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What office are you seeking?: County Council At Large
Where can voters learn more about your positions?: <https://michele4moco.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 includes approximately 1/3 of the land in Montgomery County. It is important because 1) it demonstrates our commitment, as a community, to maintaining open spaces where we live, and 2) it shows the county's commitment to maintaining agriculture and farmland. I grew up in Central Florida, where the planning process (or lack thereof) has resulted in many areas that simply put, look like one big parking lot. Montgomery County was forward-thinking in establishing the agricultural reserve, and the county is better for it in terms of open space. I also think that due to establishing the reserve, the county now is well-positioned to benefit from growth in agritourism and also provision of locally-sourced food to restaurants and stores, which is a trend that will only continue to grow.

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

The county's foresight in establishing the Agricultural Reserve is impressive. I would like to see a requirement for green space/open space in the Subdivision Staging Policy (SSP), as such a requirement does not currently exist. By implementing this requirement, we can ensure that we are bringing the open feeling of the Agricultural Reserve into our more densely populated areas.

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

We are going to have a lot of change in local government during the upcoming election, and I see a renewed commitment to the Agricultural Reserve as a necessary element of my vision for it. There is a tremendous amount of development taking place in the upcounty, and it would be worth our time as a community and a people to simply take a step back and ensure we have a commitment among the new councilmembers and County Executive to continue the maintenance of the Agricultural Reserve. In this way, we can focus our efforts relating to the reserve on creating economic opportunities within the framework of the existing reserve. This is a simple step, but very important, in my opinion.

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?

The number one top challenge to the Reserve's local agriculture is economic - it is often more profitable (and certainly less hard work) to sell a family farm to developers. If we are committed to the family farms residing within the agriculture reserve, residents of Montgomery County need to demand that the output from these farms be utilized in private and public sector outlets such as restaurants and MCPS lunches. I see the millennial generation as very interested in connecting these dots to allow for this type of integrated

supply chain and if elected, I would convene a blue ribbon panel of millennial generation participants so we can find some solutions from “outside the box” that will help keep Montgomery County’s family farms operating and supplying our businesses and government entities with fresh, locally-grown food.

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

Again, I think we can do more from an economic perspective. I am very interested to see the results of the county’s agritourism study, scheduled for release this summer. This study should be considered in conjunction with the Countywide Comprehensive Economic Strategy published in November 2016 which states, “Business must not be seen as an afterthought; the County must wholeheartedly embrace the success of the private sector.” Farms are businesses, first and foremost, and should be included as an area of focus in the efforts of our newly established Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation, as well as Worksource Montgomery, our public-private partnerships that were established to make Montgomery County more friendly to business. An unprofitable farm is not going to continue operations, no matter how the land is zoned.

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

We should strive to reduce the role of incineration and increase the role of composting and recycling to the greatest extent possible. Montgomery County’s goal was to reduce waste and recycle 70% of solid waste by 2010. The county is currently reporting that it recycles 60% of solid waste. Last year, the Council passed a bill directing the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection to create a strategic plan to advance composting, compost use and food waste diversion. I think the county’s efforts in this area have been excellent and I would like to continue this progress.

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?

Montgomery County needs to de-centralize the MCPS school lunch program. The food served in MCPS schools is prepackaged and not healthy. We have been told, when trying to work in fresh produce for individual schools, that the school lunches are prepared in a central location, so we can’t deviate in any way shape or form from the centralized service. This command and control way of thinking is forcing our kids to suffer. If we combine the farm products from the Ag Reserve with produce from school gardens, we can get better food into MCPS lunches, while can involving the kids in learning how food grows and how it comes to the table. I have seen this decentralization work with the Smart Sacks program, which I have worked in through my church, and we need to expand it. I would work as a councilmember to make this happen, through partnership with the private sector farms and not-for profit entities such as Real Food For Kids, Crossroads Community Food Network, and Manna Food.

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 want to abolish the liquor monopoly before we move to incentivize development of on-farm wineries and breweries (which I see as natural agritourism destinations). The county should not be in the business of selling alcohol, period. This question demonstrates at least one answer as to why the county should not be in that business - why should on farm enterprises considering the implementation of farm breweries and wineries be forced to subsidize the county as a competitor to said breweries and wineries via tax payments? This makes no economic sense and we need to privatize the liquor monopoly because that would be the best economic way the county could support such agritourism businesses.

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 support building the M-83 Mid-County highway. This road has been on the master plan for many years, and residents moved to the upcounty area with the understanding that it would be put in place. We owe it to those residents to fulfill that promise. I do not support an additional Potomac bridge. This bridge would benefit Virginia more than Maryland. A better use of our time and resources is to focus on economic development on our side of the Potomac, so that fewer of our residents are forced to commute to Virginia for work. I do not support an outer beltway.