



Candidates Forum

Opening Statements, August 2025

(presented alphabetically by race: Mayoral, Ward 1)

MAYORAL CANDIDATES

Jared Littmann (Democrat)

My name is Jared Littmann. My wife and I own K&B Ace Hardware, the only business in Annapolis that generates 100% of its electricity through solar panels. I'm also a lawyer, engineer, and former alderman for Ward 5. During my tenure as alderman (2013-2017), I sponsored and achieved Council approval on some of the most impactful legislation of that time, such as the City's first Forest Conservation Act and adding school capacity to the Adequate Public Facilities review.

My campaign slogan, LISTEN, UNITE, DO, captures my leadership approach and my commitment to you that I will listen to you and your perspective. I will unite our city to find the best solutions. I will do the work it takes to deliver results.

I support a responsive city government that sets clear goals so we deliver on priorities shaped by community input. One of my core principles is strengthening the city's "customer service" to improve how the city responds to residents' needs, for example, simplifying parking and permits and reducing unnecessary delays.

I'm passionate about sustainability, addressing rising waters, implementing eco-friendly transportation, and ensuring smart-growth development. We must honor Annapolis' role in history and preserve our identity as one of the nation's oldest cities. We're proud that our capital city played a key role in the founding of our country and housed four signers of the Declaration of Independence. Our streets tell stories and form an open-air museum of architecture, including Colonial, Georgian, Federal, and Greek Revival.

Residents want confidence that Annapolis will remain historic, diverse, and welcoming. I pledge to collaborate with our partners, such as Historic Annapolis and the Historic Preservation Commission, to ensure that our famous history is preserved and protected. I support the resilience aspect of the City Dock project and want to see the barriers, pumps, and raised park built as soon as possible to protect downtown businesses and residents from flooding.

Finally, my favorite building in Annapolis is the Maryland State House, a powerful symbol of our history. It's been in use since before the Revolutionary War and served as the US Capitol in 1783. There, George Washington resigned his commission as commander of the Continental Army. Nearly 250 years later, its giant wooden dome, built without nails, still towers over the city and reminds us of Annapolis's place in history.

Bob O'Shea (Republican)

I'm Bobby O'Shea, and I am running for Mayor because Annapolis deserves leadership that listens, acts, and delivers real measurable results. My plan is to reduce crime, decrease your taxes and resolve parking concerns once and for all.

For more than 40 years I have helped businesses grow and solve problems. From acquisitions and growth planning to complex consulting contracts I work with diverse clients. This has taught me how to listen, negotiate, and get things done. I will use my experience to work for the people and communities of Annapolis.

Our city will thrive when every resident feels safe, supported, and heard. From creating opportunities for our youth to protecting public safety, I am committed to building a city where everyone can succeed.

My top three points are *Transparency, Accountability, and Accessibility*.

As Mayor, creating a difference is my desire. Annapolis deserves better. The passion and experiences I have developed over the years will make this difference happen! Working together we will focus on the needs of our city to make a better life for all. I want you to enjoy our city and make good, solid memories that will last your entire life.

I support Annapolis Preservation! I oppose the change in height restrictions and spot zoning. Both precedents create a slippery slope for future developments using past approvals as examples of why another exception should be granted.

Annapolis is about 90 percent developed. Every neighborhood has its own character, history, and goals. My administration will respect and preserve it. I will establish rapport with community leaders and receive input on their vision moving forward to better their neighborhood for all involved. My administration will respect the character that is Annapolis.

Redeveloping city dock must happen! We need to address the flooding that has plagued our city for too long. Annapolis needs a comprehensive plan and a sustainable funding solution that will take the strong leadership I will provide. The plan must understand that the flood mitigation has to cover the normal situations that happen. Realizing that mother nature will throw in an Isabel every few years, we will need to establish proactive measures to reduce damage. I will work with our county, state, and federal partners to secure funding and develop a realistic, result-driven plan. Any Project that moves forward will take in consideration all environmental concerns to protect our communities.

My favorite Place in the “Historic Area” of Annapolis is 122 Duke of Gloucester St. And it has parking! I was fortunate enough to live there when I first came to Annapolis and have many fond memories of being so close to Downtown, Restaurants, Ego Alley and Eastport. All walkable. Parade of Lights and Fireworks were all so close.

