

## Frederick Progressives

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March 8, 2018

# 2018 Questionnaire for County Council

Dear Kai Hagen, 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?**

As with some of your other questions below, this is such a big and broad and complicated question that it is hard to know where to start. So, as much as I would love to get into the weeds of it all, so to speak, and look forward to discussing any part of it in as much detail as you like if we have an interview, I'll limit my response here to some broad strokes...

As I highlighted on my campaign website (and will in written materials), I'd like to see a county/community that is "Vibrant. Affordable. Sustainable."

That means a community that is socially and culturally vibrant, inclusive and diverse.

That means a community that includes a good mix of affordable housing options (in a variety of sizes, styles, locations and prices) in decent, safe, attractive communities, with good parks and excellent schools, and multiple walking and transit options.

That means a local economy that is diverse and resilient, that supports small businesses and is sustainable in a global economy with rapidly changing technologies, etc.

That means a community that is environmentally-responsible, including such things as preserving our natural areas and "green infrastructure," protecting and improving water and air quality, improving energy efficiency and producing much more local and clean energy, managing our waste responsibly (through a combination of waste reduction, recycling, composting and more), and so on.

That means a community that preserves large and cohesive agriculture areas and our rural communities, while adjusting to and taking advantage of the changing economic and environmentally sound agricultural practices that are rapidly evolving (such as intensive, smaller scale and more diverse production, regenerative agriculture, etc.).

That means making sure that our many smaller, incorporated towns and unincorporated villages maintain a distinct and separate identity, preserving their historic elements while still thriving in our modern economy, while absolutely avoiding the kind of sprawl that would convert them into older centers at the heart of spreading and merging suburban sprawl.

As I said...broad strokes.

There are many things we can do to make any or all of those things more possible or likely. Some are relatively small and incremental. But others are both larger and critical, such as good, long term land use and planning. (More on that below.)

But, I'll add that I have spent almost my entire adult life studying and working on these things, in

a systemic and detailed manner, and always with the overarching goal of informing and engaging the citizens that make up our community.

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

Frederick County has benefited enormously AND been presented with real challenges by our proximity to two major metropolitan areas. We have also benefited from our historic past, our rich natural resources, our good agricultural soils, our relative mild weather and our location along or at the crossroads of major rivers, rail and highways.

But all our good fortune comes with challenges and risks, as well. If we do not plan wisely and well, we will sacrifice a great deal of what we love about where we live, while exacerbating many of the problems we have and challenges we face.

One way of looking at that is that we won’t get where we could get by accident.

As I have noted in places below in some detail, the single biggest key to being able to avoid serious problems, and effectively address “critical unmet needs” is to understand, embrace and apply Smart Growth principles when planning and shaping our future.

Below is a list of some of the basic principles to guide smart growth strategies:

- Mix land uses.
- Take advantage of compact building design.
- Create a range of housing opportunities and choices.
- Create walkable neighborhoods.
- Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place.
- Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas.
- Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities.
- Provide a variety of transportation choices.
- Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost effective.
- Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions.

These are practical and proven planning principles. And applying them, in concert with other basic/core values, such as equity, social justice and opportunity, commitment to education, etc., not only contributes substantially to a broad range of positive outcomes for our community, it enables the investment of otherwise inefficiently spent or wasted financial resources back into the kinds of systems and programs that are designed to address a variety of remaining, but fewer, “critical unmet needs.”

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Small thing in some respects, perhaps, but I will also note here that one of my first acts as a county commissioner, on the first county budget of our term, was to make a motion (that was supported by two others and included in the budget) to increase, for the first time, our under-appreciated and important “Grant-in Aid” funding to \$1,000,000.00 (sadly, that relatively modest commitment has not been sustained).

**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?**

This question is complicated for one of seven council members, in a charter government with a strong county executive and an elected county sheriff.

The sheriff manages the department. The sheriff makes an annual budget request. The county executive drafts the initial budget. And, as it stands now, the council can only affect that if and when a majority of the council vote to reduce (and can only reduce) some items within the budget.

