



## Montgomery County 2022 Candidate Questionnaire - Lorna Phillips Forde

### Personal Information:

**Name** Lorna Phillips Forde

**What Office Are You Seeking in the 2022 Election?** County Council District 2

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

Voters may contact my campaign via the following:

Website: <https://lornaforde4countycouncil.com> Phone: (240) 801-6341

**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 Ag Reserve is the Crown Jewel of Upcounty, consisting of 93,000 acres of farmland and rural space that was created in 1980 to sustain a viable agricultural industry in Montgomery County. This vast area makes up ~1/3 of the county's land mass and features food, grain & livestock farms, a horticulture sector and equestrian facilities. Each sector not only contributes to the County's strong economic base but also lays the foundation for a commitment to farmland preservation for future generations.

The Ag Reserve provides a host of economic, environmental, and socio-cultural benefits that are important to our community. The At Reserve creates direct and indirect employment opportunities, it feeds residents, it feeds livestock, it provides a critical habitat for local wildlife, it provides tax revenue, it offers people a chance to interact with farmland through agritourism opportunities, it provides a renewable and self-sustaining ecosystem helping to control flooding, protect wetlands and watersheds and maintain air quality and it also preserves decades of traditions and long-standing cultural practices lost if there is no land to farm and no farmers to farm it.

### 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 includes the following:

- Support programs that address access, funding, equity & affordability for local producers; to include women and BIPOC residents.
- Explore funding to support a high school to college pathway for agricultural science in order to develop a generational pipeline of farmers.
- Improve infrastructure to provide services that Ag Reserve residents need (i.e. broadband, bike paths, health services, senior living options)
- Support a scaled transition to more table crops
- Support efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions

Fully utilize federal and state grant funding mechanisms that are earmarked for helping farmers achieve success. Explore existing or new relationships with non-profit and educational institutions and review budget allocations to identify funding synergies.

### What are your priorities regarding stewardship of the County's natural resources (water,

## **forests, open spaces) and parkland?**

My priorities regarding stewardship of the County's natural resources & parkland include the following:

1. Supporting & maintaining our parks & recreation spaces that will be a source of enjoyment for families & create a legacy for future generations.
2. Supporting & maintaining open spaces that preserves environmental resources and protects threatened species, preserves habitat, preserves agricultural land, and protects water resources.
3. Supporting an aggressive reforestation initiative to replace the canopy cover lost by county projects.

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

There are federal and state regulations to protect water resources; however, I will vigorously pursue proactive and preventive measures to address any gaps in legislation that would hinder all stakeholders (including watershed groups and landowners) from adequately protecting the water supply.

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

My top priorities include:

1. Adopting a program similar to Dashboard (GA) so that we can track and measure our progress. Currently, we have no idea how we are tracking to our goals and if we need to make adjustments. This model could help MoCo better measure our emissions policies to ascertain if they are working as planned.
2. Forest preservation - Deforestation contributes to global warming, which in turn creates future challenges for agriculture. I will make every effort to strengthen the County's forest conservation laws and close loop-holes that enable exemptions which, over time, are harmful to our communities. I understand the importance of preserving a legacy of tree cover and the impact to our environmental sustainability and would support adequate funding to achieve these goals.
3. Setting achievable emissions and cooling goals. We have to establish adequate goals and measurements to ensure that adjustments are made regularly as more information is available. The Council can demand that metrics be recorded and made accessible to the public. In order to ensure cooperation from the community in achieving climate and preservation goals, residents must have a sense that their individual and collective efforts are taking us in the right direction.

The Ag Reserve can assist with regular and consistent community outreach regarding its efforts & progress to address climate change. The Ag Reserve could also consider implementing an Agroforestry program which, over time, would yield results that protect topsoil, livestock and wildlife habitat; increases crop yields and profits; reduces energy and chemical inputs; improves water quality and increases water-use efficiency.

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

Create a robust community education campaign to include information about where & how residents can support local farm businesses. Collaborate with local food councils, health departments and social service departments as well as online bloggers and small businesses development centers to expand the distribution of information. Many residents don't even know where to start. I seek restaurants that use farm produce but finding these restaurants is often random. An education campaign would remove the guesswork and connect those who want to eat at farm-to-table restaurants and cafes. Then, create an incentive program, that encourages everyone to spread the word.

## **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?**

My transportation priorities include:

\*Completion of the Purple Line with no further delays.

\*All-day, two-way MARC train service.

\*Completion of BRT 355...paying close attention to access for and equity surrounding bus stop locations.

\*Prioritize local transit projects

I do not support road construction through the Reserve or adjacent rural zones. M83 would remove 100 acres of high quality forest. We are in a climate crisis and already have a tree canopy deficit. People who live close to roads and highways have higher risk of heart and lung disease. M83 is also planned to intersect a BIPOC area...my equity lens screams FOUL! We have to be open and flexible in our pursuit of remedies and have a discussion about transit improvements and transportation projects that include fiscal responsibility, climate sanity, racial equity and social justice. Prioritizing local projects & existing roadways are measures that can be the start of a long term process to ultimately ease congestion while at the same time protecting homes, forestland, parks and streams.

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

Regrettably, the County is dependent upon the Dickerson incinerator because we have not been able to demonstrate that we have the recycling metrics in place to close it. We are still in search of a solution that's economical and equitable.

Incineration, composting & recycling play critical roles in the ultimate goal of managing our waste with the most climate-friendly outcome. However, there are challenges with all.

I wholeheartedly support the concept of composting, but mandatory requirements must be considered through an equity lens. Some businesses that generate food waste operate on thin margins. I would assess the impact of (and define) small, medium and large businesses and recommend composting requirements accordingly. There is no time like the present to review such standards and recommend an implementation schedule that will not further hurt the economic viability of the business or organization. I believe that access and capacity in multi-family buildings could prove problematic to a successful mandate. Mandating training and education for businesses, organizations and families on the environmental benefit of composting might be a better first step. Community engagement and buy-in will lead to community investment.

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

I endorse the principles of THRIVE 2050; however, I am concerned about the recent Racial Equity & Social Justice review. As a Montgomery County black-owned small business owner, it is important to me that the plan that guides us for the next 30 years is equitable & inclusive. Montgomery County needs robust, but smart targets; particularly in identifying affordable housing homeownership targets, tracking the number of people served and racial equity goals. I will be a strong advocate for a THRIVE 2050 plan that promotes smart growth strategies that will help address affordable housing, global climate change, improve diversity and economic equity, and stimulate the County's economic vitality.

### **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?**

Too often we charge off to tackle the world in our own little silo; not utilizing the full power & benefit of state, local and community partnerships. We also tend not to be as transparent as is necessary to get full buy-in from all stakeholders. I will assess where we are and offer the following adjustments:

\*Maintain ongoing dialogue, communication, and meaningful relationships

\*Conduct regular outreach to build partnerships and provide transparency

\*Solicit feedback

\*Work to obtain buy-in

\*Facilitate opportunities for collaboration