Thank you for taking the time tonight and I look forward to earning your vote. I will be YOUR VOICE, creating the Annapolis We CAN All Proudly Call Home!!

Rhonda Pindell Charles (Democrat)

I am honored to participate in the Historic Annapolis Candidate Forum, where I can share my stance and thoughts on “Annapolis: Spreading the Love of Preservation, Planning, and Environmental Resiliency”.

For almost 12 years, I have represented Ward 3 on the Annapolis City Council, consistently advocating for policies that balance growth with preservation, environmental stewardship with economic opportunity, and resiliency with respect for our City’s historic charm. My earlier career with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources provided me with a strong foundation in natural resource management, land use policy, and conservation practices. That experience has informed my perspective as a policymaker.

During my time on the Council, I have supported and sponsored legislation designed to strengthen both environmental protections and historic preservation. Among these efforts:

- I worked with the City to designate additional historic landmarks in Ward 3, ensuring our neighborhoods' history is safeguarded, to include the Parole Rosenwald School historic marker in 2024.
- I voted in favor of O-32-15, authorizing the construction of a Renewable Energy Park—a solar-generating facility that advanced Annapolis's leadership in clean energy.
- I supported O-22-16 and O-38-16, implementing the City's Forest Conservation Act and expanding reforestation requirements.
- I proudly voted for R-22-17, aligning Annapolis with the United Nations Paris Climate Agreement.
- I supported the Stormwater Utility Fund (O-33-17), stormwater regulations (R-46-18), and the adoption of the Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan (R-11-18) to proactively address flooding and storm impacts.
- I championed O-14-21, which established the Resilience Authority, a first-in-the-state initiative to fund and manage projects like City Dock resiliency.
- I also backed legislation advancing clean energy, electric vehicle infrastructure, pollution reduction, and hazard mitigation—measures essential to protecting our residents and all other areas of the city from the growing impacts of climate change.

My record reflects a clear and consistent priority: ensuring Annapolis remains a city that values its history while embracing sustainability and resiliency. Nowhere is this balance more urgent than at City Dock, where flooding, sea level rise, and other climate pressures threaten both our cultural heritage and our local economy.

I have very fond memories of running errands with my mother on Saturdays throughout downtown (and uptown) Annapolis as a child. Within this area of our great city, today, two of my favorite places are the Banneker-Douglass-Tubman Museum and City Hall. The Banneker-Douglass-Tubman Museum is a beautiful landmark that tells the story of triumph. Each time I walk into the space, I am reminded of the generations before us who endured hardship, who persevered, and who built a legacy of strength from which we all can now learn. City Hall has remained the seat of our local government for more than 150 years. It has endured change, weathered challenges, and remains a constant reminder that the preservation of our civic and cultural institutions is inseparable from our historic fabric.

This sense of resilience—of honoring the past while building for the future—guides my vision for Annapolis. I am running for Mayor to continue this work—to lead all of Annapolis into a resilient and sustainable future. Thank you for your consideration and your attention to this forum as a sign of your commitment to our city.

WARD 1 CANDIDATES

Ben Bramsen (Democrat)

Who I am: Unlike most running for election this fall, I don't have a wealth of political experience. I don't have deep connections with the most powerful people in Annapolis, or a war chest of donations and endorsements. In fact, as the candidate refusing to accept donations and instead asking people make donations to some of our local and federal non-profits to help our homeless and unhoused population, I have no war chest at all! I'm just an ordinary guy, working for the opportunity to represent the extraordinary people of Annapolis. I've been drawn to this contest because I've looked at our local elected officials and don't see enough being done to help the most vulnerable within our community. The working class, the working poor, the forgotten class, the most underserved in our city tend to get overlooked too much and I'm running to provide them a voice.

Preservation: As a self-proclaimed populist, for me, every decision will always go back to "how is this going to help those that need it the most?" and Historic Annapolis aligns well with many of those answers. Historic preservation is helping to keep many of the remaining few affordable rentals downtown as affordable, preventing real estate companies from buying them up and building luxury condos. Historic downtown and its history is a driving factor in bringing unique and local shops and small businesses to Annapolis.

