



## Montgomery County 2022 Candidate Questionnaire - Jacqueline Manger

### Personal Information:

**Name** Jacqueline Manger

**What Office Are You Seeking in the 2022 Election?** District 7 County Council

### 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 Ag Reserve is one of Montgomery County's most precious resources. A generation ago we were fortunate enough to have leaders with the vision to establish it and we need to make sure that we protect it. It is an important natural resource that allows our residents to connect with the earth and bike and walk and enjoy nature. It provides educational opportunities and locally sourced produce and agricultural products. I also believe the Ag Reserve is important because it is part of our local economy and in this way, I would like to help it flourish even more.

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

I want the Agricultural Reserve to remain protected for generations to come and I want to see it flourish. This means that those who own property in the reserve should be able to unlock the resources of their property through traditional farming and agricultural businesses or through innovative use that does not negatively impact the use of the land or dramatically change the character of the agricultural reserve. The new public private partnership, Crossvines, is such an innovative use. The county can also support agriculture by allowing those in the Reserve to use their property for services that support agriculture and our permitting should allow this. The economic vitality of the Ag Reserve will ensure its survival as a productive resource for generations to come. Our county government plays a role in this through education, supportive zoning and the facilitation of public private partnerships to benefit the Reserve.

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

I want us to maintain our open spaces and parkland in the county and invest in these spaces with care. We should expand the forested areas of our county through intentional investment and care. As we look at development in certain areas of the county, we should add to our tree stock as this development is allowed. In fact, we should commit to never having an annual loss in our tree stock. The role of government is to protect these shared resources. As we make investments in our parkland

I would like to see us create an equitable distribution of such spaces throughout our county.

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

The county council plays an important role in oversight of our shared resources. In regards to water there are a few ways as a council member I would want to make a positive impact. First, the Council already has the authority to designate Special Protection Areas (we already have 4 in the county) I would be open to having DEP, DPS and the Planning Board look into others as a way to ensure we improve the quality of our watersheds.

Second, we should look at the former Green Streets Program (or create a new program) to improve our green infrastructure in the county and reduce the runoff winding up in our streams. This along with investment in our storm drain system could combine to reduce harmful runoff.

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

Maintaining the Ag Reserve as a green buffer is important to our ability to address climate change. We should never allow the Ag Reserve to be used for housing development.

We should continue to support solar farming on the portion of the Ag Reserve where now allowed by current ZTA and we should reexamine the success of the ZTA in encouraging such use. Reforestation of some agricultural land (if the current land holders want to use their land in this way) is another way that we can help offset our carbon footprint. I want to see us plant more trees throughout the county for the same reason.

Finally, how we address our housing shortage, where we build and how we build will be a top priority for addressing climate change. Reducing GHG emissions is probably one of the most impactful ways to deal with climate change and also presents the biggest challenges. This takes big actions like zoning law changes, changes to building codes and a strategic and regular investment in a greener transportation infrastructure. For example, having new BEPS is fine, but we must also couple these with an expansion of the Green Bank to offset the cost to building owners who should not have to pay 100% of the cost to implement the standards. The reality is if we require building owners to do this and provide absolutely no funding or rebates, the building owners will pass along the costs. In many cases this will affect those least able to bear the burden of the cost.

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

We should use county procurement to support local farming – why aren't our schools buying local produce, or why aren't we creating linkages between the food insecure and our local farms through government programs? With any investment we make in incubators and small business development (both of which I support as part of my vision to grow jobs in the county) we should keep our Ag Reserve and the next generation of farmers in mind. As mentioned above, I think that supporting an expansion of agricultural support businesses within the Ag Reserve will help the local farm businesses flourish.

### **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 a balanced, sustainable approach to transportation. Highest priority: smart growth development that mitigates traffic and reliable, accessible options that get people out of cars. This means BRT with dedicated lanes in some areas and investment to maintain the Metro and expansion of MARC rail in other areas. Any I270 toll lanes we invest in must benefit our county financially, be within the existing right of way and be linked to mass transit options. I have heard the residents if up-county – they want help with their commute on I270. Lowest Priority: Solutions that simply pave our way out of gridlock, so I do not support building M83 through the forest or an outer beltway through the Reserve. I favor investments that help people get out of their cars, but I am pragmatic and believe that we will not get everyone out of cars. I would like to encourage electric car use and would support county investment charging infrastructure in the future.

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

I support zero waste goals and see our government as a leader in education and creating a system that makes it easier to get to that goal. This means better recycling services, expansion of curbside composting services (perhaps through more public private partnerships.) I believe the county can create incentives for green businesses that help us solve the problems we face; for example alternatives to single use plastics, alternatives to incineration, or services for curbside composting. Some people advocate a pay-as-you-throw approach to waste reduction, but I think you need to be very careful about such programs as they can create negative impact on equity in our community.

I acknowledge that Dickerson incinerator is not clean or green. I would advocate for ending its use over time, but only if we have an alternative for getting rid of the trash and a better plan to reduce waste. Landfills, while not ideal either are better than incineration, but perhaps other thermal treatments for trash disposal should be explored. (Perhaps another home grown business?) I do not want to see us offload our trash elsewhere and create environmental impact for another (potentially more vulnerable) community.

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

Thrive 2050 provides a great framework and I do generally support the initiative. I strongly support walkable and bike friendly communities. Public transportation needs to be safe, accessible and reliable for residents in order to encourage use. Protecting the rural and truly suburban areas of our county and concentrating future development in the more urban corridors of the county is appropriate.

I am pleased that the council has put on the brakes a bit to allow for the community input that probably should have occurred before the final draft was made. Generally, I have heard displeasure about the process. Items I would like to see put back into "Thrive" include clear language that "Thrive 2050" is a general plan update, a framework, that should require a further planning process to implement for each community or development considered. I would like to see language related to the Agricultural Reserve and its importance added to the document – this will establish for this general plan a commitment to maintain what we already have in place.

## **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?**

I would like to see our county government strive to be more customer friendly to businesses and residents alike. I think we should aim to be more responsive and agile and leverage data for more accountability to our residents. We do a great job at setting goals and making plans, but not as good a job at measuring success. We also appear to be great at pilot projects. We must have the will to invest in some pilot projects to scale them in order to make progress on our shared goals. This of course will mean abandoning other pilots, but this is the hard and disciplined work of the council.

I have heard a lot of complaints about the permitting services of our government. I would like to see us follow through on investments in technology and streamlining of processes in this area. We must do this to remain competitive in our region and to grow and attract jobs. Another area of concern is the planning process. I would advocate to fund the Office of the People's Counsel which is already allowed by County Charter, we just stopped funding it in 2011. (from Sec, 2-150. People's Counsel- Functions) "An independent People's Counsel can protect the public interest and promote a full and fair presentation of relevant issues in administrative proceedings in order to achieve balanced records upon which sound land use decisions can be made." Such an office would go a long way in aiding citizen organizations and help build back trust in the county land use process.