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What office are you seeking?: Montgomery County Council At-Large
Where can voters learn more about your positions?: www.VoteAshwaniJain.com

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

The Agricultural Reserve was created in 1980 by the County Council to dedicate and preserve more than 90,000 acres of farmland. The goal of the Ag Reserve is to help preserve some of the green space in our county, protect our farming community and help protect our water supply. The land also contributes hundreds of millions of dollars to the county economy through its farm tours, lectures and hikes.

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

We must protect our county's natural resources, as they protect our food and water supply, as well as our habitat, ecosystem and way of life. To address the issue of preserving these natural resources, we must also work to address the effects of Climate Change.

As we develop, we must reduce the use of impenetrable materials such as asphalt, concrete and stone. We must also encourage the use of real grass fields instead of synthetic turf. And, as we develop, we can entice developers by providing them with additional building height and density only as a reward for 1) building more affordable housing units than traditionally required by the MPDU program, (2) installing solar panels on rooftops and making new buildings energy-efficient, (3) creating more electric charging stations in any new parking lots, (4) providing more first floor retail opportunities rather than buildings with no retail, and/or (5) providing funds to create more parks and green space.

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

I will work to preserve our Ag Reserve and will NOT pursue any development on this land. I will also work with the Montgomery Countryside Alliance to expand the reach of its Ag Science Lab to elementary students. As I understand it, funds for this program are secured through a partnership with MCA and the Montgomery County Farm Bureau. Currently, the Ag Science Lab mostly provides a hands-on agricultural curriculum (where students can learn about the importance of farming) to high school students.

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?

In addition to the issues and proposals I highlighted in questions 4 and 6, I understand that communities near and around the Ag Reserve typically do not feel as if their concerns are given the same levels of consideration and attention as residents in other parts of our county.

As such, I am fully committed to being a thoughtful, responsive, and dedicated partner in the governing process. Additionally, as someone who served in several stakeholder engagement roles in President

Obama's White House, administration, and campaigns, I understand how the best policies are crafted when representatives from various community groups and organizations are met with before, during, and after important decisions are made.

I will bring that same level of commitment to the community I was born and raised in by making our elected institutions more representative, responsive, inclusive, and accountable.

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

I believe we must help provide greater training and professional development for our local farmers to increase their farm profitability. As small business owners, our local farmers are struggling to find affordable farmland, access to capital for expansion, a large labor pool to hire from, best practices to integrate modern technology into their operations, sustainable ways to deal with climate change (i.e. strong storms and severe droughts). One way to help begin to address these challenges is to make the county's Land Link and New Farmer programs more accessible to all our current farmers and those who are interested in becoming farmers.

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

I believe we need to create more sustainable solid waste management that benefits our environment, health and well-being of our residents. In the long-term, I support shutting down the Dickerson incinerator. In the short-term, I believe we must guarantee the safety and operational efficiency of the incinerator, especially given the recent fires. We must also understand that tracking emissions is critical to achieving the County's sustainability goals, and is also a key priority of the Under2 Coalition, which Montgomery County recently joined.

Additionally, composting is a simple and effective way to make the County more sustainable and reduce reliance on the trash incinerator. Programs to educate and support grocery stores, food preparation businesses and campuses with cafeterias - such as county schools, corporate campuses, Montgomery County Community College, etc. - in the creation of composts or participation in compost waste recycling will be key.

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?

In addition to the ideas I proposed in question 4 (which include expanding the reach of the Ag Science Lab to help educate students about the importance of the Ag Reserve, farming, agriculture and healthy eating, I will also work with MCA and organizations like Real Food for Kids to educate and communicate the importance of food choices on a student's academic performance and physical fitness. We must also work with the Board of Education, MCEA and SEIU Local 500 (among others) to encourage our school cafeterias to serve fresh food from local farms.

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?

In the context of the master plan, The Agricultural Reserve and its accompanying Master Plan and zoning elements were designed to protect farmland and agriculture. When I toured the Madison House Autism Foundation, I witnessed first-hand the importance of ensuring that we limit the land uses of that area to agriculture, farmland, low density development and non-residential uses. If elected, I will stay true to these principals.

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?

As it relates to paying for these investments, we must be mindful of how we balance this budget while not cutting essential services and critical programs that people come to this county for. I will prioritize the programs that take into consideration the needs of both residents in DownCounty and UpCounty. This includes those programs that have the most immediate effects on reducing congestion and pollution (like the BRT and CCT), as well programs that were already promised to residents years ago through county-approved master plans (like a limited expansion of M-83). All of these are investments in the future of our residents, our community and our economy.