



Montgomery County 2022 Candidate Questionnaire - William Roberts

Personal Information:

Name William Roberts

What Office Are You Seeking in the 2022 Election? County Council D2

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

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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 93,000 acres of "farms, fields, and forests" that make up our Ag Reserve are truly a natural gem. One of the nation's most successful local agricultural preservation projects, it protects farmland and agricultural history; provides locally sourced products and abundant opportunities for outdoor recreation; and generates more than \$280M+ in revenue for Montgomery County. The Reserve is also a critical part of our battle against food insecurity and climate change.

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

I want to make sure we protect the Ag Reserve for future generations to benefit. As the District 2 Councilmember, I will ensure that we protect the reserve from encroachment in the form of zoning text amendments that would further change its boundaries and other ZTA's that would prioritize non-agricultural uses that might endanger the goal of the preservation effort. I also want to ensure that we work with our farmers to support their ability to continue the business of farming in Montgomery County for generations to come - we need to realize that farming is a business and farmers need the support and partnership of our county to thrive. I want to make sure we're working with farmers and local food producers to enhance the ability to cultivate the land and invest in farm upgrades like high tunnels, green houses, and cold storage that can produce additional yields. I also want to make sure we're adapting best practices that we learned during the pandemic to work with farmers, the local community, and public-private partners to bolster processing, distribution, and sale of more local food and agricultural products. All that said I also want to make sure the reserve lasts into the future by working to make sure the County is properly elevating the Ag Reserve as an economic resource. The Ag Reserve can and should be the engine of Agribusiness - and of agritourism - in our region. With new business coming on line that continue to draw visitors to the Reserve, we need a balanced approach to make sure that the reserve can continue to be an Upcounty economic engine, but also maintain its character.

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

We need to protect our forests, waterways, and open spaces. The Ag Reserve is known as the lung of the county because of the benefits we all receive from the air purification impact of our current

forests. We need to do everything we can to preserve our natural forests and green spaces.

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

It's critical that we protect the Ten Mile Creek Watershed and the Little Seneca Lake Reservoir (as our region's emergency water source) and our natural water sources. Likewise we need to work to have a long-term regional water plan as our water systems are sure to be impacted by climate change. I'll be an ally with our Ag Reserve and Western MoCo communities and a champion in this regard. We will also need to be on guard against activity that could impact and pollute groundwater - and the ways that that could harm our natural resources and affect homes connected to wells.

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

The reserve's future, and our own, depends on our fight against the climate crisis. We know that we have to do more to address the emergency, like reducing greenhouse gas emissions, building greener, incentivising renewables and clean energy usage, and making our infrastructure more resilient to withstand changing weather patterns. As we all deal with the impacts of the climate crisis, the benefits that the reserve gives us in protecting our drinking water and cleaning our air cannot be taken for granted.

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

As I mentioned above, I want to ensure that we work with our farmers to support their ability to continue the business of farming in Montgomery County for generations to come - we need to realize that farming is a business and farmers need the support and partnership of our county to thrive. I want to make sure we're working with farmers and local food producers to enhance the ability to cultivate the land and invest in farm upgrades like high tunnels, green houses, and cold storage that can produce additional yields. I also want to make sure we're adapting best practices that we learned during the pandemic to work with farmers, the local community, and public-private partners to bolster processing, distribution, and sale of more local food and agricultural products. I also think it's critical that we continue to work with and through the County's office of Agriculture (and continue to invest in it's expansion) - to really hear the voices of local farmers and build partnerships that will help us support local farming.

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 do not support an additional bridge crossing or outer beltway through the reserve - I think ultimately this benefits traffic coming through Montgomery County from the VA side and also poses risks to our environment.

The Upcounty is in an untenable transportation position- we don't have the transportation infrastructure (road, transit) for the population density that has been approved or what our master plans call for. Thankfully the Corridor Forward plan has been approved, including 355 Bus Rapid Transit, but many of the projects it contains will take years to bring online. I think we must put all our options back on the table and re-examine how we give our residents viable multimodal mobility options. As part of that, I think we do need to reopen the M83 conversation. I believe we can connect Snowden Farm Parkway and Midcounty Highway as a multimodal transportation corridor that would provide more capacity for drivers, but also transit riders, bikers, and pedestrians. That kind of transit-forward multimodal corridor could get cars off of 270, but also give us another transit option to connect up w/ the Shady Grove Metro and the ICC.

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

I'm on record as supporting shutting down the incinerator and I'm open to pay as you throw programs.

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

I believe that Thrive is a good framework that is incomplete in that it doesn't take into account how rural areas like those in the Western Reserve should develop under it's modeling - I hope to see more in that regard in the new council draft.

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?

Yes, it all starts with building better partnerships. I'm going to be a representative who will listen, build consensus, and then seeks to lead. I did that on the Upcounty Citizens Advisory Board and I'll do it on the County Council.