

Responses to Town Council questionnaire

Question 1

I will answer this in two parts.

Over the course of the last 10 years, I have served on several executive boards, and in volunteer roles. Notably, Shepherdstown Community Club President, President, Shepherdstown Public Library Board of Trustees, President, Berkeley-Jefferson Extension Master Gardeners, and as a founding member of Shepherdstown Shares, as well as other board positions in the book industry.

These various positions have given me administrative expertise in the nuts and bolts of guiding an organization. More importantly for this position, however, they have allowed me to focus on the many aspects of life, work, interests and priorities of the people in Shepherdstown. By becoming acquainted with the board members and people served by these groups, I have been able to acquire a wide breadth of knowledge and experience in areas which are not immediately related, but together form a much more rounded perception of life in our town.

Secondly, per my remarks regarding administrative skills, I will say that in a practical sense, I bring a businesslike approach to meetings and projects. I tend to be prepared, brief, respectful and thorough.

Question 2

None will argue that we have pressing issues. Most of us, myself included, tend to refer somewhat abstractly to parking, encroaching housing developments, Airb&bs and the like. As a new Council member, I would expect to learn much more specifically about these and other issues. I would rather not respond in advance. Yes, I have read and am familiar with the Comprehensive Plan, but want to learn more fully the response of the Council on the proposed initiatives.

I will make an exception on one issue that particularly caught my attention:

Appearing in the September 2024 packet was a letter written by Carrie Blessing in which she laid out her concerns regarding the “gentrification “ of Shepherdstown’s black neighborhoods, as well as a list of action options.

I found this a well researched and particularly compelling letter and was glad to see that the Comprehensive Plan does speak to this issue (p 21). My hope is that this is a series of steps on which we will receive progress updates and will be moved on accordingly.

Question 3

Answered above

Question 4

Communication - here is where I have experienced an unexpected benefit from volunteering with Shepherdstown Shares.

Almost every Sunday for the last five years, my partner Mark and I have maintained the "Share Your Change" table at the Farmers Market as a fundraiser for Shares.

During that time we have attracted a very large and varied number of people who come to talk with us. Shepherdstown folks who converse on all manner of things regarding our town - the good, the bad, parking, the university, what they are mad at, what they want changed, what they wish was different, what they think they have heard on issues, and so on. In a relaxed and easygoing atmosphere, folks seem to open up.

As well, tourists seek out directions, restaurant advice, tell us what they are enjoying, what they aren't. We are, as most longtime Shepherdstown residents, de facto tour guides.

And finally, the farmers - their county development concerns, fears of losing the Market, financial issues and so on.

This is communication on the ground, open, free and very instructive .

I will go into one other aspect of this.

When we created Shep Shares it was in order to provide particularly food assistance during Covid. At that time, someone asked, "Well when Covid is over with, what're you folks going to do? There won't be any more hungry people."

Obviously we learned otherwise. Many more friends and neighbors now avail themselves of our help - many of whom you may see every day. The number is growing steadily as you might imagine. This is another opportunity to find out what is going on with these folks. They speak freely and finding out what is concerning to people who are on the low end of the economic scale provides a much fuller picture of what are the issues in our town.

So - to answer more briefly - I would expect to continue these avenues of communication and bring to the Council observations that are particularly relevant.

Question 5

As a new Council member, I would expect to add to seeking consensus on town processes and initiatives. I respect the experience of the current members and will try to make my input useful and to the point. That about sums it up.

I know several council members and I hope they would agree that I am not disruptive, adversarial, or obstructive.

At least I hope so.

Question 6

Yes

Thank you for your consideration,

Nancy Stewart