That means that beyond the potentially effective use of the so-called “bully pulpit,” the council’s most effective tool is legislative. There may be times when a problem is severe or chronic enough, and may be within the legislative authority of the council, to warrant the drafting and consideration of specific legislation to address it. Such legislation, of course, would have to go through the full (and appropriate) public process, and would be subject to approval or veto by the county executive (which is itself subject to a veto override by a super majority of the council).

That is a reasonable option if and when the circumstances suggest there might be a legislative solution (full or partial) — one that has a chance to pass.

But none of that is to under-appreciate the potential value and impact of an articulate council member to utilize their public platform to shed light on a problem, and to push for it to receive greater attention...and/or to strongly suggest and advocate for a particular solution.

Out of office or in office, I have never had any fears about speaking up in such situations!

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

As I have said many times elsewhere, the top two priorities for our community are education and public safety. No matter what else is true, or what we agree and disagree about, we must maintain a strong commitment to excellent public education and public safety.

Public safety includes police and fire protection, and emergency response, of course...but it also

included basic public health protection, such as clean air and water.

And public education does not only mean K-12 public schools, but also Frederick Community College, state of the art vocational training, etc.

Beyond those fundamental priorities, which should be managed smartly, efficiently and compassionately, there is a significantly longer list of other things that are within the reach and authority of the county council and/or county government that are important, even essential.

I believe that with the proper approach and values and priorities, we can accommodate a growing population, and provide more and better affordable housing, and provide a solid social safety net, and protect and enhance the biological integrity of our natural environment and natural resources.

Too often we hear things described as if we are making decisions in a zero sum or win-lose environment, where we have to make hard choices between supposedly competing interests, such as the economy and the environment, or between being economically competitive and having a strong social support structure, and so on.

That is old and out-of-date thinking. We really do have the real opportunity here to take a win-win approach to all these issues, through a combination of right-minded priorities and proper planning. Frederick County is going to grow. How and where we grow will make a massive difference in so many ways, affecting and even shaping many parts of our community and day to day lives.

We have made plenty of mistakes in the past when it comes to land use and planning, in the county and in our municipalities. But we have also done some things relatively well, AND been fortunate that our distance from DC and Baltimore allowed us to get to this point in our history without sprawl consuming the county, without losing the identity of our small towns and rural communities, without losing a still-cohesive enough agricultural landscape, and without degrading our natural environment beyond repair.

But now we have to appreciate that our relative good fortune and tremendous assets will not guarantee our long term success and sustainability without the proper values and good planning.

**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?**

If work is important enough to need people to do it, people who work full time doing that work should be able to afford to live in adequate housing, in decent, safe neighborhoods, with good schools, health care, etc.

Part of what makes a particular wage minimally adequate or not is the cost of living in the

community. And that can vary a great deal based on a number of things that are directly affected by the policy choices and long term planning of a community. There are reasons, for instance, why it is harder in a number of ways to be a low-income earner in Frederick County than in Montgomery County. That includes the availability of decent affordable housing and good public transit, among other things.

According to the Pew Research Center, if the federal minimum wage had kept up with the increase in worker productivity since 1968, it would have been \$21.72 an hour six years ago. While that does not suggest the minimum wage should be \$21.72 an hour, it dramatizes how little of that new productivity has gone to basic wages and benefits (if they have them at all) for lower income workers. It also makes \$15.00 an hour look more reasonable...and practically speaking, achievable. For perspective, \$15.00 per hour, for a person working full time, all year, with no vacation (or a paid vacation) would be \$31,200 per year.

According to the United Way's outstanding ALICE Project and report, a single adult in Frederick County needs an annual income of \$31,536.00 just to meet what they refer to as the minimum "household survival budget." Obviously, for a couple or a family, the number goes up, and substantially so when you add in the costs of health care and child care. By their measure, in addition to the 6% of the county that lives in poverty, another 26% are struggling to make basic ends meet.

A higher minimum wage makes a real difference for these individuals and families. It is good that Maryland has increased minimum wage some, and even better that Democratic legislators in Annapolis have engaged an effort to increase Maryland's minimum wage to \$15 an hour over the next five years.

