



Montgomery County 2022 Candidate Questionnaire - David Fraser-Hidalgo

Personal Information:

Name David Fraser-Hidalgo

What Office Are You Seeking in the 2022 Election? Delegate District 15

Where Can Voters Learn More About Your Positions Or Contact Your Campaign?

www.fraserfor15.org

Please Answer the Following Questions- responses will posted in their entirety and will not be edited.

Someone new to Montgomery County may ask, "What's the Ag Reserve and why is it important?" What's your answer?

The Agricultural Reserve is a revolutionary farmland preservation program established in 1981. Established as protection from urban sprawl and to preserve the rural characteristics of Montgomery County, the Ag Reserve has become a beloved part of our community which provides working farms with fresh food, environmental benefits, and thousands of jobs for our community.

What is your vision for the future of the County's Agricultural Reserve? Briefly, how would you achieve that vision?

My vision for the future of the Ag Reserve largely revolves around protection and preservation of a system that already works. The future will involve continued efforts to make sure that farmers can continue to be economically viable, protecting this land from development, stopping infrastructure projects over the Potomac, and increasing agricultural tourism opportunities. As a father with two children, I live in Boyds just outside the Ag Reserve and I want them to continue to experience an Ag Reserve similar to what previous generations had the pleasure to experience.

What are your priorities regarding stewardship of the County's natural resources (water, forests, open spaces) and parkland?

I firmly believe in protecting our County's natural resources from development and believe that efforts to build at the expense of open space are misguided. While I am supportive of smart transit oriented growth, building on green-space within the Ag Reserve or removing established parkland is not a smart use of resources and will only lead to additional traffic, a less resilient environment, and a decreased quality of life.

What role will you play with regard to ensure that we safeguard our drinking water supply both surface and groundwater?

As a member of the Environment and Transportation Committee in the House of Delegates, protecting our drinking water, in relation protecting the Chesapeake Bay watershed has been a passion of mine for 9 years. I will continue to fight for stronger stormwater regulation, oversight on pesticide usage, and regulations on municipal salt use during our winter months.

What are your top priorities to help the County address climate change? What role will the Ag Reserve play?

Grow more crops locally in the Ag Reserve.

Support our local farmers in the Ag Reserve so they can afford to continue to produce and live in the Ag Reserve.

The more we support and grow crops locally the smaller our carbon footprint.

Furthermore, in order to preserve the reserve we must not allow development to encroach inside the reserve. This would lead to less open space, more storm water problems, more potential for drinking water pollution and contamination.

What more can be done to support our local farm businesses and rural communities?

Incorporating local produce into schools and exploring tax credits for county restaurants and grocery stores that purchase directly from farmers within the Ag Reserve would be a strong step in supporting farmers and the rural communities. I'm on the Board of Community Farm Share and have actively advocated for growing, transporting and supporting our Ag farmers and community. Responsible agro-tourism to further diversify the economy of the Ag Reserve will help grow small family owned businesses in our region.

What are your regional transportation priorities? Do you support M83 and an additional Potomac bridge and outer beltway through the Reserve or adjacent rural zones?

As a State Delegate I do not support a Potomac bridge and or outer beltway, both of which are within the purview of the General Assembly. Transit options must be improved to serve the up-country, increased public transit and MARC service should be considered. We must also explore the mono rail and other less environmentally impactful options and technologies. M83 is a county road and falls strictly within the purview of the county council and county executive not the State. With that said and while not an expert on M83, I do have concerns on environmental impacts of building M83. We must balance the needs of traffic congestion and its impacts on the quality of life of the up-county residents with the myriad of environmental and climate change concerns.

How should our County manage its solid waste? What role should incineration, composting and recycling play?

Montgomery County needs to lean heavily into composting and recycling as a major component of our solid waste plan and work towards the zero waste goal to reach the county's goal of carbon-neutral operation. I do not believe that incineration has a place in our solid waste plan and do not support solid waste incineration receiving green energy tax credits.

What are your views on the general plan update "Thrive 2050," both the process and the draft now before the Council?

The Ag Reserve was specifically designed to preserve the agricultural way of life in 1/3 of the county. With that said, I grow concerned anytime there is a policy discussion of any kind concerning the Ag Reserve. While we continue to have growth, housing, traffic congestion, increase public school needs, all these County Policy issues must be continually framed within the parameters of the original intent and mandate of Ag Reserve.

Do you believe that the way that local government branches, state entities, and the public currently interact can be improved? If so, what steps would you take?

Local and state governments can and absolutely should improve their interactions with the public. A major change we saw during COVID was the ability to host virtual meetings to engage with the public and solicit comments concerning future developments and legislative efforts. I fully support continuing this as it allows more representative slice of our community to actively participate in the planning process without having to worry about childcare, travel, or taking time off work to voice their opinions. While furthermore, decreasing traffic congestion and the burning of fossil fuels, hence reducing our green house gas emissions.