



**Voter Guide for the May 2021 Election: Fredericksburg City Council**

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan civic organization and does not support or oppose any candidate or candidates or political party or parties. This voter guide includes candidate and voting information for an election that has at least two or more candidates on the ballot for an office. All responses to questions come directly from the candidates and are not edited by LWV-Hill Country Texas.

**Fredericksburg City Council Election for 2 Places: term of office is 2 years.**

Fredericksburg is a home-rule city with a charter and a city council/manager form of government. The five-member legislative and governing body known as the City Council is composed of a mayor and four council members who are elected from the city at large. The election is for two at large positions on the Fredericksburg City Council. The two candidates with the highest number of votes will be declared as elected.

Duties: appoint the city manager; oversee the city manager and the direction of the city; approve the city budget and the tax rate; set salaries and benefits of city employees; pass ordinances and resolutions; appoint members to advisory boards.

**Voting Information for Fredericksburg City Council Election**

Take a photo ID with you to the voting location. Curbside voting available.

**EARLY VOTING LOCATION:** Girl Scout Cabin 202 West Austin Street Fredericksburg

Note: Extended hours on Tuesday, April 20 and Tuesday, April 27

| Sunday<br>April 18 | Monday<br>April 19  | Tuesday<br>April 20 | Wednesday<br>April 21 | Thursday<br>April 22 | Friday<br>April 23  | Saturday<br>April 24 |
|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
|                    | 7:30am to<br>4:30pm | 7:00am to<br>7:00pm | 7:30am to<br>4:30pm   | 7:30am to<br>4:30pm  | 7:30am to<br>4:30pm |                      |

| Sunday<br>April 25 | Monday<br>April 26  | Tuesday<br>April 27 | Wednesday<br>April 28 | Thursday<br>April 29 | Friday<br>April 30 | Saturday<br>May 1 |
|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
|                    | 7:30am to<br>4:30pm | 7:00am to<br>7:00pm |                       |                      |                    | Election<br>Day   |

**ELECTION DAY: SATURDAY, MAY 1 FROM 7:00AM TO 7:00PM**

Location: Fredericksburg Middle School Library 110 West Travis Street Fredericksburg

**Dates to Remember for the 2021 Election**

- Last day to register to vote: Thursday, April 1
- Last day to update voter registration: Thursday, April 1
- First day of Early Voting (in-person): Monday, April 19
- Last day to apply to vote by mail: Tuesday, April 20
- Last Day of Early Voting: Tuesday, April 27
- Last day to return mail-in ballot: Saturday, May 1
- Election Day: Saturday, May 1

**Compare candidates online: [www.VOTE411.org](http://www.VOTE411.org)**

Website sponsored by the League of Women Voters - Hill Country Texas: nonpartisan and nonprofit.



Fredericksburg City Council Election for 2 Places: term of office is 2 years.

Table with 3 columns: Tom Marschall, James McDonald, Kathy Sanford O'Neill. Includes contact info like email, phone, and website.

Table with 3 columns: Robert Phoenix, Polly Rickert, Bobby Watson. Includes contact info like email, phone, and website.

1. What in your background qualifies you to serve on the Fredericksburg City Council?

Tom Marschall: Fredericksburg native going back to 1846, BS degree from Texas A&M university. Served 11 years as US Army logistics officer...

James McDonald: I love Fredericksburg. I love being part of this community. And I would welcome the opportunity to be part of finding solutions to the problems and challenges we face...

Kathy Sanford O'Neill: Having previously served on the City Council, I am very familiar with the work the Council does as well as the work of the City Staff. I am a lawyer and retired Administrative Law Judge...

Robert Phoenix: I'm consultant and multi-media producer. I have a rather eclectic background and have worked in the service industry, dot.com and journalism. I managed baseball teams for five years in the Austin area...

Polly Rickert: I have over 25 years of management consulting and business management experience, which I apply to my understanding of and decision-making on City government services and actions...

I have also worked to create a non-profit organization, Haus Verein, which is focused on solutions to bring middle income working family housing to our community.

Bobby Watson: I believe that my 40 plus years of experience as a successful businessman and business owner, as well as my 15 years of continuous involvement in the Fredericksburg community, gives me the background and the qualifications needed to continue to serve on the Fredericksburg City Council...



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**2. What is the most pressing issue facing the Fredericksburg City Council and what do you hope/plan to do about it?**

**Tom Marschall:** Following the oaths that they are sworn to uphold. Call out any action by the council that opposes the sworn oath.

