

## Frederick Progressives

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March 8, 2018

# 2018 Questionnaire for County Council

Dear Susan Jessee, Candidate for County Council:

Frederick Progressives, as a chapter of Progressive Maryland, is a grassroots community organization that acts for social and economic justice by developing civic leaders and cultivating allies in order to advance economic, racial, and environmental equity, and to change our economic system for the benefit of all people in Maryland.

Learn more at [www.ProgressiveMaryland.org](http://www.ProgressiveMaryland.org)

Progressive Maryland supports candidates who will work to build a society and economy that works for all Marylanders, with special emphasis on traditionally marginalized groups—low and moderate income residents, people of color, women, LGBTQ+, and all oppressed and exploited people. Elections can have an enormous impact on our work to reduce inequity and to improve the lives of residents all over the state. It is our responsibility not only to advocate for residents but also to empower them to engage in the political process at every level, from member-led canvasses to trainings for our members who wish to run for office.

To be considered for Frederick Progressives & Progressive Maryland's endorsement, please return the completed questionnaire by email to [FrederickProgressives@riseup.net](mailto:FrederickProgressives@riseup.net) no later than 5 P.M. on Friday, March 23, 2018. Your responses will be available to the public at [www.FrederickProgressives.com](http://www.FrederickProgressives.com)

Sincerely,

Josh Cassell  
Secretary -- Frederick Progressives  
(301) 928-0697

1. What is your vision for Frederick County and what will you commit to doing to ensure a future for Frederick County that provides safety, security and stability for all who live here?

I have lived in Frederick County my entire life and have and will always welcome anyone that wants to come here to live, work, and enjoy the great amenities that this county has to offer. I strongly believe that everyone should be and treated equally under the eyes of the law, no matter who they are, where they have come from, or what language they speak. I have worked in the scientific field my entire career and have had the pleasure of working with people from all over the world from many different countries, all working together to develop new therapeutics for the common good. I want the same for our county! I spoke at the council meeting in favor of abolishing the “English Only” policy because it promoted xenophobic behavior and was simply wrong. There is so much to be learned from different cultures which is what makes any area richer. I would support initiatives that would promote open dialogue, with ideas from many different people when it comes to developing policies for safety, security, stability in our schools, our community, and businesses which have a big global reach already.

2. What do you believe are Frederick County’s most critical unmet needs and how would you implement solutions to meet those needs?

I don’t believe that the Frederick County is serving the needs of our seniors adequately, our multicultural population that is here to stay, safety of our children in school, affordable housing options, and addressing the problem of heroin addiction that is killing our children. I believe that solutions come from ideas from those that are the experts in their fields and also from those that have been directly impacted by these unmet needs. County Executive Gardner has done a great job in bringing together a wide variety of people to discuss and strategize about these needs, and have come up with great ideas and solutions that have been implemented. This type of information is free and has been extremely helpful in addressing many needs throughout the county.

3. If elected, what would you do to combat police misconduct and to ensure that there are appropriate consequences and justice when police misconduct occurs?

I always believe that working together as a team brings about the best results in the end. It also provides an opportunity to have voices heard that may have been silent in the past. I also believe in talking with everyone to learn all sides of any situation to bring about the best outcome for everyone involved. That being said, I have zero tolerance for any police misconduct for any reason, especially those that target specific nationalities, or individual rights, that as citizens we all have in this country. I would want to make sure that all residents, especially those that may not have legal status, have the same rights to report crimes as those that do, and there would no repercussions after the fact. I also believe if anyone commits a serious crime, they should be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. I believe we all want to make sure our streets are safe for those that live here, work here, and visit here. Targeting one demographic to fight crime is a narrow minded way to enforce the law.

4. What do you believe are the County’s legislative priorities and how will you ensure those priorities are met?

Under the charter it is the County Executive that advances the legislative priorities of the county. The County Council has the responsibility to develop legislation for the good of all citizens. This process should be open and transparent while working closely with the delegation in Annapolis on behalf of the citizens. Current legislation that is important to our county includes some of the following: changes to the Maryland Public Ethics Law, infrastructure needs, school construction and renovations, agriculture and farming initiatives, and efforts to eliminate poverty. These are all critical to the future of our county, our roads, our schools, and our famers who some are barely surviving, as well as those at the poverty level by no fault of their own. As a council member I would focus on promoting legislation that addresses our critical needs first and would also support legislation that is forecasted to address the needs in the future. Forward thinking is the way to get things accomplished.

5. Do you support a \$15 minimum wage? Why or why not? If you do, how would you support and facilitate the enactment of a \$15 minimum wage law in Frederick County?

Yes, absolutely! The federal minimum wage has not kept up with the inflation adjusted dollar and if it had, the minimal wage now would be \$19.33/hour. In an economy increasingly characterized by the service sector, a raise in the minimum wage usually affects the lowest-paid workers. There is a racial difference for support of a higher minimum wage with most black and Hispanic individuals supporting a \$15.00 federal minimum wage, and 54% of whites opposing it. In 2015, about three percent of white, Asian, and Hispanic or Latino workers earned the federal minimum wage or less. Among black workers, the percentage was about four percent. If the raise in minimum wage is a phased in, it always creates jobs. Why? Because people who make the minimum wage or near it are struggling to get by, they spend every penny they make, they turn it over in the economy, they create jobs, they create opportunity, and they take better care of their children. It's just the right thing to do, and is also very good economics. If necessary I would support legislation in the county to bring the minimum to \$15/hr as others counties in the state of Maryland have done.

