

# Voter Guide for Gillespie County

## Elections on Saturday - May 6, 2023



### League of Women Voters - Hill Country Texas

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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 provides voters an opportunity to read about candidates who have filed for an office in local Primary Elections. All responses to questions come directly from the candidates and are not edited by League of Women Voters - Hill Country Texas.

Deadline Dates for Election on May 6, 2023		
Register to Vote/Change Address		
Thursday	April 6	Last day to register to vote
Voting by Mail		
Sunday	January 1	First day to request Mail in Ballot
Tuesday	April 25	Last day to apply for Mail in Ballot
Saturday	May 6	Last day to return Mail in Ballot
Early Voting		
Monday	April 24	First day to vote in-person
Tuesday	May 2	Last day to vote in-person
Election Day		
Saturday	May 6	In-person at voting location

The League of Women Voters of Hill Country Texas produced this Voter Guide, which includes information on the following elections on Saturday - May 6, 2023: Fredericksburg ISD School Board (candidates for board of trustees) AND the City of Fredericksburg (candidates for city council).

The voter guide is available in printed form at the Gillespie County Election Department office and the Pioneer Memorial Library and online at the website: [lwvhillcountrytexas.org](http://lwvhillcountrytexas.org). The League of Women Voters of the Hill Country Texas also provides election information for local elections at the website: [VOTE411.org](http://VOTE411.org). A voter enters the address on their Voter Registration card to access the information.

## Election and Voting Information for Gillespie County

Sample ballots and other Information from the Gillespie County Election Department posted online:  
[https://www.co.gillespiecounty.org/page/election\\_info](https://www.co.gillespiecounty.org/page/election_info)

Take a photo ID with you to the voting location.

Curb-side voting is available for Early Voting and on Election Day.

Remember: no cell phones, no texting, no photos, no campaign material, no loitering

**Only registered voters who live in specific parts of Gillespie County are eligible to vote in the school board election and the city election.**

**Blue voter registration card details the elections for the voter residence address.**

## FREDERICKSBURG ISD SCHOOL BOARD

Election conducted by the Gillespie County Election Department

### Early Voting in one location:

Gillespie County Annex 3 Building - Meeting Room 95 Frederick Road Fredericksburg

Sunday April 23	Monday April 24	Tuesday April 25	Wednesday April 26	Thursday April 27	Friday April 28	Saturday April 29
	8am-5pm	8am-5pm	8am-5pm	8am-5pm	8am-5pm	
Sunday April 30	Monday May 1	Tuesday May 2	Wednesday May 3	Thursday May 4	Friday May 5	Saturday May 6
	8am-5pm	7am-7pm				Election Day

### Election Day: Saturday - May 6

### One Location open 7:00am to 7:00pm

Fredericksburg Middle School Cafeteria 110 West Travis Fredericksburg

### Fredericksburg ISD Board of Trustees: three positions for 3-year terms each

The Fredericksburg ISD Board of Trustees consists of seven trustees elected by eligible voters to serve a three-year term. Each trustee serves as an at-large position for the term and represents the entire school district. Elections are held annually on the May uniform election date. Fredericksburg ISD boundaries are in Blanco County, Gillespie County, and Kendall County.

Duties: adopt goals and priorities and monitor success; adopt policies and review for effectiveness; hire and evaluate the superintendent; adopt a budget and a calendar for the school year; set the tax rate; and communicate with the community.

The election is for three at-large positions on the Fredericksburg ISD Board of Trustees, and each position will serve a three-year term. The three candidates with the highest number of votes will be declared as elected.

<b>Keri Hensley</b> Website: <a href="http://www.kerihensleyforfisd.com">www.kerihensleyforfisd.com</a>	<b>Brian Lehne</b> Campaign Email: <a href="mailto:brian@lehneconstruction.com">brian@lehneconstruction.com</a>
<b>Dennis McCanless</b> Website: <a href="http://www.Dennis4FISD.com">www.Dennis4FISD.com</a>	<b>Taylor Ward</b> Campaign Email: <a href="mailto:tward2256@yahoo.com">tward2256@yahoo.com</a>
<b>Jake Whittington</b> Facebook: Jake Whittington for FISD School Board	

### **What in your background qualifies you to serve as a member of the Fredericksburg ISD Board of Trustees?**

**Hensley:** I worked in a non profit setting for over 9 years where I oversaw over 600 volunteers and managed over \$10M directed to the youth of Texas. I am now CEO of our family-owned business serving the Texas Hill Country wine industry. I'm a mom of three children; two are attending FES and our youngest will start Kindergarten in Fall 2023. I love kids and care about their success.