**James McDonald:** The most pressing issue for the current Council appears to be a group-think mentality. For one reason and another, I've attended a number of City Council meetings over the last few years, and I've come away from those meetings with the sense that there doesn't seem to be much variation of opinion or perspective among the current members of the Council. I think that is unfortunate, and I don't believe it's in the best interests of the city. Competing ideas and different perspectives are the bedrock of good government. If elected, I promise to bring both to the City Council.

**Kathy Sanford O'Neill:** Fredericksburg is a well-run City. Because so much of our economy is driven by the tourist industry, our population expands with visitors every week, so we must ensure sufficient police are available to address that larger population. Because of traffic congestion it is necessary to plan for efficient vehicle and pedestrian movement through and around the City streets. Our Comprehensive Plan is dated and will be reviewed and updated over the next year. And as the City grows, we must ensure that new development is consistent with and enhances the historic character of Fredericksburg.

**Robert Phoenix:** COVID-19 can't be brushed away that easily. My greatest concern around that is that we'll have another lockdown--more severe than the last. I've been pushing the city to make a declaration that all businesses are essential so that if and when it does happen, we have already determined the path that we will take to protect and support our local businesses. I'm also very concerned about the possibility of a vaccine passport to travel, work and purchase goods. Again, a declaration that Fredericksburg is an open and free city, is essential to maintaining both social and economic equilibrium.

**Polly Rickert:** We are in an enviable position, with a great quality of life, ample amenities, and an attractive, diverse economy. We have a unique combination of history, outdoor features, agriculture and culinary recognition. My focus is to ensure that future growth creates positive return on investment for the taxpayers and retains the unique small town culture and assets we now enjoy. My plan is to implement long term planning and budgeting, and vote on projects and policies that generate a positive long term tangible and intangible return on investment for the local taxpayer.

**Bobby Watson:** Fredericksburg is a unique small town that has a strong agricultural community, a growing wine industry as well as a robust tourism business. Finding the balance between managing the town's continued growth and maintaining the quality of life for Fredericksburg's residents is our most pressing challenge. This includes maintaining our high level of city services, attainable housing for our local residents and employees, while maintaining our rich German heritage. I believe we need to expand the city's communication efforts and encourage more community involvement to find solutions to our issues.



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**3. What are the citizens of Fredericksburg telling you about city problems?**

**Tom Marschall:** Voting is a waste of time.

**James McDonald:** I'm hearing that the current members of the City Council too often operate as if their obligations, first and foremost, are to city government itself, and not to the citizens who elected them. If I am elected, I pledge to you that I will be a representative of the citizens of Fredericksburg to the city government, not simply a representative of the city government.

**Kathy Sanford O'Neill:** Most people are very happy with Fredericksburg; that's why they move here, raise their children here, retire here, leave and come back. Some people feel the historic residential areas near Main Street are being overrun with short term rental units to the detriment of the quiet neighborhood they expect. Others discuss the rising property prices and the affordability of housing. And some want to know when we will get so much traffic off of Main Street.

**Robert Phoenix:** Fredericksburg is blessed in that when the city is open, the money flows in from tourists. That said, tourism is like mono-crop farming, which isn't always the best way to go, especially if a blight or a pest wipes out a particular crop. Fredericksburg needs more economic diversity. I am very much in favor of attracting businesses that manufacture products and can sustain production even in down times with tourism. Manufacturing jobs also generally tend to pay more, which in turn can help people afford the rising cost of housing here in the Hill Country.

**Polly Rickert:** There is tension between citizens who appreciate the vast array of amenities available in such a small town, and their positive economic impact, and citizens concerned about the negative effects of growth, including a lack of childcare options, middle income housing, loss of neighborhood culture from a large number of second homes and short-term rentals, and issues with traffic and mobility through town particularly at times when tourism levels are high. Trust in government is low in the current political climate. There is a need for increased engagement, more discussion and information sharing with mutual respect for differing perspectives.

**Bobby Watson:** Citizens are concerned about the growth of short-term rentals in R-1 residential areas. Because of the tourism growth, we are losing neighborhoods to STR's. Another issue that stems from STR's is higher traffic and more noise complaints. This is an issue that will need to be addressed if we are going to keep Fredericksburg a wonderful place to live and raise a family. Lack of attainable housing is another concern. Due to the active real estate market, the increase in STR's and the growth of our economy, the result has been higher prices which makes housing unattainable for many.