6. If elected, what would you do to increase transparency and citizen participation and engagement in the business of the County Council? Would you be willing to change the schedule of meetings where public comment is accepted to evening hours so more citizens could participate in person?

I truly believe that all voices should be heard by any citizen that wants to speak. If elected I would want to change the County Council meetings to 7pm on Thursday evenings as was done under the commissioner form of government, so that more people had the chance to come to the meetings and speak or watch them on TV after the dinner hour. I would also add public comment to every council meeting no matter what the subject of that meeting is. Public meetings are meant to share information and hear from the public on issues that pertain to the subject at hand or any issue that are important to them.

7. What laws do you believe should be implemented in Frederick County to reduce the potential for gun violence in our homes, our schools and our communities?

I do believe in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment but I don't believe the answer to gun violence is more guns, especially in schools. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment did not rule out research, but the NRA wants to curb public health data on gun violence. CDC should be allowed to research this epidemic and researchers could take gun ownership data and conduct large-scale studies that identify and develop best practices to reduce gun violence. I believe there are things that can be done to the schools immediately to make them physically safer but it takes commitment and funding. There also needs to be more resources in the identification of mental health issues at a young age within our schools and communities but again, this takes commitment and funding. Additional laws need to be put into place to track guns purchases with background checks, 100% of the time. A restriction on high capacity magazines and bump stocks is a start but many things need to be done to combat this epidemic of gun violence. How many more children must die?

8. Do you support or oppose the participation by the Frederick County's Sheriff Office in the 287g program? Why or why not?

I would like to obtain more information on what the 287g program has accomplished in Frederick County as well as the costs that have been incurred through an outside audit of this program, to best see what is going on and has been done. I do not want bad criminals walking our streets and I also do not want anyone being targeted without just cause just because of their nationality. I want to know if this program has or has not been effective in curbing crime and if anyone was treated unfairly as a result of this program. I have lots of questions about the 287g program and need answers to these questions with real data.

9. What do you see as the needs and priorities specific to the Council District you are running to represent? If At-Large, answer for the whole county.

I am running for County Council At-Large and understand that each town and area of the county has different needs and issues to address. Throughout my life I have lived in four of the five different districts, and have a good idea of what each district has to offer as well as their strengths and needs. Frederick County is so fortunate to have many unique municipalities with charm and history, which enhances the entire county as a whole. Representing the entire county as an At-Large Council member requires an open mind with a broad view in understanding that not one size fits all, and that long term effects of balanced growth and prosperity in the county will only make Frederick County a richer place to be.

10. Where do you stand on progressive issues as they apply to Frederick County including racial and gender equity; economic, environmental and climate justice; a return to true democracy where people, not profits prevail, poverty, homelessness, alcohol and drug abuse, unsafe homes, etc. as symptoms of societal injustice and failure rather than personal failure, ie, blaming the victim, etc.?

I believe in love. I believe in treating each other with respect no matter where or what conditions we live in or who we choose to love. I believe in taking care of our home – our planet because as a scientist I understand the delicate balance between living organisms and their environment and once these precious resources are gone, they may be gone forever. I believe that as humans we all have good and bad times in our lives and we must recognize and help each other during the bad times. I believe that the stigma that is associated with homelessness, alcohol and drug abuse and any other type of human process is what is wrong with many aspects of our society. If we would just treat each other with respect and dignity in the choices we make, this world would be a better place to live. Who we choose to love, how we choose to live, and issues we choose to be passionate about is what makes this county free.

11. What are the key challenges to adequate infrastructure and what would you do to address infrastructure needs.

Our county has grown tremendously in the past 10-20 years and elected officials and county staffs have done a pretty good job in keeping up with the infrastructure. However, when less money is provided at the federal level it leaves state and local governments scrambling on how to address these infrastructure needs. At times there is less money flowing from the state level as well, and The City of Frederick and Frederick County have worked together on infrastructure projects which has proven to be successful. This is not the way it should be for all projects so the county must work together with the local delegation and the state to provide real time information about the infrastructure needs in order to bring the money back to Frederick to address them. Partnerships are important in any successful venture.

12. If Frederick Progressives /Progressive Maryland does not endorse you for this race, would that affect your willingness to work with the group in the future on important issues?

No not really. I always approach any situation with an open mind looking for the facts, working towards the best overall outcome. My passion and my heart has always been to take care of others that are less fortunate and to accept people for who they are. It's not only the responsibility of our government to do this but it's our moral obligation to do this.

13. Would you be willing to support Frederick Progressives priorities by:

● cosponsoring legislation?	Yes
● testify in support of legislation?	Yes, have done so in the past many times
● write an op ed?	Yes, have done so in the past
● speaking at progressive events?	Yes
● attending meetings?	Yes, have done so in the past
● meet with our leadership group?	Yes
● give updates on shared goals?	Yes
● writing letters to endorse a labor organizing drive?	Yes
Other:	