

For Immediate Release

Contact: Caroline Taylor, Executive Director
Montgomery Countryside Alliance
301-461-9831
info@mocoalliance.org

Montgomery County's Big Field of Candidates Weigh in on The 106,000 Acre Agricultural and Open Space Reserve (1/3 of the County)

[Montgomery Countryside Alliance](#) (MCA), the 501c3 nonprofit organization founded in 2001 to promote and protect Montgomery County's 106,000 acre, 38 year old Agricultural Reserve, has just released the [results of the 2018 Candidates Questionnaire](#). The questionnaire was sent to all candidates for County Council, County Executive and all state legislators representing Montgomery County (Districts 14-20 and 39), an expansion from 2014 when the questionnaire only included the Council and Executive races. The questionnaire consists of 9 open ended questions, allowing each candidate to express their vision for the Ag Reserve, ag education, rural businesses, solid waste management, county-wide transit, zoning and water quality. Candidates were given a week and a half to submit their responses electronically.

The questionnaire is an attempt to collect candidate views on a part of the County that is generally overlooked. Ginny Barnes, County resident and President of the West Montgomery Civic Association observes, "Surprisingly, many residents still don't know what the Ag Reserve is or where to find it. Focusing on questions specifically about this unique treasure helps us all understand how the Agricultural Reserve benefits each of us and fits into a balanced land use strategy. Rural low density residential 'green wedges' buffer and protect the Reserve, creating a transition from our urban core. Beyond the vital economy it represents, the Reserve offers local fresh food and farm products, a living tie to County history and a place to refresh the soul."

Candidates were asked to propose solutions to challenges faced by local farmers, but also to provide their ideas on bringing the benefits of the Reserve to all county residents. "We were pleased to see so many thoughtful and candid answers. Many people, for example, are keenly interested in candidates' expressed positions on topics such as an outer beltway and protection of Montgomery County's rural schools. Very illuminating," said Caroline Taylor, MCA's Executive Director.

MCA will make the candidate questionnaire a continuing initiative in forthcoming election years according to MCA Board Co-President Gene Kingsbury. "Montgomery County's nationally lauded Agricultural Reserve and our local food system have grown in importance to the residents of the County and the region. We've had voters asking when the survey will come out this year. In a crowded field of candidates, it is important that voters know where the candidates stand and we were happy to see both voters and candidates engage on these important issues."

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