Some say raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour is a threat to jobs and reduces the competitiveness of Maryland businesses. But there's plenty of evidence demonstrating that raising it gradually (not too gradually!) does not have the negative effects that those same naysayers have said about any and every minimum wage increase, or, for that matter, the minimum wage itself.

It is uncertain what is practically and politically possible in Frederick County alone, but a higher minimum wage would lift all boats, so to speak, and we should seriously explore what progress we can make here, while simultaneously supporting efforts to pass a higher minimum wage throughout the state.

**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 have spend most of my adult life, in a variety of ways, working to get more people more

informed and more involved in our civic life, especially at the local municipal and county level.

Consider, for example, the Mission Statement of Envision Frederick County, which I was part of founding and where I have been the Director for the last seven years:

“ENVISION FREDERICK COUNTY is a non-profit, non-partisan organization founded on the principle that diversity, informed public discourse and active engagement of individuals and groups in our civic life is essential to our mutual well-being and prosperity. We are dedicated to enhancing the social, economic and environmental vitality and sustainability of our community.”

In nearly every conceivable way, I have always been supportive of a high level of transparency, and strong ethics and lobbying laws. As a county commissioner for four years, I had the opportunity to support substantial improvements in all those areas.

Among our reforms was the requirement that all communication with constituents, advocacy and lobbying groups, etc., on pending legislative matters, be noted and briefly described, and be available for public review. That included having a system set up at the time where all commissioners forwarded all such email correspondence to a county staff person.

I was also the elected official in the county who initiated and advocated for making all BOCC — and now county council — meetings (and many others, such as the Planning Commission, etc.) available for viewing online, both live and archived for viewing at any time. (This is standard now, but it wasn't in 2006.) The county made that investment, and then the City of Frederick followed suit, along with other municipalities before long.

I have already been advocating that the council meetings not start in the afternoon, but should be scheduled for evening hours that work for more citizens who might want to participate. There is nothing in the charter that sets the time. It was something that was worked about among the current council members, and can easily be changed (and would have to be changed if there was a council member who worked a “9 to 5” job that made it necessary anyway).

I am confident this change can and will be made.

I also think that there are many times when it would be reasonable, practical and wise to allow more than the current three minutes for public testimony at public meetings and hearings. There are some practical issues for those rare times when the number of people is very large, but I'd like to see what we can do there that is fair, consistent and increases the opportunity for public comment.

## **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?**

The most effective gun control laws are established at the state level, and, overall, Maryland has

taken a relatively strong approach to addressing the issues...and legislators are working even today to further strengthen state law, voting this week, I believe to ban bump stocks and similar devices. Beyond being the most appropriate level of government, in terms of related laws it is often the only legal option.

But that doesn't mean there aren't many things, beyond specific gun-related legislation, that a local community can do "to reduce the potential for gun violence in our homes, our schools and our communities." Gun violence is about guns AND a long list of other things that relate to violence in "our homes, our schools and our communities," including poverty, mental health, drug and alcohol abuse, and other stressors that contribute to violence (and other problems) in our community.

I've discussed some of the things that relate to our social safety net and to the benefits of a systemic approach to a range of these issues in other responses. But I should also add that there are places and times when reducing the potential for gun violence has to include responsible and reasonable and adequate security measure, such as in our schools.

I will also note that I am a strong supporter of what is known as Community Policing:

*QUOTE: "Community policing is a philosophy that promotes organizational strategies that support the systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues such as crime, social disorder, and fear of crime."*

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

The Frederick County Sheriff's Office has been participating in the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) 287(g) program for about a decade. It is one of only 60 law enforcement agencies (in 18 states) to do so, and one of just three in Maryland.

As noted in response to another question above (about gun violence), this question is complicated for one of seven council members, in a charter government with a strong county executive and an elected county sheriff.

The sheriff manages the department. The sheriff makes an annual budget request. The county executive drafts the initial budget. And, as it stands now, the council can only affect that if and when a majority of the council vote to reduce (and can only reduce) some items within the budget. Having said that, and being uncertain, at this time, as to the possible role and authority of the council with regard to the county's participation in the ICE 287(g) program, I do have — along with many others — a growing concern about some of the ways in which the program may be being implemented and applied, and real questions about the overall costs and impacts on our community.



