

# Meet the candidate: Michael O'Connor

By Jen Bondeson News-Post Staff | Posted: Sunday, August 25, 2013 2:00 am

Alderman Michael O'Connor, a Democrat, is running for reelection.

**Should the city continue investing public dollars in business ventures? The city owns an airport (Frederick Municipal Airport), a theater (Weinberg Center for the Arts) and a golf course (Clustered Spires). Should the city be investing in a downtown hotel and conference center?**

The public endeavors we currently invest in are assets for the city. The planned runway expansion will drive economic development at the airport and beyond, and a diverse arts and recreation portfolio is important to the quality of life we offer. Regarding downtown hotel and meeting space, the city's job is to support necessary public infrastructure, such as parking, that is crucial to maintaining a vibrant downtown core, not to invest in private businesses.



My First Job: Michael O'Connor

Michael O'Connor

**Assess the efficiency of the Frederick Police Department. What improvements should be made?**

The department functions at an extremely high level despite constrained staffing. To improve it, we have to be prepared to hire the officers necessary to meet the demands of a growing city. We need to support investment in new recruitment techniques that will attract the best candidates. We also have to provide our first-class department with a first-class headquarters and invest in the technology the department needs to serve our residents and businesses efficiently.

**Are the city's resources (funding, police, planning, recreation, etc.) allocated appropriately throughout its neighborhoods? Name any neighborhoods you feel receive too much or too little, and explain why.**

I believe that the city's resources are allocated appropriately. But "appropriately" doesn't always mean equally. Each neighborhood is unique. Special attention to transportation funding and improved neighborhood connectivity will be critical to meeting the vision of the Golden Mile Small Area Plan. Increased public works infrastructure is necessary to support East Frederick Rising. Strategic

planning, with the involvement of the NACs, would ensure police, code enforcement, recreation, and social services meet community needs.

**What's your view on the status of business and crime along Carroll Creek Linear Park? Is the city moving in the right direction when it comes to redeveloping this area?**

Perceptions must be addressed, and our police have been highly responsive to what the data says is needed, and deploying officers appropriately. Completion of the linear park will bring increased private investment, expanding our tax base, and putting more eyes on the creek. Maintaining a vibrant downtown business core is critical to Frederick's overall health. Other positives include efforts to improve creek flow and the addition of plants and aquatic life to improve creek health.

**What is the best plan for Hargett Farm?**

A plan prior to purchase was the missed first step. We should do that now, mindful of significant encumbrances on the property, including the debt structure. An elementary school site is identified. FCPS is planning construction. I support an aquatics complex, a missing amenity in our recreation system. Multipurpose fields and running paths are needed. With a complete needs assessment, and a master plan, any identified surplus land could (be) sold to support park improvements.

*The Frederick News-Post invited candidates in this year's Frederick mayor and Board of Aldermen election to give their thoughts on some of the city's issues. We will publish their responses over the next few weeks leading up to the Sept. 10 primary election.*