

April 4, 2023

Candidate Forum Participants:

Jason Evans, 8-year resident

Clayton Gilbert, 2-year resident

Steven “Pops” Kraft, Confirmed resident

Karl Munder, 10+ year resident

Tim Washabaugh: 15-year resident

Candidate’s Forum*

*Important: The answers from the candidates are paraphrased and there was one additional question asked which is not listed below. This is not a transcription nor is it the authoritative source for the candidate’s answers to these questions. Please watch the full forum to hear directly from the candidates: <https://www.carrollmediacenter.org/index.php/episode/mount-airy-town-council-candidates-forum-4-4-2023>

**Question 1: What do you think your duties and responsibilities will be while serving on Town Council?
How much time will each of you pledge to dedicate to the town?**

Gilbert: Listen to you. Get your input; take the direction you want to go. Open communication and dialogue. Use information responsibly. Take as much time as we need to. May take months/years. Can’t have immediate solutions. Will pledge the time that is needed.

Kraft: Larger issue, long term. Health and safety of our population. First goal, to take care of our population’s health. Post pandemic isolation. Youth, adolescents, seniors - first priority as a town council member. 2nd is the reckless development that’s been railroaded. Very concerned about maintenance of educational institutions, our heritage, thankful we saved the FI building. Peaceful relationship between council and mayor. Get more done that way. Empty nester, so time is on my side.

Munder: Listening to citizens and concerns, taking care of town issues – budget, development, health and safety of citizens. 24/7 job – wake up thinking about it, go to bed thinking about it. Will continue to do so and work tirelessly for the citizens of this town.

Washabaugh: Treat citizens and government with respect. Represent you in the correct way. Be someone that represents this town in the correct way. Treats its citizens in the correct way. Look into our budget. Ensure every dollar that is spent is getting equal or paramount ROI. We cannot keep throwing money away needlessly. Take away unnecessary spending and build our reserves back up. I am a business owner. Stopped coaching softball to take this on. Looking forward to representing the town as whole.

Evans: Leading you guys, leading the citizens of Mount Airy – regardless of the cause: police station, overdevelopment. Full transparency. Honest and transparent so you know what’s going on within the town. That includes the water. Vision is to be a leader in dealing with the water issue that so many municipalities are facing. Very passionate person – whether coaching, schooling, or work. When I invest my time, I’m all in. I’m very passionate about this town and that is where my time will go.

Question 2: What are your Short- and Long-Term Goals for the town? What skills and qualifications do you bring that will make those goals a reality?

Kraft: Our safety is primordial. Ecumenical network is not good; first and foremost – getting healthcare access. Difficult to find providers. Worked in financial services; smart budget advocate. Telecoms guy from way back. Need to get our carriers involved in our town in a better degree and get our system. We have all the cell phone things that are necessary to have a good reception in our area and it's awful. Background in corporate communications. Enhance our town communications toward our population and our educational movement to that same population.

Munder: Short term and goals: Control development to a point where its compatible with surrounding land uses. Doing the best, I can currently through council meetings and various ordinances. Advocate for fiscal responsibility (will continue). Health and safety of residents is paramount. Current working through well contamination crisis. Seeking grants for that; DO work well with the mayor. Supported him when he was town council president. Will continue to support him as mayor. 4 past years of experience on council. I have seen what has happened when we don't keep a watchful eye over the other branches of government and town staff. Education has allowed me to focus on policy concentration.

Washabaugh: Short term: Earn your trust. How can we represent people who do not trust us. I want to speak with as many of you as I can. All about what you want. I have my own thoughts and ideas, but I have to represent you. I have to have your trust. Don't intend to lose it. I Want to control the growth that's getting ready to happen. Dive in to how the Beck property was zoned. Slow sustainable growth that we can sustain over time without blowing up the town and turning it into everywhere else.

Evans: Water – get a grip on the water problems. Need to be leaders in that realm. Need to figure out how to fix the issues. Budget – lack of reserves. Stunned about lack of reserve funding while we're paying for roundabout, etc. Looking to trim costs, and generate revenue for the town. Zoning is not good. MXD as written is not good. Collaborate with everyone to make sure we're putting the best zoning forward. Support local businesses. Blueprint program – educate ourselves on that and ensure education doesn't change for children.

Gilbert: Stop the bleeding. Full stop on everything. Figure out what is actually going on. I have a sliver of all the information. Thought one thing, had a conversation that completely changed my thought process. Education – need to be informed of that. See what we want to do long term. Contractor. I ask people, what they want, that they need, what they're wishing for. Blend those together, give the result I can that is fiscally responsible. Need to come up with best solutions to stay in your home as long as possible.