City Dock: When it comes to City Dock, I think we're all in agreement that something needs to be done to mitigate the flooding that is now regularly occurring. Too many of our businesses on and around Dock Street downtown have been damaged both physically and financially, and in the case of many smaller businesses, that's a financial and time burden that they can no longer bear. Something must be done before more small and local businesses are driven away from downtown. I'm in favor of a large, free and usable green space park for all. We're in desperate need of more green spaces and this will provide one for families of all classes to enjoy. I am not in favor of using spot zoning to give political favoritism to one business over another. I am not in favor of using money to build luxury pet products when so many in our ward and city are struggling to buy groceries or school supplies for their children.

My favorite place: I think by definition, it's Old Fox Books and Brown Mustache Coffee. Most people can see me every weekday morning in there, enjoying the ambiance and a nice cup while starting my work day. I've been fortunate in my time to meet and interact with so many different people there, from the Naval Academy, to St. Johns, to workers in the State House and many more! Shout out to Janice and Jinny of Old Fox and Joel and Colleen of Brown Mustache for curating such an amazing gathering space!

Ron Gunzburger (Democrat)

It seems at times like our wonderful hometown of Annapolis has lost its way and is off on the wrong path. Our City Hall leaders chase costly, ever-changing pet projects ... often projects that threaten the very character of our Historic District.

I will fight to get the focus back to the basics we need the most: public safety, clean water, trash pickup, street and sidewalk repairs, parks, plowing, and flood protection. The essential city services delivered well.

Property taxes for homesteaded owners skyrocketed by an outrageous 44% over just the past eight years alone – nearly double the rate of inflation. With our community still reeling from record inflation and wage stagnation - and with so many of our retirees living on fixed incomes – it's time to stop the skyrocketing city property taxes and fees.

Equally concerning, Ward 1 has the slowest emergency response times in the city because of a lack of adequate fire department staffing. Yet the city council refuses to staff the needed fifth rescue unit during the peak demand hours. I will fight to staff the fifth rescue unit. That's why our Annapolis Firefighters (IAFF 1926)

It seems that on nearly any given City Council agenda, unpleasant surprises await Ward 1. A 90+ slip marina, a 30 year no-bid lease extensions of city property, and a spot-zoning amendment to raise the height/bulk limit for a hotel at City Dock are just a few recent examples.

City Hall has lost sight of what makes Annapolis special: the unique character and charm of our historic neighborhoods. I will fight to preserve the past, protect the present, and safeguard our future from reckless proposals that would destroy our wonderful community.

Our City Council is not meant to be a "politics as usual" clubhouse. I will fight the "go along/get along" culture on the Council that has ignored the concerns of Ward 1 residents for years. My decades of attorney, governmental, public safety, and community experience - the broadest experience of any candidate in the race - will make me a very effective fighter for a better, safer, and more affordable Annapolis.

With your help, we can get Annapolis back on track. Thank you for your consideration.

Favorite building: Like most Historic District homeowners, I'd answer: my own home - Hugh McCusker House (1878) on Hanover Street –because of all the love that goes into living in, caring for, and being the guardian of a historic property. Excluding my own home, I would answer: the State House, but specifically

the inside of the wooden State House dome. The winding, narrow wooden staircases, the autographed/graffitied walls, and the Georgian windows that line the route to the top, and the views from the observation deck all make it a truly incredible place and piece of history.

Harry Huntley (Democrat)

In my day job, I'm an expert in agriculture policy, who's worked everywhere from a small urban farm to a three-Michelin star restaurant to the US Senate Agriculture Committee. On the city council over the past year, I think of myself as a policymaker, not a politician. But more importantly, I'm the kind of legislator who "makes it happen."

Some days that means simply picking up trash off our sidewalks, other days it means fighting to double funding for fixing sidewalks (which I did), and on some really long days it's about bringing together the residents, businesses, and different factions of city government to hash out complex legislation, like the bill I passed to make it easier for the city to clear snow from sidewalks.

I grew up right here in Maryland with a family that's always valued leaving the world better than you found it. My then-girlfriend and I came to Annapolis right after graduating from University of Maryland, because we knew we wanted to live in the kind of walkable community that's been preserved here.

