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

Montgomery County's designation of the Agricultural Reserve in 1980 remains the nation's most successful land conservation decision and as District 1's County Councilmember, I will ensure those 93,000 acres of farm, fields and forests continue to be protected from development. It isn't just about protecting our county's agricultural heritage, it's about safeguarding the air we breathe and the water we drink. Sprawl development in the Ag Reserve is a non-starter because the resulting environmental degradation doesn't just threaten those who live in or near it; it harms the entire environment which is a threat to all of us. In my senior roles at the state level, I have traveled all across Maryland and have frequently visited our rural communities to understand the challenges they face. That unique perspective: deep local roots with a statewide perspective and significant time spent in rural communities will serve me well representing a community as geographically diverse as District

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

I am deeply committed to preserving forested areas and streams, protecting and enhancing tree canopies, and promoting public open spaces for the sake of both our environment and our quality of life. As part of this effort, we need to craft a new regional water plan which will require inter-agency and inter-jurisdictional efforts that involve WSSC, ICPRB, Montgomery County government, among others, and the recent Water Availability Forum hosted by MCA, Sierra Club and others was an important first step. This isn't a new area of interest or concern for me. As a top advisor at the Board of Public Works, I've helped fight against sprawl development in the Bay's Critical Areas and worked on land conservation and environmental easements through the state's Rural Legacy Program, Program Open Space, and other programs designed to protect our precious natural resources.

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

We need the Ag Reserve to be sustainable both environmentally and economically. Despite the clear challenges facing local farmers, there is real opportunity for the County's Agricultural Reserve, for those who call it home, and whose livelihoods depend on it. At a time when locally sourced ingredients are in high demand, consumers are more carbon-conscious than ever about the distance their food travels to get to them and agri-tourism is on the rise, there is real opportunity. I will work with the parties involved to help Maryland Craft Beer to be "Montgomery Sourced" from the Ag Reserve. But besides the regular challenges of connecting to customers and the cost of running a farm like any business, the biggest challenge is the high cost of land. We need to help farmers by building upon and expanding programs like Land Link, ensuring that we are eliminating barriers for farmers and not adding them, and seizing public-private partnership opportunities like the grape crushing facility.

5 Can you identify some of the top challenges to the Reserve's local agriculture and what actions you would take, if elected, to address them?

From conversations I've had with farmers, the biggest challenge they face are rising costs and a lack of rising crop prices. The second biggest challenge I hear is the aging of our farm workers with a lack of young farmers. While we are limited in our ability to control commodity food prices, we can create and expand programs that help reduce costs for farmers - both with programs like Land Link and the New Farmer Project, and by reducing bureaucratic burdens over which county government has control for longtime farmers. We can also make targeted investments in entities like a food hub and/or industrial kitchen to help create jobs that supplement and support the rural economy. We can also work with MCPS on a state-of-the-art agricultural career track to support young people who would benefit from those skills and to inspire a new generation of farmers equipped with modern farming techniques. We need to invest in our rural communities so they remain livable and desirable places to live.

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

I'm committed to supporting our local farm businesses and rural communities. This is an area in which I bring a different perspective, as someone with local roots who has worked statewide and visited rural communities throughout Maryland on a regular basis. I've also been involved here, as a local resident who grew up in Potomac, and also from the time I worked on now Sen. Brian Feldman's Delegate race back in 2006. What I've found is the best way to support our local farm businesses and rural communities is to show up and to listen. I don't have all the answers. But I do know that it often feels the farther away businesses and residents are from Rockville, Bethesda and Silver Spring, the less their voices are heard. That won't be the case with me. I show up, I listen, and I deliver results. That's what I've always done serving at the top levels of state government and being actively involved in our community, and it's what I'll do as District 1's County Councilmember.

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

I support efforts to move us closer to Zero Waste so we can eventually shut down the Dickerson Incinerator. Reducing municipal solid waste is good for jobs and for the environment, and improves our air and water quality, along with our overall quality of life. I led the way a decade ago at the University of Maryland, hosting the first-ever campus-wide zero waste event, and before and since, have been a strong proponent of waste reduction, recycling, and composting, and would continue that advocacy as a County Councilmember. Of the trash burned in the incinerator, 18% are plastics. That's unacceptable, and it is as much about the practices of citizens as it is about public policy. Montgomery County should be a leader in drastically reducing those numbers, and it starts with public awareness. County government can and should work together with partners like MCA on a public education campaign to highlight this issue, while making it easier for residents to recycle and compost.

8 How can we expand the role the County's schools play in the support of a healthy local food system and the success of local agriculture? Do you support a rural schools' policy that provides equity for Reserve cluster schools acknowledging the unique nature of schools in region set aside for farmland and open space preservation?

The county's schools can and should play a major role in the support of a healthy local food system and the success of local agriculture. For starters, healthy food is an area of significant concern and studies show that it is an area where we can drastically cut the achievement gap. An innovative program where much of our lunchroom food is locally sourced from the Ag Reserve would be a great start and mutually beneficial -- improving education outcomes, establishing healthy eating habits, and supporting local agriculture. Yes, I support a rural schools' policy that provides equity for Reserve cluster schools, and see it as a tremendous opportunity to educate young people about environmental sustainability, inspire a new generation of modern farmers, safeguard our county's agricultural heritage, and support communities in the Ag Reserve. It's part of my focus on "Early Education to Career" education, with agriculture being an important career track for Montgomery County students.

9 Currently the County is exploring how best to support a strong agricultural economy through agritourism and new farming enterprises such as on farm breweries and wineries. What are your thoughts about how best to advance on farm activities within the context of the master plan?

I think there are tremendous opportunities to build a strong agricultural economy, especially through agritourism and new farming enterprises such as farm breweries and wineries. Waredaca, a longtime family farm which is now also a craft brewery, is a good example. As senior policy advisor and deputy chief of staff for Comptroller Franchot, Maryland's leading proponent for these burgeoning industries, I have worked on these regulatory issues and been an outspoken supporter of these small businesses. With respect to the master plan, I think it's important to recognize that protecting the Ag Reserve from development shouldn't mean opportunities in economic development that support an agricultural economy. It's also important to note that it isn't just about the opportunities for the micro-breweries themselves, it's also about the ingredients that can be sourced locally to support a strong agricultural economy for those micro-breweries located outside the Ag Reserve.

10 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?

I'm a strong supporter of transit-oriented development and believe our limited dollars are best spent on long-term transit investments (dedicated Metro funding, Purple Line, BRT), the CCT, MARC service expansion, and improvements to 270 that don't necessarily require costly and disruptive right-of-way acquisitions. Transportation projects should complement each other by resolving our mobility challenges without creating major damage and disruption to the environment and existing neighborhoods. A second Potomac Bridge isn't financially or politically feasible and creates significant environmental and community degradation and I don't support it. Expansion of the American Legion Bridge is a far better way to improve capacity without destroying the Ag Reserve. I have real concerns with the cost and environmental impacts of M83 as currently devised. I recognize the need for upcounty transportation solutions, but feel the county can develop a more modern option than a plan from the 1960s.