

## Montgomery Countryside Alliance 2014 Candidate Questionnaire

**Candidate Name:** Tom Moore

**City:** Rockville

**Office Sought:** Montgomery County Council, District 3

**More Info:** <http://moore4council.org/>

**If you were asked to describe the County's Agricultural Reserve to someone, what would you say?**

Montgomery County's Agricultural Reserve is a testament to the foresight of county planners, councilmembers, and citizens whose legacy we still enjoy today. It has been called the nation's most successful farmland preservation program for good reason: its 93,000 acres protect over 500 farms, most of which are family-run operations, and 350 horticultural enterprises. The Reserve also protects open space, which offers thousands of County residents a scenic place to recreate, rejuvenate, and reconnect to our natural world. Clean and healthy streams run through the Reserve and provide backup water supplies to County residents. All these benefits make the Ag Reserve an invaluable resource, critical to the future well-being of Montgomery County.

**What is your vision for the future of the County's Agricultural Reserve?**

My vision for the Agricultural Reserve is a place where farming, open space, and water quality are revered and protected. Its value is not measured in dollars, but in quality of life. The Reserve is a place where natural rhythms and seasons mark time, where landscapes dominate, where our cultural heritage can be rediscovered. It is a place where farming is always viable, sustainable, and resilient.

It's a future that looks a lot like the present. Ensuring that future is one of the most important ongoing tasks of the County Council.

**What more should the County be providing in terms of legislation and/or services to realize that vision?**

Montgomery County has the highest percentage of farmland under agricultural land preservation easements in the nation. That's something to be proud of. We are a nationally recognized leader in farmland preservation and I want that to continue. The County should continue to place a high priority on fully funding its preservation programs — the Building Lot Termination program, the Agricultural Easement Program, and the Legacy Open Space Program among them.

We also need to support the county's New Farmer Pilot Program, which connects new farmers with landowners willing to lease their fields. That will boost the amount of land under

farming and help the next generation acquire the skills and knowledge to keep farming a viable occupation in the County.

**What challenges exist to ensuring that your vision for the Reserve is realized?**

Population and development pressures will only increase over time. The County government will have to remain vigilant to ensure that only agricultural uses are allowed in the Reserve.

Climate change is expected to have a significant impact on regional water supplies. According to recent reports, water resources could be diminished by as much as 35% by 2040, causing water supply shortages and emergency water-use restrictions. We need to ensure that our farmers are resilient to climate impacts and can adapt to extreme temperatures, droughts, flooding, and changes in agricultural productivity.

**What role do the County's schools play in the support of our local food system and success of local agriculture?**

County schools can support local agriculture by visiting farms, school gardening, culinary classes, and integrating agricultural education into the classroom curriculum.

A program I'd particularly like to see expanded is the County's implementation of the Maryland farm-to-school program, where schools purchase fresh fruit and vegetables from local farmers. It not only improves students' health but also creates a stable market for local farmers; MCPS is a major customer of just about anything it purchases. It will also lead to simply better school lunches, which is the #1 County issue among my six children. The only reason they are tolerating my run for Council is because they believe I can improve their schools' food.

A stable school market could spur farm diversification, allowing Montgomery County farms to consider growing a greater diversity of crops that could be sold to schools. We should expand this program to more schools, more farmers, and more products.

**The County has undertaken a comprehensive zoning code re-write. What are your thoughts about the County's zoning code enforcement? Does that division have adequate resources and is it properly functioning?**

It's too early to tell. The new code is going to have enforcement challenges that we can't yet see. On the County Council, I will watch that situation carefully to see where the needs are and address them.

**Do you support an additional Potomac bridge and highway in the Reserve or adjacent rural zones?**

No.

I do not support an additional Potomac River bridge or highway in the Reserve, nor in adjacent rural areas.

I have always been a big fan of Montgomery County and Maryland's position, which is, effectively, that if Virginia built a superhighway right up to the river on their side, we would let their road end at the water's edge.

Additional traffic would only increase congestion and attract unwanted development pressures.