**Lehne:** I have served on the FISD School Board for 5 ½ years. Our team of 8 has lowered tax rates by 18 cents since 2018, given staff raises (but not enough due to 35-39% of our money going to Austin), and through community involvement and a team effort, passed a bond for a new middle school and other campus improvements. I'm also part of the FISD Education Foundation and assist with the Fredericksburg Education Alliance. This alliance is working in Austin to get relief on the tax money that is taken from FISD for Robin Hood.

**McCanless:** I am a husband, a father of five, and an oil and gas industry executive with 30+ years of business experience and education in leading people and organizations, being fiscally conservative in managing budgets, and making tough decisions when needed, but I also firmly believe in protecting our kids, respecting our parents, spending within our means, and providing much needed property tax relief for the FISD community.

**Ward:** As a 2005 graduate of FISD, my passion has always been rooted in education. I grew up watching my mother teach special education at the elementary school and that instilled an understanding of what it meant to serve. Since my wife and I moved back to Fredericksburg in 2016, I strive to carry on that servant's heart by dedicating my time outside of family and work life to organizations that benefit the youth in our community. I understand the challenges the school faces and will work towards solving the problems with the future of our teachers and students in mind.

**Whittington:** Over the past two years, I have attended most school board meetings and had numerous meetings and conversations with current school board members and the administration. In doing so, I have had the opportunity to listen and understand the challenges facing our schools. I have also been treated respectfully and listened to. Additionally, my 24 year career as a CPA would be very favorable in helping me to adapt quickly to dealing well with school finances, education law, and the unique, complex local issues that will most certainly arise.

### **What are the most pressing issues facing the Fredericksburg ISD School Board?**

**Hensley:** Teacher and staff retention, supporting underprivileged students

**Lehne:** The most pressing issue facing FISD is school finance. We continue to send back 35-39% of our tax money collected to the state (\$19,000,000 +/-). Housing costs are out of reach for our teachers and staff. If we expect to properly prepare our children for the future and continue a strong community, we must take care of our teachers and staff. Also, we must remain nonpartisan when it comes to our schools. As parents and the school board work together, we must focus on doing what's right for ALL children and the community.

**McCanless:** Protecting our kids – children deserve a traditional core academic learning environment that is safe from physical, emotional, and mental harm that allows them to develop into independent and productive citizens. Parents need to be respected, provided with full transparency of what their child is learning, and have a seat at the table in their child's education as the primary voice in their lives. Also, the spending of FISD property taxes needs to be managed and transparent and taxpayers deserve relief from continued annual increases.

**Ward:** A strong and cohesive board with diverse backgrounds is key to ensuring the success of FISD. I believe that supporting our teachers and administration, school safety, improving quality of education, and the health/wellness of our students are the most pressing issues that the board can facilitate improvement. There are issues the board will face or are currently facing that have a direct impact on our district but may be out of their control.

**Whittington:** There are numerous issues resulting from the financial constraints from Robin Hood such as offering competitive compensation for both hiring and retaining our teachers and staff, affordable housing, handling unforeseen expenses, etc. One problem heavy on my mind over recent months is an issue we are having with our counselors and other staff being overwhelmed with numerous student crises that would ordinarily require the help of social workers or other specially trained professionals to properly respond. I would like to see our school administration and school board, our city, and our county leaders work together to solve this problem appropriately.

**What are citizens and parents telling you about the problems of the school district?**

**Hensley:** Our teachers and staff are spread thin challenging campus culture. There are academic gaps of students within the classroom. We don't have resources to support those behind while pushing high achievers.

**Lehne:** Our community overwhelmingly states that politics do not belong in our schools. We must develop a team that brings solutions to the table that benefit all children, parents, and citizens in our district. Also, the community would like to have more control over our local tax dollar. The approximately \$19,000,000 that goes back to the state is unacceptable. Our state's accountability measures have been a moving target academically and don't consider all our students' successes. The FISD Education Foundation and Fredericksburg Education Alliance have worked diligently to bridge these gaps and are greatly appreciated.

**McCanless:** Community members want kids protected from political activism to focus on and develop the traditional academic educational skill sets needed to be independent minded and productive citizens. They care about parents being respected, and provided with full transparency of their child's education so they can know what their child is learning. They also have expressed concern that the school district needs to do a better job of living within its means and take a harder view of the allocation of budget dollars to make sure we are making the best fiscal decisions we can for the kids and school district.