As such, at the very least, I support the calls for a thorough and complete audit of the program in Frederick County. After a decade in place, there should be a great deal of information we could examine to evaluate its effect and cost, financially and otherwise.

For instance, the 287(g) program, which is part of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, and was revised in 2009, delegates authority to local law enforcement agencies for the purpose of “strengthening public safety and ensuring consistency in immigration enforcement across the country by prioritizing the arrest and detention of criminal aliens.” And Sheriff Jenkins, who has been a very enthusiastic and vocal supporter of the program, has repeatedly claimed it “has been very effective in the identification, detention, and removal of criminal aliens.”

But while he makes the case that those (more than 1,500 people, I think) who have been removed from the community are “criminal aliens” involved in transnational gang activity and who are perpetrators of violent crime, there is good reason to believe that the program is not just targeting serious criminals, and that a significant portion of those “criminal aliens” were arrested and put into the system after being stopped and arrested for minor, non-violent acts, even simply traffic or code violations.

Our community has the right to inquire about that, and more, and to receive good, detailed and public responses that enable us to have a proper community conversation about it and our choices.

The United States needs to establish a clear, fair and humane immigration policy. By common sense and law, this is national issue that requires a coherent national response. In the meantime, how we engage this issue at the local level needs to be carefully examined and actively discussed, and even if the program continues in Frederick County, it must be fairly and legitimately applied and enforced. Right now, we don’t know that that is true.

**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 at-large. Since I first moved to Frederick County (in 1995), and got engaged in our civic life less than two weeks later, I have thought about and worked on issues throughout the entire county. As a county commissioner for four years, I was no less focused on the entire county.

I have not answered these questions in order, and this is the last one I am getting to. When I consider my responses to other questions, I think I have pretty much covered this particular question already...a number of ways.

But, to repeat one very important point and central theme, Frederick County must smartly utilize

all the tools in our toolbox to engage and implement smart, economically-efficient and environmentally-responsible long term planning for land use and development.

One point about that that I only briefly referred to elsewhere, I think, is that your questions are about the county council, and by extension the county government. But in order to move forward with a solid, long term plan for our county, we must work well in concert with, and develop a substantially shared vision about our future with our twelve different and independent municipal governments. We really are in this together!

**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?**

Goodness...one could write a book in response to such an expansive question. It's hard to know where to even start.

I believe we should stop electing people who say that government — including local government — is the enemy, and then get elected to prove it.

We need to have elected leaders who care about everyone in our community, who approach important issues systemically, who understand that there is a proper and responsible role for local government to play in addressing the range of issues you have listed, and who combine the proper values with the practical experience to get things done.

If we are going to be a prosperous and thriving community with a high quality of life, it won't happen if so many of the people who work here can not afford to live here, or if so many (approximately a third of all county residents) who do live here are struggling to make it week to week, month to month — no more than a car repair or a health issue or a personal tragedy away from the edge.

That isn't just about jobs and wages and benefits, it is also about the range of housing that is available, about the transit options that are available, about good and available treatment programs, about basic health care and public health, about the various elements of our safety net and other effective programs and systems we can have in place, or improve upon, to protect and support everyone in our increasingly diverse community...from children in poverty to our rapidly increasing senior population.

We need to be committed to social, economic and environmental justice. But we also need to be as smart and innovative as we are dedicated and diligent. Part of that means understanding that these are not completely distinct and separate issues...that as much as they deserve individual and serious attention, they are all connected, and that real solutions are not about temporary or

short term or partial fixes, but holistic ones that don't treat our community as a zero sum game of sorts.

And part of that means recognizing the difference between a short term reaction to a particular problem or challenge, as necessary as that may be, and thinking about how to get closer to the root of the problem and minimize or prevent it in the first place. Just as we all — and our communities — benefit from investing in good public education, whether we have children or not, we likewise benefit...beyond measure, really...from smartly investing in the systems that protect and lift everyone in our community.

