

Name: **Marilyn Balcombe**  
Address: Germantown  
What office are you seeking?: County Council At Large  
Where can voters learn more about your positions?: [www.MarilynBalcombe.com](http://www.MarilynBalcombe.com)

---

**2 Someone new to Montgomery County may ask, "What's the Ag Reserve and why is it important?" What's your answer?**

I've lived in the Upcounty for over 20 years and given my advocacy and involvement in Germantown, I'm often asked to give talks on the History of Germantown. I typically start with the concept of Wedges and Corridors and the creation of the Ag Reserve and its relationship to the corridor "cities". I explain that the Ag Reserve was created to protect farmland from future development. Depending on the audience I go into detail on transfer development rights and how the density in some areas of the County is a trade off for protecting the Ag Reserve.

I fully support protection of the Ag Reserve. It is important for farming, recreation and for protection of air quality, water quality, and biodiversity of flora and fauna.

---

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

The protection of our streams and watershed is one of the most important environmental concerns for our County. We have several areas in the County with "poor" or "fair" rating of our subwatersheds and only a few areas with "excellent" health. As you might imagine, the areas rated "poor" are the most densely populated areas of the County and were also developed prior to stricter stormwater management requirements. I support the County's efforts to continue monitoring these areas and to reduce pollution in our watershed.

Other priorities would be reducing the amount of trash we create, reducing our reliance on fossil fuels, and creating more green spaces in our densely populated areas.

I am on the Advisory Board for the Mooseum in Germantown. This is an excellent resource for not only sharing the rich history of dairy farming in Montgomery County, but also in protecting the remaining dairies we have in Ag Reserve.

---

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

My vision for the future of the Agricultural Reserve is much the same as the vision when it was originally established - to protect farmland and agriculture in perpetuity.

It's easy for me to understand the vital nature of the Ag Reserve because it is right in my backyard. I walk the C&O canal, I visit the wineries, I travel the rural roads. The Ag Reserve is one of the reasons I love living in the Upcounty. I also know the history of how the Ag Reserve was developed as part of the overall planning concept for the County. We made a deal and we need to stick to it.

To ensure that the Ag Reserve is continually protected, we need to continually educate the rest of the County as to the importance of the Ag Reserve to the entire County. We also need to support farmers to make sure they can continue earning a living through farming.

---

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?**

We can't protect the AgReserve if we don't protect our farms. People tend to see farms as a quaint tourist attraction and a nostalgic look at a simpler time. But we need to remember that farming is a business and farmers rely on a certain profit margin to raise their families. It is very expensive to start and maintain a farm, with many obstacles to success. I support the County's Department of Agriculture and the incentives in place to help support farming in the County. As the Executive Director of a local chamber of commerce, I strongly believe in the "shop local" movement. We need to push the "Made in MoCo" label as well as working with grocery store chains to purchase from local farms. This is part of educating the general public as to the importance of EVERYONE supporting the Ag Reserve.

---

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

As answered above..... I support the County's Department of Agriculture and the incentives in place to help support farming in the County. As the Executive Director of a local chamber of commerce, I strongly believe in the "shop local" movement. We need to push the LOCAL label as well as working with grocery store chains to purchase from local farms. This is part of educating the general public as to the importance of EVERYONE supporting the Ag Reserve. I will never presume to know the answers without first asking those individuals most directly impacted. As a new Councilmember, I would want to talk with farmers and learn directly which incentives are working and which economic development incentives can be improved / scrapped / created.

---

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

The County has a goal of 70% recycling by the year 2020. We are just above 60% now, so we have a lot of work to do. I am intrigued by curbside composting. I know other jurisdictions have implemented the program with success. I compost in the backyard and it significantly reduces my own trash. I think we need to increase recycling at commercial office buildings. Anecdotally, I think there is a wide range of recycling in the commercial sector. I think there is room for improvement. In addition to recycling, we need to look at reducing waste to begin with. I would like to look at how to reduce the amount of waste in packaging goods. I am currently looking at the issues involved with the incinerator in terms of the alternatives to burning our trash and in the mean time, how we can mitigate the negative impacts.

---

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?**

We can start with school lunches. I began advocating for healthier school lunches over 20 years ago. We could have a significant impact on the health of our children and the health of our local farms by partnering directly with local farms as a source of food for MCPS lunches. I hope that MCPS currently purchases food

directly from local farms, but I would also assume this could be significantly increased. We also need to continue to educate children on the importance of the Ag Reserve from an environmental perspective, but also as a direct link between farms and food. I do support equity for rural schools. If we are serious about preserving the agricultural history and way of life in Montgomery County we need to ensure that our rural schools are also protected. I understand the MCPS Superintendent's push to create capacity in his CIP budget, however, I think it was unfair to leap frog over Poolesville High School's much needed modernization.

---

**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?**

I think we have a great opportunity to ride the wave of farm breweries and wineries, as well as the Food to Table movement. Agritourism has grown significantly and Montgomery County has the natural resources to expand the options in the Ag Reserve. We need to do this while protecting the very nature of the Ag Reserve. I would want to accommodate as much activity as is allowed by the current Master Plan. I would be concerned about the impact of ZTA requests for commercial development in the Ag Reserve. We need to ensure that traffic / parking are not a concern. We also need to be careful about noise ordinances and practical issues like well and septic tank restrictions.

---

**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?**

My top priority would be increased capacity of I-270. We should study reversible lane options as well as express bus service from Frederick, Clarksburg, and Germantown. My top transit project is the Corridor Cities Transitway, but I would expand it all the way to Clarksburg Town Center. I also support BRT along the Rt. 29 Corridor and South 355. I do support M83. Clarksburg is a good example of a "corridor city" that was planned in conjunction with the "Wedges and Corridors" concept that created the Ag Reserve. The County allowed significant development to occur in Clarksburg, assuming the transportation infrastructure in the Master Plan would also be built. The houses were built, the people moved in, the infrastructure did not occur. As for the 2nd bridge, there is no political will on either side of the river to even study the bridge. I do not see this happening in my life time.