We especially fell in love with Acton Cove Park, and a few years later, I kneeled down on its boardwalk and asked her to marry me. (She said "Yes!") It's remained my favorite place in Annapolis. But, today, that boardwalk is warped, rotting, and dangerous. In this past budget I secured the funding needed to fix it, but it still hasn't been fixed.

These kind of quality of life issues are taking way too long to get resolved. City government does not move at the speed at which people experience problems. When it takes almost a year to get just a new traffic sign installed, people lose trust in government. My background is in optimizing government for trust and results, and I want to keep doing the hard work of making city government run more effectively and efficiently.

A good example of this related to preservation is the need to improve our permitting process. Historic District residents shouldn't have to endure months of uncertainty while begging the city just to make simple fixes, like replacing a board on the porch. We know that the way to protect our history is with the kind of dynamic preservation Historic Annapolis has modeled, where our historic buildings are enmeshed in vibrant communities.

I'm also proud that I prevented a \$200 increase to the minimum permit fee homeowners pay for repairs in the historic district, while increasing the fines on bad actors who conduct illegal demolition or otherwise violate preservation requirements.

Residents can always trust that I will take a balanced approach to issues of preservation and development, not universally opposing change but ensuring it's appropriately managed for the good of our city and our citizens. I don't come in with preordained opinions but evaluate each project on the merits and always stand up for the residents of Ward One.

Over the past year, I've demonstrated that I have the energy and expertise to improve our communities, our government, and our residents' lives. You can tell by looking at the long list of leaders—from Congresswoman Sarah Elfreth to our next mayor, Jared Littmann—who are supporting my campaign that I'm the candidate who can "make it happen".

Tom Kriek (Unaffiliated)

If you were to design an ideal City Council as a functioning entity you would want to have a balance of talent that offers skill sets from a variety of backgrounds. I am the only candidate from Ward One that brings a business background to a problem. I have held COO, Executive Vice President, and Division President positions both in Fortune 500 companies and smaller firms. I completed my business career starting and growing my own company into a thriving multi million-dollar operation. If elected I would be the only member of City Council with an MBA (Master's in Business Administration) degree. My education, knowledge and life experiences would allow me to confidently navigate the complex financial issues, enhancing city staff recommendations as the council makes decisions regarding your precious tax dollars.

Respecting the historical nature of our city should be the guiding principle of how we move forward. My home, my favorite building in Annapolis, is historical. We have made additions to modernize it but every element we added was respectful to the origin, both in time and character. I state that because to have history be a guiding principle it cannot be just words but must be present in everyday actions.

I am not reflexively opposed to sensible development that respects the tremendously important historic features of Ward One. I do believe that we must ensure we are not promoting development just to increase property tax revenue. I will make sure that Ward One is not burdened with development, Historic Preservation Commission approved or otherwise, that is intended to bail out the fiscal responsibilities of the city-wide government.

Annapolis is a waterfront community hosting various environmental ecosystems. As Alderman of Ward One I have, and will continue, to work hard to ensure that our economic development does not diminish the preservation of these ecosystems. I will support efforts to enhance the environmental resiliency of our land and waterways.

I am not a politician, never have been and it is not my life's goal. I have undertaken this effort due to the increasing division within our city on what the residents want, and need, and what the city is delivering.

Most concerning is that we cannot continue the uncontrolled spending within our city. We now have \$8.5 million dollars in debt service (Annapolis's Mortgage payment) that is projected to go up to \$13.3 million in two years. Inasmuch as 61% of all monies the city takes in will come from property tax, unless we think differently our property taxes WILL rise under the next administration.

My platform is based on "No Politics –Just Solutions." I will offer balanced solutions to issues rather than weave politics into a solution. I have NO business interest in the city and will not benefit in any way from the outcome of my positions other than an enhanced quality of life for all citizens. I offer a fresh approach to city government. I ask for the vote of the Ward One residents because I believe the status quo is not the solution.

Katie McDermott (Democrat)

Introduction: I came to Annapolis in 1986 to start my legal career and have been in the historic district since 2007. I have enjoyed a long legal career as a federal prosecutor pursuing healthcare fraud against our vulnerable citizens, a private attorney with a national health law practice, and a law professor for many years at the University of Maryland Cary School of Law. Annapolis has always been a respite and a place to call home. Its small-town feel, great neighbors and neighborhoods, small businesses, education institutions, vibrant focus on arts, music, preservation and maritime heritages, are all just a magical blend. It is a friendly place where walking down the street we can feel everyone seems to know our face, dog, name, or story.

