

City of Ferrysburg Candidate Questionnaire

Name: David Cook

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Employer: Not provided

Office Being Sought: City of Ferrysburg – City Council

Please provide a brief biography, including your education, professional experience, and any previous public service or community involvement.

Dave holds master's degrees in business and water resources. He is a graduate of Clarkson University. His professional experience includes 14 years in the public sector working for regional, state, and local governments in different parts of the country. He's held positions in research, land-use, engineering, GIS, business analysis, technology and finance. Dave's most recent work experience includes roles as a SQL Engineer and Security Program Manager in the private sector. Dave's community involvement includes prior service as a member of Ferrysburg's zoning board of appeals, foster parent, and sitting on the City of Grand Rapids receiving board for the 2020 election.

What motivated you to run for Council Member of Ferrysburg?

Neighbors and community members encouraged Dave to run for city council in the 2023 election and in this election cycle. There are many unfilled, vacant seats on the City's boards and commissions. Getting candidates to run for office has been historically challenging in Ferrysburg. Many of the individuals serving are advanced in age and wisdom. There is a great need for participation from a younger generation.

What skills or experiences uniquely qualify you for this role?

Dave was previously employed by a regional development corporation which administered shared, regional services across multiple local governments. While the Tri-cities are unique, they share utility systems and other assets. Dave's work experience includes identifying and implementing shared service opportunities to control or reduce costs while maintaining services to citizens through shared services models. Ferrysburg residents, like others in Ottawa County, have seen steady increases in their property taxes. Further increases could be attenuated through shared services.

What is your leadership style, and how do you plan to build consensus on City Council and with other local leaders?

Dave's leadership style has been described as collaborative by colleagues. Dave is well-versed in elicitation techniques and can be expected to ask many questions and gather information from multiple sources before making decisions. Dave likes to brainstorm and will frequently introduce "what if" scenarios in conversations to engage others and explore motivations and alternative approaches to challenges.

How will you ensure transparency and accountability in city government?

Dave is an avid proponent of the Freedom of Information and Open Meetings Acts. As a member of council, Dave would ensure his conduct conforms to the Open Meetings Act and the various policies the City has in place for its elected officials. As councilman, Dave would welcome and respond to correspondence from citizens, direct them to information posted on the City's website and/or encourage and educate citizens on how to file freedom of information act (FOIA) requests with the city for records.

What role should the City Council play in engaging residents and ensuring their voices are heard?

City council members should be accountable and responsive to their citizens. As councilman, Dave would respond to correspondence from citizens as well as share relevant information from these correspondences during council meetings. Dave would utilize social media and other civic engagement tools, as appropriate, to communicate with stakeholders.

Ferrysburg is known for its natural beauty and small-town character. How will you balance growth and development with preservation and sustainability?

The City's planning commissioners recently went through a major effort to update the City's master plan. These volunteers did an outstanding job of identifying and codifying into the master plan areas that are conducive to development as well as which areas citizens preferred to keep natural. As councilman, Dave would follow the planning commission's recommendations when making decisions regarding development and preservation.

How do you plan to support local businesses and economic development in Ferrysburg?

Historically, businesses have left Ferrysburg and have not returned. During his 2023 campaign, Dave reached out to multiple business owners. Some provided feedback that the city ordinances related to signs were an impediment to operating their businesses in the city. As councilman, Dave would advocate making the ordinance less restrictive for businesses. The City's economic development council has made several recommendations in the past that have not been implemented. Dave would work to move these ideas to implementation by working with council members to create a strategic plan for business development in Ferrysburg. This plan would be used to gain consensus and priority among various stakeholders and put Ferrysburg on more equal footing with Grand Haven and Spring Lake.

What are your thoughts on regional collaboration with neighboring municipalities like Grand Haven and Spring Lake?

Dave is a proponent of shared services and previously worked for a regional economic development corporation. There are several opportunities to collaborate with neighbors to evaluate shared service opportunities to reduce or contain costs and maintain services to Ferrysburg citizens.

How would you define success at the end of your city council term?

Dave would define success as conducting city business impartially and in a manner that shows respect and appreciation for citizens of different socioeconomic circumstances.

Is there anything else you'd like voters to know about you or your candidacy?

Dave is the only candidate on the City's 2025 ballot who is NOT an incumbent or someone who previously served on council. He is a local candidate having been raised in Ferrysburg and attended Ferrysburg elementary. He believes in non-Partisan local elections and is not accepting endorsements from political parties or special interest groups.