Question 3: What is your position on reassignment of financial responsibility from the mayor?

Munder: Ordinance change we all agreed upon (resolution). Content leaving that as-is. Allows proper oversight Happy with what was passed. Believe that it should be retained by one person, not the council. Formation of budget and spending and overall fiscal oversight and wellbeing of the town.

Washabaugh: Totally against it. Mayor is the CEO. He is responsible. WE elected a leader to be responsible. IF we remove his responsibilities, we nullify the process of the election. He is there to

uphold his responsibilities. The council is legislative. Mayor should be trusted as long as there are checks and balances in place. Let him fulfill his duties.

Evans: Fully against it as well. We elect our officials for them to do the job they were set out to do. What's the point of changing it after he was elected. Elected him for a reason; keep it that way. Checks and balances; just as in my business. Support keeping checks and balances.

Gilbert: Agree with Tim.

Kraft: This is one of the reasons I got involved. Couldn't believe what I was seeing between the council and mayor. Whether Hushour or future mayors, is astounding. We have preserved the mayor's office. It took way too long to fix it. If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

Question 4: What is your stance on the FI building. Can you state tonight you support preservation and that demolition is off the table? Would you vote to move forward with the project if the estimated liability to residents was as much as \$1M.

Washabaugh: Happy they voted to preserve. For me, it's about citizen involvement. FI Task Force is committed, organized, and doing everything they can. We should be helping them with the process, back our citizens if that is what the feeling of the town is. I will not throw good money into a bad building. If we realize it's not fiscally responsible to save, we will have to do what's best for the town. We cannot deplete reserves just to keep it up. Would like to see preserved, easier access, useful piece of retail to get a return on investment. Keeps our small-town charm.

Evans: For the preservation of the building. If at some point it doesn't make sense, then we have to bite the bullet. What would it cost to take it down and fortify the wall, replace, or remove it. Let the task force continue. Get grants and save the building. If it's going to cost the town millions and millions, will need to rethink it.

Gilbert: Pretty unfiltered. Tearing that down is the dumbest thing I've ever heard. It's going to cost you money, so everyone open up your pocketbook and write a check for \$1000 because that's what its going to cost to take that down. It's your money. Leave that building as it is. It will be there long after I'm gone. \$1.5M on traffic circle, on water, or on FI building? Come to the council and let them know. All about free money. Leave it along it will get worse, so we should restore it. Don't take it down; cost a fortune, we can responsibly save the building.

Kraft: Volunteer grant writer on the FI building. We'll keep collecting money to preserve the building. We've already done it. Should bring closer to the town council and our government. It's the center of the town; a piece of our heritage. Go inside it. For the last year we've been dragging our feet. This building is solid as a rock. Go inside it. It'll be standing after Armageddon. Amazing space. Brilliant model. So much we can do telecom wise. SO many things we can do in this wonderful, solid building.

Munder: Voted in favor of the recently passed ordinance or resolution for preservation of the FI building. Wonderful job by our task force. Studies have shown it is stable in place. Either way, tax dollars will be spent (tera down vs preserve). Save it. Part of the town.

Question 5: What is your strategy against such a well-funded development? Has the current town council acted in good faith or yielded to the loudest crowd on submissions for development?

Evans: I'm not against development. I'm against high density overdevelopment. It's not harmonious with the town. This is a small town. We don't need Russian military barracks lining 27 (townhouses, apartments, etc.). Should be sustainable, slow, and fit the infrastructure. Infrastructure should be looked at before we even think about development. Don't have the roads, the schools, definitely not the water now. Ready to find out what zoning things we can do to prevent developers from coming in here and stealing our small town from us.

Gilbert: I'm a developer's worst nightmare. I've seen the aftermath of high-density developments; construction person – fixing them 1-2 years later, with no place to park. Conversation w/ volunteer FD chief. Has anyone asked the fire department if they can get into these developments and do what they need? Probably not. I want to put up a big giant iron curtain around Mount Airy. Look at Portland, OR. State level, development boundary around Portland so you can't just build on top of it. We should do the same thing here. We can keep Home Depot in Frederick, townhomes in Mont Co. Don't need them here. We have value here – if you lose that small town charm, values will go down, traffic will go up, etc. I am willing to put up a fight. What if they file a lawsuit? That's great. The cost of a lawsuit is nothing compared to the aftermath of that development.

Kraft: Will work with Commissioner Guerin to implement a moratorium on all commercial development for at least 6 months until we figure out if our infrastructure can support what's on the Beck property and others. Blueprint. The tsunami of population coming in will blow those schools apart. If elected, I will work immediately for at least 6 month moratorium on development to see if we can sustain the kind of growth that is in our face right now.