Our community — Frederick County and our municipal governments — have done some things relatively well in this regard. But not nearly well enough. We can absolutely do better. I'm not sure if this even begins to adequately address the lengthy list of issues, problems and challenges you listed in that very broad question.

If you're going to hold candidate interviews, I look forward to discussing specific aspects of "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.

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

The biggest factor affecting our ability to adequately plan for, pay for, develop and maintain adequate infrastructure is land use and planning.

Applying Smart Growth principles to our long term vision, planning and implementation would go a long way to ensuring that adequate infrastructure is properly developed to meet the needs as they arise and are anticipated...AND ensuring that it is more efficient and affordable.

The infrastructure associated with sprawl is not only a lot more expensive to build and maintain, but it is also too expensive to afford sufficient elements to meet the demands and community goals. In other words, there won't be adequate infrastructure, and we will only fall farther behind, if we approve the kind of sprawl that was commonplace for many years, and, unfortunately for the county, re-established by the Blaine Young BOCC between 2010 and 2014.

Smart Growth utilizes existing infrastructure more efficiently, makes new infrastructure less expensive (and more possible)...while also supporting and/or enabling more affordable housing, better public transit, more adequate parks and more, while reducing a variety of environmental impacts.

But basic infrastructure is not limited to roads, water and sewer, schools and libraries, as is so often described. Those are critical infrastructure, but so are things such as fast, reliable and price

competitive internet access, safe paths for bicycles, access to adequate-or-better recreational facilities (especially in lower income communities), and, finally, most of all, our green infrastructure.

According to the EPA: “Green infrastructure is a cost-effective, resilient approach to managing wet weather impacts that provides many community benefits. While single-purpose gray stormwater infrastructure—conventional piped drainage and water treatment systems—is designed to move urban stormwater away from the built environment, green infrastructure reduces and treats stormwater at its source while delivering environmental, social, and economic benefits.”

But my definition, and that of others, is of the “green infrastructure” necessary to preserve (and enhance) the biological integrity and ecological health of our broader community. That includes protecting and connecting natural areas of ample/sufficient size, and in the critical places, to preserve biological diversity over the long term. It means protecting the basic natural assets on which we depend, such as clean water and soil health and fertility. It means being able to live in a community with a healthy environment and with sufficient proximity and access for our citizens.

If we do that, and apply smart growth principles to our land use and planning, the infrastructure we have to build will be less, do more, and cost a lot less.

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

I would like the endorsement. I think my record (in and out of office) and my views and values have earned that. But, quite honestly, if I am elected, it won't make any difference whatsoever when it comes to my approach to my responsibilities and priorities if I am elected to serve on the county council.

I'm willing to listen to, speak with, meet and work with any one or any group that is engaged in the process. And my record demonstrates that.

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

- cosponsoring legislation?
- testify in support of legislation?
- write an op ed?
- speaking at progressive events?
- attending meetings?
- meet with our leadership group?

- **give updates on shared goals?**
- **writing letters to endorse a labor organizing drive?**

I would sponsor or co-sponsor and/or support legislation that I think serves the interests of our broader community.

I would always work to ensure a thorough, thoughtful and responsible process for drafting legislation, discussing and debating the legislative proposal, evaluating the unintended consequences, considering the direct and indirect costs, researching what other communities have done and how that has worked, involving the community and stakeholders, and making adjustments accordingly.

I have long been one to testify in favor or opposition to legislation, as well as to write about issues and legislative matters (in newspapers, website, social media, etc.).

I'm happy to speak at "progressive events" and many other events and gatherings, and have done so for years, candidly and thoughtfully.

I would be happy to attend some regular meetings, as my schedule permits, and as I already have been.

I'm pleased to meet with your leadership group, as with any individuals and groups that are engaged in the civic process and our community.

I can always be counted on to provide updates and information, on our "shared goals" and/or anything else.

And I have long supported labor, collective bargaining, etc. That is among the reasons why I have, in the past, received the endorsements of teachers, police officers, career and volunteer firefighters...and hope to again this year.