

Good afternoon,

I'm Macayla Cook, a reporter at The Star Democrat. Below is a list of questions for our candidate profiles. In the lead up to the June 23 primary, we will be publishing the profiles online and in print.

The deadline for the questionnaires to be completed is Friday, March 20. Please let me know if this presents any problems.

Each question needs to be answered in 100 words or fewer. If it is over that limit, answers will be edited to fit the page. Responses will also be lightly edited for grammar, clarity and accuracy.

For any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. I can be reached at this email (mcook@chespub.com) or by cell at (443) 239-0218.

Professional headshot: See attached

Name: Dave Stepp

Address (not for publication): PO Box 234 – Newcomb, MD 21653

Phone (not for publication): 410 299 2111 – cell phone

Email: dave.c.stepp@gmail.com

Age: 46

Family: Dave is married to his wonderful wife of 22 years, Lori and they have 2 wonderful children together.

Education: Dave has earned his Associates Degree from Anne Arundel Community College, Bachelor's Degree from the University of Maryland, and his MBA from the University of Maryland where he graduated with honors and gained entry into the Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society.

Occupation: Dave has worked in the telecommunications industry for the last 27 years, holding various sales and management positions. Dave has also been a proud small business owner since 2003.

Previous political experience: Dave is a current member of the Talbot County Council and has served since 2022. In addition to his regular Council duties, Dave is currently the Council Liaison to the Emergency Services Advisory Board, Parks and Rec Board, Local Emergency Planning Committee, Local Drug and Alcohol Abuse Committee, and the Weed Control Board.

1. Why are you running for Talbot County Council? Our rights and freedoms are given to us by God and are enshrined in our US and MD Constitutions. I firmly believe that it is the primary responsibility of any elected official, no matter local, state, or federal, to protect those rights and freedoms for our citizens. That has always been, and continues to be the primary reason I am running for re-election to the Talbot County Council. I feel that serving in local office presents itself as the best opportunity to make noticeable impact in our community.

2. What issues will you prioritize if elected? My top issues that I will continue to prioritize will be protecting our citizen's rights and freedoms, prioritizing public safety, keeping Talbot County the fiscally-responsible county that it already is by keeping taxes low and ensuring taxpayer dollars are spent wisely, protecting our rural character, and bringing Talbot County together as a community. I will continue to run on the platform of what I call the 5 F's – Faith, Family, Freedom, Fiscal Responsibility, and Fighting For You!

3. How should the county approach balancing the need for affordable housing with managing growth and preservation? Affordable housing is a numerical value that has a different meaning to everyone. Housing and growth in Talbot County should follow our Comprehensive Plan so that we can maintain and protect the rural character that we all love. Any sizable increase in housing supply, no matter the affordability level, should be considered in the Comprehensive Plan's designated growth areas. Talbot County's municipalities also play a crucial role in this process.

4. Legislation surrounding short-term rentals has been a topic of contention in recent council meetings. What are your thoughts on the matter? Talbot County already has some of the toughest regulations on short-term rentals (STR's) that exist. Only a few handfuls of complaints have ever been formally filed with the county since the inception of STR legislation. In short, the current regulations are working as intended and contain protections for owners, renters, and the surrounding community. Recently, several members of the Council have submitted broad-stroke legislation against Talbot County's STR owners, but due to overwhelming opposition by that community, have since pulled that legislation. I personally would not have supported that broad-stroke legislation.

5. The old hospital site in Easton has been a hot topic among residents lately. What direction do you think the county and town should move toward with that land? The current hospital on S. Washington Street is not a county-owned or town-owned facility. It is privately-owned by the hospital system themselves. Because the property falls within the limits of the Town of Easton, any matters regarding the potential future use of the property should be directed towards Town of Easton officials. I do feel that community input on the future use of the property is paramount and should be afforded by all citizens of Talbot County (not just Town of Easton citizens) because it's future use has the potential to affect the entire county.

6. What are your plans for public safety and emergency services in the county? We have phenomenal law enforcement, emergency services, and volunteer fire personnel in Talbot County and the only way to maintain the level of service that they currently provide is to continue to fully support, advocate for, and fund their operations. Over the last 3.5 years as a Councilman, I've been proud to be a part of many relative initiatives like the building of the new North EMS Station in Cordova, the funding of School Resource Officers (SRO's) in all Talbot County Public Schools, and the opening the new Public Safety Complex on Mary's Court in Easton.