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The Citizens' Agenda



Jan. 10, 2022

Village of Fredericktown
2 E. Sandusky St.
Fredericktown, OH 43019

Dear Fredericktown Village Council,

This fall, Knox Pages brought "[Talk the Vote](#)" to Fredericktown.

The event – created by our parent company and sister site, Richland Source, in 2019 – was held Oct. 14, 2021 at the Mill Street Nature Center. Nearly 20 village residents attended the hour-long discussion, which included 30 minutes dedicated to the future of the village and 30 minutes dedicated to the future of the local school district.

The purpose of the event was to give Fredericktown voters a chance to make their voices heard heading into the Nov. 2 general election. While candidates for village council and school board seats were allowed (and invited) to attend, they were not permitted to speak. Only voters could participate in the discussion, which was moderated by Knox Pages reporters Grant Pepper and Emma Davis.

This was done intentionally. It was our hope to give *voters* the ability to shape the conversation this election season – sharing their thoughts, concerns and ideas about the village and its future – and to use this feedback for future accountability journalism on our end.

We used residents' feedback to help shape our [pre-election coverage](#), asking village council candidates specific questions based on concerns raised during the discussion. And now we're ready to take the next step.

Today, we are excited to present to you the **Citizens' Agenda**: a document detailing the key themes that emerged from Fredericktown's first "Talk the Vote" session last October. These were the things your voters thought you should prioritize heading into 2022 – some of you beginning new terms in-office, some of you continuing your service on council.

We believe this document shows that collaboration — between journalists, elected officials and their communities — can be incredibly powerful when done intentionally and with an open mind.

On behalf of those residents and "Talk The Vote," we respectfully ask you to consider these priorities as you continue shaping your transition and laying plans for your time in office:

THE CITIZENS' AGENDA

The following items were compiled and summarized from the October 2021 discussion with roughly 20 village residents. Some quotes have been edited for clarity.

Preparing for population growth

One of the main topics covered in October's "Talk the Vote" event was the idea of growth coming to Fredericktown. The village grew 6% over the last decade and is expected to continue growing, as central Ohio and Columbus region expand.

Voters in attendance had the following questions:

- How can Fredericktown continue to grow while also maintaining its "hometown" feel?
- How can the village encourage diversity in housing – the coexistence of all kinds of homes and living structures – to avoid division in the community based on economic prosperity?
- How can the village make itself appealing to outsiders, while also protecting the interests of longtime residents?
- How can the village take care of existing issues, while also actively planning for its future?

Multiple voters said Fredericktown's "small-town feel" is one of its main assets. It's what draws people to the village and keeps them there. Voters expressed concerns about how growth over the next several decades might impact that phenomenon.

Focusing on infrastructure

Another priority for voters was infrastructure – the basic necessities of living in a community. They had the following questions:

- How could Fredericktown improve its roads and sidewalks?
- Could the village "do more to enforce rules of property maintenance, rather than this responsibility being placed on the citizens?"
- How could the village more effectively apply for and receive grant money to fund infrastructure projects? Could the village hire a grant-writer specifically for this purpose?

Residents expressed concerns about areas within the village "that have been let go," and wondered if the village could play a bigger role in the rehabilitation of those properties.

Communication and transparency

Several residents voiced concerns about the village's ability to communicate with the public. They also thought more communication between the village and the school district could be beneficial. They asked the following questions:

- How could Fredericktown make more information available online to its residents? Could it improve its website? (Several residents also noted that portions of the community do not have a strong internet connection, which could limit this form of communication)
- Is there a way for council members to have more one-on-one conversations with residents?
- Could the village send a 'liaison' to school board meetings, and vice versa, to establish a stronger line of communication between the two entities?

One resident said, "Once kids are out of school, families don't have as much information generally about the village." They expressed concerns about the transparency of Village Council and its commitment to being open to the public.

Residents also expressed miscellaneous concerns about public safety (specifically cars driving too fast down residential roads), fiscal responsibility (one resident noted that "in a small community, there is only so much money available"), and the restoration of key downtown properties such as the grain mill and the old grocery store.

Thank you for considering these questions and requests from Fredericktown residents as you and your colleagues start planning for your term in office. We'll be following along as you navigate your next term to see how each of these items factors into your agenda.

On behalf of the partners in Talk The Vote,

Sincerely,

The Knox Pages Editorial Team

Larry Phillips, Managing Editor - larry@richlandsource.com

Carl Hunnell, City Editor - carl.hunnell@richlandsource.com

Brittany Schock, Engagement & Solutions Editor - brittany@richlandsource.com

Grant Pepper, reporter - grant@knoxpages.com

Emma Davis, reporter - emma@knoxpages.com

Cheryl Splain, reporter - cheryl@knoxpages.com