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

2 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 one of the most important ways we preserve our farming heritage and is a prime example of Montgomery County values. It enriches our lives by preserving nearly one-third of our county as farmland. Not only does it provide our residents with fresh, wholesome and unique foods, it teaches our residents and children about protecting the environment. It enhances our overall air and water quality. It also contributes to the quality of food in our homes and local restaurants. Its more than 500 farms contribute millions of dollars to Montgomery County's annual economy and is a source of many valuable jobs in our community. Preserving the Ag Reserve and protecting it from commercial incursions and the pressures of development will always be a high priority for me.

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

Protecting our open spaces and watersheds protects our drinking water and preserves our natural environment. We must limit our impervious surfaces and control storm water through best management practices, removing impervious surfaces and using green infrastructure. We must be diligent in restoring eroded stream valleys and ensure that new development is environmentally sensitive. Tree preservation is also imperative for a healthy environment. Trees clean the air, cool our environment, and help clean our waterways. Currently, Montgomery County has strong tree preservation and restoration laws, but I would be willing to work with the Montgomery Countryside Alliance to enhance our efforts. Maintaining our County's parkland and open spaces is crucial to ensuring that our children can learn about the benefits of preserving and enjoying nature. They are important

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

It is vital that we protect this treasure and ensure its sustainability by guarding against incursions from certain kinds of development that is not in keeping with the core mission of the Ag Reserve. We must also protect against Zoning Text Amendments that threaten the agricultural nature of the reserve. I believe the core mission of the Ag Reserve must be first and foremost as we shape future land use policies. We should look to growing programs that advance this mission: agricultural incubators, small farmer training, and looking at innovative programs that will expand farming opportunities and preserve farmland.

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?

Intense business activities that are not in line with the core mission of the Ag Reserve are a threat to preserving the rural character of the Ag Reserve. Agritourism is important to grow our farming capacity, but we must ensure that any Agritourism sustains and enhances the core mission and does not erode it. There is always pressure to develop in the Ag Reserve and it is important that we guard against intrusive uses and activities that do not align with the master plan.

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

We can work with our local schools and Montgomery College to teach farming as a profession, and how to grow a successful farm to table business. We can also encourage leasing of farmland so that those that are interested in farming can have opportunities that they otherwise would not have without owning farms. And we can find ways to encourage our local restaurants to buy local produce and farm products.

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

I am proud to live in a County that recently adopted a 70% recycling goal. Our next move is to explore recycling food waste, which we know will require significantly educating the public on not only why it is a good idea, but how to do it. Moving to a zero waste policy is a laudable goal but there are many challenges. Adopting such a goal would require a rigorous combination of public education, aggressive recycling pricing, and forging public-private partnerships for recycling. I would like to explore this as a goal and look forward to working closely with the environmental organizations to achieve it, as it would reduce our reliance on our waste-to-energy facility in Dickerson.

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?

As I mentioned above, I would support programs that link our local schools to the mission of the Ag Reserve by strengthening the farms to school program that currently exists in MCPS. We know that our local economy benefits greatly from our Ag Reserve. Promoting education that offers farming as a viable career and business opportunity would benefit students and our Ag Reserve at the same time. I would also support linking our farmers with opportunities to provide fresh produce and other farm products to our schools.

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?

See my answer above. I strongly believe that agritourism must be compatible with the core mission of the Ag Reserve, and of the farm on which it is taking place. I am aware that there is currently a working group that is headed by Park and Planning to define and encourage agritourism. But we must move forward with caution to ensure that commercialization is limited to promoting what the farms produce and products

grown or raised on the farm. The Ag Reserve should not be used as a venue for commercial ventures that are not linked to a farm's core mission.

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 do not support M83 or the Second Crossing. Transit must be our highest priority if we are going to maximize our ability to grow our County with livable, walkable communities that will attract businesses and residents alike. This includes a dedicated funding source for Metro. More companies and people realize the benefit of living near transit hubs. Not only does it make their commutes more convenient and affordable, but transit-oriented communities typically have many amenities that add to a high quality of life. Also, transit is crucial for those who struggle economically. The ability to get to work in a comfortable, affordable way promotes economic fairness.