

Name: **Roger Berliner**
Address: North Bethesda
What office are you seeking?: Montgomery County Executive
Where can voters learn more about your positions?: www.berlinerformontgomery.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 the roughly one-third of land in Montgomery County (much of it along the county's northern, western and eastern borders) that we are protecting from harmful and inefficient sprawl development in order to promote agriculture and environmental sustainability.

The Ag Reserve is critical to preserving our agricultural heritage, providing sufficient land for more than 500 farms that give us food to eat and that boost our economy, protecting streams and water sources from stormwater pollution, protecting forests and open spaces from development, and channeling housing and commercial growth to where it belongs – the mid-county and down-county sections of the county closer to Washington, D.C. This helps us prevent the suburban sprawl that carries high public costs and that threatens to permanently replace needed rural land while damaging our environment.

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

Ensuring the Soil Conservation District has the resources it needs to ensure good stewardship of the land is a high priority of mine. I led the charge to provide the SCD the water quality protection charge funding used to fund/implement best management incentive programs including the cover crop acres program which reduces soil erosion & creates better soil health. As county executive, I will ensure these funds remain available to the SCD.

Other priorities include stream buffer forestation, channel protection, wetland development, dredging the forebays at Little Seneca Reservoir, & creating a more robust/responsive stream quality monitoring system.

I oppose any expansion of the sewer envelope & support the 2007 AAHWG rec. to exclude the PIF policy in the Reserve. I would develop a pragmatic regulatory framework for on-site sustainable septic systems.

Our channelized streams need to be naturalized, forested areas protected, & parkland expanded through a more active/well-funded ALARF.

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 Ag Reserve is to create the most sustainable future for farmers/farming possible. Unfortunately, market forces continue to pose challenges to the agricultural community and economy. For example, dairy farming continues to decline and the county is now home to only four dairy farms.

I believe that agritourism as an accessory to farming is going to be the key to the future of our Ag Reserve. Jurisdictions all around and across the country are embracing agritourism and growing it in their jurisdictions. We cannot afford to get left behind in this arena. The Agricultural Tourism Advisory

Committee is hard at work and I look forward to receiving their recommendations and working collaboratively on solutions and initiatives. Activities and enterprises that can help boost farmers economically while allowing county residents to enjoy the beauty of the Ag Reserve will be critical to ensuring a sustainable future for agriculture in Montgomery County.

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?

Funding for land preservation in the Reserve remains a great challenge and priority. The Building Lot Termination Program and the County's agricultural easement program (AEP) help secure land for farming for futures to come. These programs provide the financial resources for farmers to purchase land rather than continuing to lease which results in locking in more acres for agricultural use in the long-term. There is significant acreage eligible for these programs if more funding is made available.

Another continued challenge in the Reserve is the need for stream banking mitigation. One source of funding for such work comes from new development, but it is not sufficient. By working with the farming community in this area, we can assist the county's overall efforts in meeting our MS-4 permit.

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

We must support our county's commodity farmers as well as smaller, new emerging farmers. In addition to the many ways discussed in responses to earlier questions, successful, creative programs like the Land Link Program & the New Farmer Pilot Program should be supported & expanded as appropriate. We should continue to look for innovative ideas to bring our ag community together with groups like MCEDC, Work Source Montgomery, Food Council, Office of Tourism, etc. to find new ways to support local farm businesses.

Expanding access to high speed internet for all residents of the Reserve must remain a priority. I had the honor of working with David Weitzer and Dennis Kamber on this issue & will continue to be a strong, active advocate of this initiative.

I was proud to strongly support the creation of a stand-alone Department of Agriculture. I would continue to support a stand-alone department & ensure it has the funding needed to be an effective advocate for the agricultural community.

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

I would seek to make our county a zero-waste jurisdiction by establishing a composting facility in the county, implementing curbside composting pick-up service to manage food and organic waste, increasing our recycling/re-use capabilities/facilities to include a wider array of materials, and engaging in an aggressive public information campaign to educate people to reduce the amount of trash they throw away. We cannot and will not get close to zero waste if people are not reducing the amount of trash they produce on the front end.

I would seek to shut down the county's waste incinerator in Dickerson before its contract ends in 2021 because of the harmful pollution it emits into our air. But I also recognize we must significantly reduce our waste stream in order to do so. Shutting down the incinerator and simply shipping our waste to landfills in other states is not zero waste, and in fact, carries its own set of environmental problems.

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?

I strongly support a rural schools' policy that provides equity for schools in the Reserve & have fought to achieve such a policy as a councilmember who represents a large part of our Ag Reserve.

The Ag Reserve's zoning restrictions limiting density should not be used as justification to limit educational programs offered or close schools within the Reserve, as was the case several years ago with the attempt to close Monocacy Elementary School. At that time, I advocated for MCPS & the BOE to create a fair policy. I am confident that as CE, I can bring all stakeholders together to make this a reality.

Providing the freshest, locally sourced food possible to our students is a shared priority of mine. The BOE has sole jurisdiction over school food policies & they face significant challenges, including the geographical limitations of our local growing season & MCPS' operating budget restraints. I would encourage all involved to look for creative, implementable ideas and programs.

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?

As I mentioned above, I think there are real opportunities for promoting agriculture (especially sustainable agricultural practices) and the agricultural reserve as a destination through some existing and proposed agritourism concepts. However, we must take a measured approach to agritourism in order to ensure that we are not allowing agricultural lands to be used for non-agricultural purposes.

I do not support opening agricultural reserve properties to all manner of recreational or event-hosting activities in the name of agritourism. There must be some legitimate connection to what is grown on the land or what grazes in the fields to qualify, and agritourism activities and enterprises should remain accessory uses.

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 oppose M-83 and an additional Potomac River bridge. As the district councilmember for the part of the Reserve that would be most impacted by a Potomac bridge and highway corridor project, I have vociferously fought Northern Virginia developers who have repeatedly brought up this bridge project. We will not allow an environmentally disastrous bridge/highway project that will serve only to induce

additional traffic congestion because Northern Virginia leaders didn't have the foresight we did to prevent sprawl on their side of the river.

regional Council of Governments and would continue to fight this idea.

I do support addressing traffic congestion by better utilizing our existing right-of-ways, strengthening Metro, and adding new transit service such as Bus Rapid Transit to increase mobility options and get more cars off our roads.