Munder: Development will occur, unfortunately. The trick is how we will control it. Throughout my tenure, I have advocated for it in many ways—how to control/limit it to be compatible with the town. MXD is not working out the way a lot of us would have hoped. I have submitted many changes to it, but the council has not voted for it for Beck or future developments. Current APFO standard should be looked at to be applied earlier in the development process. One of my first ordinances was the Prospect/Hill St. development; Karl contained the inappropriate development along Prospect that would have hurt this town.

Washabaugh: Not against development. We have to make sure it fits into the fabric of our community. If you want to develop, you follow the APFO which is in place to protect our way of life. If you follow the APFO, we can't make a mistake. If you start waiving the APFO, you are no longer protecting the way of life of our town. 46 acres of open space and you're welcome to build here (Beck Property) because that is following the rules of the APFO. We don't waive anything for anyone.

Question 6: Town currently has an 80-acre deficit of open space. Do you support a waiver of open space for the Beck Property?

Gilbert: No. Back to the last question – I don't care about how much money they have. We have the town. They can throw money at it; if certain things are in place, they are wasting their money. Zoning can be changed. Moratoriums – not 6 months, 6 years or more. There are multiple solutions to stop, curb, and only allow responsible improvement. Improve what we already have. We don't need to add more to it because we can't sustain it.

Kraft: No, I don't support an open space waiver. It's a shame because the Beck family themselves have been part of this community for decades. Curious - Good stewards throughout the life of their presence in this town. Suddenly at the end of the road, they're not good stewards? It's curious, isn't it? There must be something else in this picture. They're called the developers that come to our town council meeting every month and tell us we're not collaborative and how unhelpful we are how we don't want to work with them. WE need to have a little bit bigger vision. This isn't just about Beck. It's about future development across Mount Airy and if we can support it.

Munder: As currently drafted, 10% is a little low for granting a waiver. The more density, the higher the open space requirement. In several ordinances, went from 15-30% open space requirement. So, I don't support it.

Washabaugh: I do not support any waiver for open space. As a youth sports advocate, I have told our children firsthand we don't have the space for you to play and I'm sorry you are on a waitlist. That is not doing what's best for our town. I understand the Becks' right to sell their property and their desire to get top dollar. The town has the right to dictate what goes on that land and the responsibility to protect our citizens' way of life and ensure all developments adhere to our current APFO. IF it does, build. If it doesn't, fix your plans or move along. It may prevent you from making the most profit, but that is a business decision for the developer to make. We have an obligation to our citizens, not the developer. I'm tired of telling our children we don't have enough sports fields for them to play.

Evans: I agree – not enough space as it is and you want to bring more kids in? Take my kids to basketball and there's not enough room to stand; son's baseball team is fighting for practice fields. Volunteers are pitted against each other for practice fields. Don't support the APFO waiver in any form; should be increased. Don't support waiver or special exception on any level. I don't care about the developer's return on investment.

Question 7: The senior population is growing. What can we do to assure developers include affordable housing for seniors in the future and how can we expand our senior center?

Munder: I will always advocate for villas or age in place housing; make sure it is affordable for various income levels. Low income in Mt. Airy is in the mid \$60K. I will try to make sure at least options are included in any designs that come before the council or the planning commission to make sure residents who are choosing to age in place, can hopefully remain in town in the long term. Senior center expansion in preliminary talks to either expand/relocate the senior center and/or library. Both facilities are at max capacity. Would love to see the library or senior center with something similar as to what Westminster has.

Washabaugh: Growing senior population is a good thing. They love the town and don't want to move out of Mount Airy. Our responsibility is to give them a place to do so that's affordable on a fixed income. Most senior communities don't strain our APFOs the way MXD would. They don't strain our school systems; our APFOs. This is the best kind of community to put into what little land we have left. I plan to stay here; would love to have a place to move to as we age as well. As for the senior center, see what it is they want, see what they need, see how we as a town can fiscally responsibly help them get what they desire.

Evans: Need more senior living. How we can make that affordable, I don't have the answers for you yet, but I plan on becoming educated and working on planning and collaborating with the commissions and council to make sure that's included. Seniors are a vital part of Mount Airy. Mike Guerin is taking it seriously as well. Need to put this on our plate so we can attack the issue.

Gilbert: Here's an idea for you—first, what kind of senior center do you want to build. Let's figure it out. Let's Give the seniors something to do. What do you want? I worked in a retirement building for four weeks and it was the most depressing experience. I have also seen the complete opposite and I would love to retire there. So if you want to do something with Beck, put a big giant Senior community there. 30-40% of profit when something is built. I got my 10% profit; developer gets their 15-20% on top of that. Compounds over the life of the project. \$2M project, 30% of that is profit alone. Let's go in the opposite direction, let's say what we want, tell the developer they will only make 5% profit. That's my wishful thinking/idea. Define affordable housing. Depending on who you ask, that's very different.

