way to re-route traffic on Monocacy Blvd. once Wal-Mart is built so that cars will not be directed behind the animal hospital and CVS.

R. Mc.

The city will review this. The city doesn't have the right-of-way.

Allan Joseph asked the candidates whether "eminent domain" might be used to force this traffic pattern.

K.Y.

Monocacy Blvd. issues will need to be approved.

J.D.

City can't make CVS or the animal hospital give up their land for traffic flow issues.

*Joe Pinto asked what each of the candidates will do for Worman's Mill.

J.D.

Lower property taxes from 5% to 3%. Why does Frederick have high taxes? We choose to live in the city because we want services.

R. Mc.

What can we do to manage taxes? Provide maintenance and reasonable services. Overall tax decrease based on tax differential. Need to examine algorithm and eliminate duplication of services.

K.Y.

Reversed question...What do you want the city to do for you that we're not doing? We can go to NAC meetings. We want to be your partner. I did represent this community in an issue when I felt you didn't have a voice. We're working with a formula that is 20 years old and has artificial constraints. I've served on the Maryland legislature, We need state support for reasonable growth with accurate taxation. Check the pie charts to see how taxes are allocated.

*The next question concerned the duplication of cost for condo owners in Worman's Mill who pay for their snow removal and trash pick-up out of their condo fees, and pay taxes for the same service.

K.Y.

This is an issue with all condo owners, not just Worman's Mill. You have described the problem accurately. The solution requires a review of taxes and services.

J.D and R. Mc. declined to answer this question.

*Lorenzo York asked each candidate what their motivation is for running for mayor.

J.D.

I love Frederick. Lived here 26 years and made it home. I have ideas. I know government can work better than it does now. My approach is basic, but my joy comes from the great untapped potential of the city. I love the work, am committed, am a business owner here, and bring skills important for today.

K.Y.

It's a given. We all love Frederick. The recession lingers. Responsibility has been shifted to the local level. Can't count on Annapolis to fund projects anymore. We're at a crossroads where city officials take responsibility into their own hands. I love a challenge, not the same old, same old. I

believe that we're poised on the brink of a second renaissance with input from residents.

R. Mc.

In civics class we learned to give back. I love this town. Have owned a bagel shop for 12 years and naturally started doing things for the community: served on ethics commission, charter review committee, tourism board. I want to see the forward movement of projects such as East Frederick Rising.

*Ann Arnold asked why Frederick has an all volunteer fire department.

R. Mc.

It has been run like this by the county for the past 30 years. There are pros and cons.

J.D.

We can have the conversation if we want to have our own fire department. However, they augment services at no cost.

K.Y.

I would hesitate duplicating this service and have to pay for 22 additional fire departments around the city.

*Dedra Salitrik asked each candidate how they would make Frederick a greener city.

K.Y.

Sustainability. Recycling. Need holistic approach, reduce emissions and have regional responsibility for clean water, air. We need quantifiable goals for one and five years to measure progress. Roll out the state programs that are already in place.

R. Mc.

We've taken steps with street lights and other lights, a bicycle ad-hoc committee to make Frederick more friendly for bikes and pedestrians. Possible consideration of a solar field near the airport and solar panels on top of garages.

J.D.

I would suggest a "get off the grid" program, and get the Conservation Core to map, clean up, restore and protect the 7,000 acre watershed in Catocin Forest that filters our water.

Allen Joseph then asked each candidate to provide a summary of their strengths.

J.D.

Provided an anecdote about her determination when first learning to swim. I am direct and involved. Tell the truth and work hard. Frederick has a \$135 million dollar budget and we're doing less with more money. Things haven't progressed since I've left.

R. Mc.

I've kept taxes level with consistent services and upgrades in infrastructure. Mandated by the state to upgrade waste water treatment, and we did this without raising taxes. Attempts to expand the airport. I appointed Police Chief Thomas Ledwell and his data driven procedures. I've maintained a vibrant city without raising taxes and want four more years.

K.Y.

I have a vision for smart growth with community input. I will develop new processes to bring about fiscal responsibility. I support adopting a regional approach for change and growth. Over the past 10 years, the budget has grown by 87%, yet benefits have grown by 111%. Benefits were 45% of salary 10 years ago. Now they are 70% of salaries. I have perspective as an alderman and work well collaboratively. I'm on the Synergies Commission, the Maryland Municipal League, and am

the Chair of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. Last, but not least, I want you to be my partner by providing me with your input.

The winning ticket for a gift certificate to the Wine Kitchen was chosen, the candidates were thanked for their time and information. Allan Carlson reminded members of the upcoming holiday dinner and terminated the meeting at 9:00 pm.

Submitted by Dedra Salitrik, secretary