As a steward of a historic home, I feel privileged to contribute to maintaining the character of this historical City. I revere the American story, all of it, and fell in love with Annapolis in my teens when visiting with my family. It is why I serve on the Annapolis 250 Commission. The Annapolis historical legacy is not just charm, it represents our highest ideals as a nation and as Langston Hughes eloquently said, the American heartbreak, where Freedom stumped its toe. It's all here and a place of enormous people talent and civic pride. Annapolis is a place we can make even better for all residents if we are honest about the challenges and focus on the essentials of City life for all residents and our small business community.

Why I am a candidate? My sense is that we are at a critical time for Annapolis and Ward One needs a strong advocate who understands the complexity of the Ward and the stress residents have navigating City policies that put them last on many issues, including parking, short term rentals, housing, development and mass tourism. I want to bring a moderating voice to the City Council so we can address public safety in our vulnerable neighborhoods, inconsistent housing policies, and fiscal responsibility and governance innovation to prepare the City for the future.

Managing Preservation, Land Use and Resiliency Objectives: I believe we are at risk with an imbalance between development, resident quality of life and historic preservation, reflecting in part an emphasis on over-development of public assets for the benefit of private interests. The proposal on a marina at City Dock with 90+ slips for yachts 50 feet or more, destroying the iconic harbor view and public access, is one recent example of this imbalance and why I formed Save Our Harbor to provide an avenue for citizen advocacy.

Our historic preservation standards have served Annapolis well so I will be a strong supporter of preservation guidance. We need to embrace development and land use practices that are more a benefit to our neighborhoods and small businesses, considering our historic character, infrastructure capacities, and resiliency needs. I have questioned the scope and cost of the City Dock plan for failing to keep on track with these important objectives.

Favorite Place In Annapolis: very hard to list only one place but I pick The State House, its grounds and Lawyer's Mall.

Genevieve Torri (Democrat)

I first visited Annapolis in 1996 and was immediately taken by its colonial charm and welcoming spirit. A year later, I moved to Maryland, began my career designing residential, commercial, and hospitality spaces, and started my family. Since then, I have lived in Wards 5, 8, and now Ward 1, where my husband Christopher and I are raising our four children and three dogs while restoring a 1935 Dutch Colonial. Annapolis has been my home for nearly three decades, and my roots here run deep.

In 2018, I was appointed Ward 1 Commissioner for the Art in Public Places Commission and elected Chair the following year. Working with state and local leaders, I helped secure permanent funding for the Commission by dedicating a portion of the Hotel Tax paid by visitors to Annapolis. This ensured our arts programs would no longer face underfunding. During six years of service, I managed budgets, organized free public art events and festivals, reviewed grants, and co-led the development of a 10-year Arts Master Plan. These efforts strengthened Annapolis's cultural life while building strong working relationships with city departments and the Mayor's Office.

Alongside my public service, I have built a successful career delivering award-winning strategies for clients through innovative, ethical practices. I also served as Secretary and Vice President of the District 30 Democratic Club, where I worked to boost voter turnout in the 2021 election and was honored with the Sarah Flynn Do Something Democrat Award for my contributions to local elections. My professional and civic experiences have earned me trusted relationships across Maryland's Democratic community.

I am an activist and strategist committed to practical solutions that strengthen neighborhoods and drive economic growth. With more than 30 years of experience in project management, campaign leadership, and community service, I know how to move ideas into action and build partnerships that deliver results. My motto is “Be Better,” and I apply it every day in service to my family, my work, and the City of Annapolis.



Established in 1952, Historic Annapolis is the leading nonprofit preservation and history organization in Annapolis, MD. Our mission is to *Preserve* and *Protect* the historic places, objects, and stories of Maryland’s capital city, and provide engaging experiences that *Connect* people to the area’s diverse heritage.

We invite you to come visit our museums and enjoy the fun and discovery of our programs. Your support ensures that we can continue to protect our treasured historic places and provide opportunities for people to connect with each other and our shared history.

Together we are stewards for our Annapolis.

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