**Ward:** As a parent of three, I have the same concerns that many parents do about certain aspects involving the education of our children K-12. We live in a tight knit conservative community that believe in raising our children in a morally sound environment. I believe many parents would voice the same concerns in regards to their children's mental health, teacher burnout, and access to information that is not age appropriate.

**Whittington:** It feels like things have moved in a positive direction this year. However, the community feels the effects of FISD being understaffed. Current staff are juggling more roles than ever. Still, many people work very hard daily ensuring that these jobs are performed. But our staff are spread thin. Another concern that continues to arise is phone usage at school — specifically — social media. Disciplinary action has dramatically decreased over the past two years. Parents and staff have communicated the negative effects of phone abuse. Ultimately, the challenge will be navigating individual rights versus school policy.

**CITY COUNCIL FOR THE CITY OF FREDERICKSBURG**

**Election conducted by the City of Fredericksburg**

**Early Voting in one location:** Girl Scout Cabin      202 West Austin Street      Fredericksburg

Sunday April 23	Monday April 24	Tuesday April 25	Wednesday April 26	Thursday April 27	Friday April 28	Saturday April 29
	7:30am to 4:30pm	7:30am to 4:30pm	7:30am to 4:30pm	7:30am to 4:30pm	7:30am to 4:30pm	8:30am to 11:30am

Sunday April 30	Monday May 1	Tuesday May 2	Wednesday May 3	Thursday May 4	Friday May 5	Saturday May 6
	7:30am to 4:30pm	7:30am to 4:30pm				Election Day

**Election Day: Saturday - May 6      One Location open 7:00am to 7:00pm**

Fredericksburg Middle School Library      110 West Travis Street      Fredericksburg

**City Council Members: two positions for three-year terms each**

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.

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. The term of office is two years.

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.

<b>Randy Briley</b>	<b>Sharon Joseph</b>
Website: UniteFBG.com	Email: sjoseph1@austin.rr.com

<b>Charlie Kiehne</b>	<b>Timothy Ellis Riley</b>
Email: charliekfbgrealty@gmail.com	Website: www.timothyellisriley.com

<b>Bobby Watson</b>	
Website: bobbyforfredericksburg.com	

**What in your background qualifies you to serve as a Council member for the City of Fredericksburg?**

**Briley:** I believe my greatest service to the citizens of Fredericksburg will be to leverage my strengths to help unite our town with one common vision; What is best for our citizens and our community? As a new council member, a new set of eyes can yield new solutions to lingering issues. I am a US Navy submarine veteran with 35 years of corporate business experience. I am a fiscal conservative. I believe healthy and respectful discourse is essential to a thriving community. Finally, I use facts to make informed decisions.

**Joseph:** Decades of community service. I served on Fredericksburg Historic Review Board, Gillespie County Historical Society Board, Hill Country Memorial Hospital Board and Foundation Board, Community Foundation of the Texas Hill Country Board and Sisterhood For Good Leadership Team, Bethany Lutheran Church Council and Preschool Board, Outreach & Advocacy Team and Chancel Choir as well as the professional women’s organization, Zonta Club of Fredericksburg. I have worked in finance & budgeting in all of these organizations as well as my own business and have a good understanding of fiscal responsibility.

**Kiehne:** Fredericksburg is where I grew up and raised my family. I have been involved in our community volunteering for many events in town, church, school, and county. My experience is wide spread from being a business owner on Main Street for 24 years and as a Realtor for the past 23 years. As for my “political” background I served 3 terms on city council, 1 term as Mayor, 14 years on Fisd School Board in multiple rolls such as a board member, Secretary and President. I have also served as Justice of the Peace in Precinct 4.

**Riley:** I am the Vice President of a non profit called FBGshines. Responsible for park improvements (a new dock at Ladybird), five electric car charging stations at Marktplatz, home tours and much more. As a Master teacher of Fine Arts, Director, Producer, Writer, Equity Actor, Designer, HVAC Technician and an established collaborator with the City of FBG, I can tackle any problem and provide solutions with action.

**Watson:** I believe that my 40 plus years of experience as a successful businessman and business owner, as well as my 17 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. My community involvement includes leadership roles in Leadership Gillespie County, Fredericksburg Chamber of Commerce as well as positions on the Fredericksburg Convention and visitors Bureau, Fredericksburg Planning & Zoning Board, Gillespie County Economic Development Commission, Gillespie County Airport Advisory Board and 4 terms as a Fredericksburg City Councilman.