Kraft: I'm particularly concerned about the youthfulness of the other people at this table. I think I'm the only one who has an AARP card and the wisdom that comes along with that. My mother was director of gerontology for multiple nursing homes and senior centers. She taught me how to work with seniors and how to work with special needs folks. The way you expand a senior center is not by building. You do it from the inside out. You go and you visit the seniors. I go visit the seniors every Sunday after church. I have a blast and I hear the same story every 5 minutes over and over again, but it's a blast. We have fun together. I don't see a need even to build anything more. I don't think we need to build. We need to introduce the community into the senior center through whatever vehicle that might be. But the first thing is to get inside and participate. And I have my ukulele in the car, and I can do that after this because that's what I do on Sundays.

Question 8: Would the candidates consider and pursue new sources of water outside or drilling new wells (i.e., buying water from Frederick or Montgomery counties or pulling raw water from a reservoir in Carroll County)?

Washabaugh: If it's a necessity, if it came down to the point where we had to purchase it from an outside source, what choice would we have. We would have to reallocate funds to figure out what we need to do to survive. Why would be in that situation to begin with? Why are we having to buy outside sources of water? Because of reckless development and not thinking long term. We always look at short term gains without realizing the long-term ramifications of those decisions. We have to stop doing that. We have to start balancing the long term gain to make sure we don't have to go to Montgomery County for water. We have to be better.

Evans: I would like to avoid it at all costs. It doesn't make sense to have to go to outside sources to get healthy safe water. First step, how can we fix the PFAS in our water. If that's not fixable, that's something that would be a last resort. It doesn't make sense. Fix water so we don't have to do outside sourcing.

Gilbert: Do the math. \$20K once or 10K 3x. You can either wait and do it the right way or you can throw a Band-Aid on it and I'll be back in six months and you've just spent more money. Water is the same way. Right now, our water filtration system needs to be completely updated, but also with a

system that's easily maintainable, not proprietary where you need special filters that aren't made anymore, etc. Your water bill going to another county means we did something wrong. If it comes down to that, you would be informed. Town as a whole would need to understand and ask themselves why we were in this spot in the first place.

Kraft: I have no expertise in this domain. I would be wholly dependent on experts on this issue before I make a decision. I don't have to be the smartest person in the room, and I have no expertise whatsoever in water matters.

Munder: IF we had to purchase water from out of county source, this town would be in dire straits and have more concerning issues than the water shortages. A lot of these options have been looked at and rejected by the town due to the costs. Even if wells were explored in other parts of the surrounding area, they're not viable for town needs at this time. Closest reservoir is Gillis Falls. That won't be developed any time soon, so no feasible water source to pull from in Frederick or Montgomery Co. So, we need to protect what we have and ensure it's not drawn down by overdevelopment or pollution in our wells.

Question 9: Should council members initiate changes to the town charter prior to citizen approval?

Evans: Citizens should be informed; need to educate myself on this a little more, but citizens should be informed and there should be public hearings and comments should be taken before any charter amendments or rewriting of anything.

Gilbert: Rewriting the charter is like giving myself a raise. This should go to a ballot. It should be discussed in public, but should be the public's choice, not the council.

Kraft: If it ain't broke, don't fix it. We have so many other things knocking out our doorstep in 2023. Blueprint for our schools, legalized marijuana and what that looks like in our town. Head shops at each end of main street. Significant number of things to focus on before we waste time rewriting our town charter.

Munder: Charter change process is governed and dictated by the state constitution. At times, I can agree with Mr. Kraft, but there are times that as elected officials, you come to understand things need to be corrected to make sure the citizens are protected from potentially harmful effects of other elected officials. The only way to do that is initiate charter changes to make sure citizens, town staff, are protected from elected officials and citizens have a working and functioning government in this town. I do not agree that citizens need to be informed about the charter changes. The state constitution does allow for a referendum for citizens to get it on the ballot. The best I can say is the citizens need to, please, get involved and stay informed of the operations and what your local government is doing to make sure nothing is being done under the table, so to speak.

Washabaugh: Tired of seeing charter amendments. I want to see action. I want to see us get along and do what's best for our town. I agree if it's in the best interest of the citizens of Mount Airy, it might be needed. Transparency is paramount. Should we? IF we have to, but for what reason would we not include our citizens? I don't know why it wouldn't include citizen input, but I haven't sat on the council. Transparency goes along with earning and keeping your trust is one of my goals in being your elected official.