



# Montgomery County 2022 Candidate Questionnaire - Linda Foley

## Personal Information:

**Name** Linda Foley

**What Office Are You Seeking in the 2022 Election?** Delegate

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

www.foleyfor15.com

(You may contact my campaign through the website.)

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 Agricultural Reserve is an area of roughly 93,000 acres of beautiful open space that was set aside by the Montgomery County Council in the 1980s as a real estate development-free zone designated for agriculture and recreational use. One of the largest open space areas in Central Maryland, the Ag Reserve provides natural beauty, farmland, recreational activities, agri-tourism, historic sites and a natural habitat for many native plant and animal species. It includes the communities of Poolesville and Damascus, as well as several smaller locales. Hundreds of small farms dot the landscape, with the average Reserve farm being around 118 acres. More recently, a number of wineries and other agri-businesses have made the Ag Reserve the County's No. 1 destination for relaxation and special outdoor events.

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

Above all, we must ensure that the Agricultural Reserve remains an open space dedicated to farming and farm-related businesses. As we realize that we need to rely on more locally sourced food, our Ag Reserve farms should be encouraged and assisted to play a larger role in providing fresh, local food for Montgomery County residents. Farm-to-table programs and farm-to-school programs should be funded and directly connected to farms in the Ag Reserve. More focus on agri-tourism will help bolster the Reserve's contribution to our local economy. Finally, we must make sure that the Dickerson trash Incinerator is closed and replaced with a green energy project or other environmentally sound usage.

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

The biggest threat to Montgomery County's natural resources is over-development and the problems of congestion, pollution and green space destruction that it brings. My priorities in this area include:

1. Bolster funding and resources for Project Open Space, which can directly benefit the Ag Reserve.
2. Encourage the preservation of old-growth forests and plants.
3. Support the planting and maintenance of native plant species.
4. Preserve our parks and expand the amount of parkland.
5. Reduce ground water pollution and control agriculture waste.
6. Ban the use of gas-powered leaf blowers and, eventually, other 2-stroke gasoline-powered devices.

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

As a member of the General Assembly, I will continue to push for banning the use of harmful chemicals that seep into our water supply, such as the recently banned PFAs. I want to ensure that we vigorously enforce bans on pesticides, which ultimately end up in our drinking water. In addition, I want to ensure that we minimize the amount of animal and other bio waste from getting into the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed. Finally, the legislature recently passed laws leading to more rigorous inspection and certification of properly functioning septic systems. We need to do more in that area to ensure that waste water is cleaned and properly treated before it re-enters our water supply.

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

1. Reduce fossil-fuel emissions to reach net-zero emissions by 2045 (as outlined in the recently passed Climate Solutions Act) by encouraging and supporting the public and private use of electric vehicles.
2. Implement building standards that reduce greenhouse emissions and move toward electrification.
3. Advocate for expanded public transit and so-called last mile bike and pedestrian transportation infrastructure.
4. Require developers to preserve more green space and tree canopy.
5. Incentivize residential use of solar and promote community solar projects, so long as they don't adversely impact the preservation of the Ag Reserve.
6. Revise the Renewable Energy Portfolio Standards so that they include truly green energy production.
7. The Ag Reserve provides a significant amount of tree canopy and open space relatively free of fossil fuel emissions, compared to the rest of the County. We must make sure we maintain the Reserve and be vigilant that it is protected according to the original intent of its planners and creators.

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

Emphasizing and promoting the importance of locally sourced food and connecting those efforts to farmers in the Ag Reserve will help grow Montgomery County's agri-business. In addition, we can assist small businesses that dominate the retail economies of our rural communities by offering more robust loans and by promoting bond initiatives that create a more business-friendly environment for them. Agri-tourism, including wineries and farm breweries, can become an even more important component of our rural Montgomery County economy.

## **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?**

Western Montgomery County desperately needs more public transit. In addition to Rapid Bus Transit, we need to upgrade and promote our MARC rail system. Expanding Metro or even adding additional light rail access should be a longer term priority. Reversible lanes on existing arteries, such as I-270, should be studied as a possible short-term solution. While some highway expansion might be necessary to accommodate already over-developed areas, I do not favor highway or bridge construction through the Reserve or road projects that would disturb rural communities.

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

Solid waste disposal is a growing problem for Montgomery County. I do not believe we should incinerate any of our trash or solid waste. Information I've seen indicates that landfilling is actually more environmentally sound than any type of incineration. Our residents need more guidance and support in order for a much-needed, robust composting program to take hold. While many residents already compost their organic waste, there is not enough education and support for widely disseminating the benefits of composting. We can start with a robust composting program in our schools and at other public facilities. Recycling has become a difficult waste-management proposition. Too many plastic items are labeled "recyclable" when they are not. I would like to see better management and education of our recycling program. I want to promote local resources for recycling lithium batteries and other high-tech energy products. I think battery recycling is critical to

achieving a green energy future.

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

I am not a County Council official and only know what I have read about Thrive 2050. I am not conversant enough in the details to comment on the process. In general, I support the idea of full-service communities but believe we need to require proper infrastructure in the initial phases of development and zoning.

**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?**

Of course, we can improve how we interact at various levels of government. In short, it's important for the legislature and County government officials to:

1. Meet on a regular basis (and not just during the legislative session) for updates and input into decisions being considered.
2. Coordinate funding of road and transit projects to maximize bond monies and grants that the state can provide.
3. Communicate regularly and systematically on contemplated legislation.