**What are the most pressing issues facing the Fredericksburg City Council?**

**Briley:** Water conservation is critical. We need to ensuring our city infrastructure is ready to meet the demands for future generations. Ensuring the safety and the security of our town and our residence. Attainable housing impacts many including our police, fire and EMS professionals. I have developed several plans to approach this issue. Property tax increases are a result of historic valuations. As valuations decline, the city will be faced with reducing spending or increasing revenues. I would work to reduce spend without risking city services.

**Joseph:** The most pressing issue for Fredericksburg and the Texas Hill Country is water. As we move to Stage 4 water rationing and all pray for rain, we need to work together to use less and preserve more. I support strict enforcement of the water rationing rules so that we are all playing the same game on the same field. Always pressing is the issue of public safety. Let us not become complacent just because all is well. Police, Fire, EMS and administration must remain a top priority.

**Kiehne:** Fredericksburg continues to have challenges as our city continues to grow. 1) Water has recently been the forefront of concern. The city has been proactive by having Stage 3 Water Restrictions with Water Ordinance in effect since 2014. The city has added 3 additional one million gallon water storage tanks, generators for city wells and an additional water line. 2) Park/Open Space: the city will need to continue to improve and establish facilities in partnership with the county and private participation. 3) Infrastructure: improvements to services such as water, sewer, electric and streets need to be continued.

**Riley:** The City needs to collaborate with private, county and city budgets to create larger endowments, land trusts, and invest in the Hill Country that is vanishing before our eyes. Without strategic efforts to save our water and natural resources, our entire economic and sustainable future are in peril.

**Watson:** Water conservation is the most pressing issue facing the City Council. 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 another issue which includes maintaining our high level of city services, providing parks for our growing population of young families, affordable housing for our local residents and employees and preserving our rich German Heritage.

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

**Briley:** That they deserve a safe environment for families and our community. Having served at Motorola, I understand the emergency systems necessary to better support our first responders. During our 2018 Quality of Life Visioning work, we cautioned against Fredericksburg becoming a destination of excess. We understood that a balance was needed to support our residents along with the expected growth. The focus was families and residents first with any city plans or projects. We need to protect our small town and preserve the historic assets that made Fredericksburg the gem of the hill country.

**Joseph:** The citizens of Fredericksburg are telling me they are worried about too many tourists and the big rigs on Main Street. The business people want their business to thrive while others just want to get through Main Street in one light. We don't worry about the water until the tap is dry or public safety until our house is burglarized. I'd like to stay ahead of the most serious issues.

**Kiehne:** Taking the time to visit with folks in town almost every day, concerns that they have expressed and are important to them include Water, Hill Country Memorial Hospital sale, Parks/Open Space, Housing, Crime/Drugs/City/County/State/Federal Government, Traffic/Parking, Diversity of businesses on Main Street, Education and Short Term Rentals. On a POSITIVE NOTE... ALL seem to agree that Fredericksburg and Gillespie County are still a great place to call HOME, even on its worst day(s).

**Riley:** The tennis club and the new rise of pickleball are clashing at LBJ. Matters such as these seem trivial, but these issues are true community issues and are only trivial if our City leaders have no capacity to pick up a racket and play ball.

**Watson:** Citizens are concerned about water, growth in tourism, our quality of life and that Fredericksburg is losing our small-town character. Because of the growth of short-term rentals in our residential areas, we are losing our neighborhoods. Another issue that is result of our growth is more traffic congestion. Lack of affordable housing for our workforce is a real concern for Fredericksburg. As mentioned previously, with our growth in young families, we have outgrown our park facilities and need to improve and add to our existing park system. If reelected, I will continue to make these items my priority.

## **League of Women Voters - Hill Country Texas**

For over forty years this League has served Kerr County and now serves six counties in the Texas Hill Country: Bandera, Blanco, Gillespie, Kendall, Kerr, and Llano. Members of this League live in all six counties. Both men and women over the age of 16 are members of the League and there are various membership levels with annual dues as a part of the membership. Visit the website to join: [lwwhillcountrytexas.org](http://lwwhillcountrytexas.org)

If reading this Voter Guide has helped you to be informed and vote, please consider a donation, in any amount, to help the Hill Country Texas League continue to offer this service to voters. Donations are accepted via the website: [lwwhillcountrytexas.org](http://lwwhillcountrytexas.org) or mail to the post office box on the front page.