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What office are you seeking?: Montgomery County Council At-Large
Where can voters learn more about your positions?: <http://www.lornaphillipsforde.com/>

2 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 a significant and nationally-recognized shining example of land use conservation that protects farmland and agriculture in Montgomery County. It includes 93,000 acres of farmland, and it is important because it helps agriculture and farms continue to contribute to Montgomery County's economy, it supports agriculture as a meaningful industry, it protects the environment, and it provides green spaces and historical areas for residents to support and enjoy.

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

Some of my priorities are 1) septic rather than sewer in rural Montgomery County; 2) limit development in fragile environmental areas; and 3) continue efforts to limit storm water through the use of innovative technologies, forest conservation and expansive tree planting throughout the county.

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

I support the Agricultural Reserve and believe that the county needs to protect the original vision for the implementation of this land use conservation policy in ways such as maintaining septic over sewer, limiting development, and not building a second Potomac River bridge across the Reserve. I think it is critical that the county council work with constituent organizations to continue to implement the Master Plan for the Ag Reserve. I also think it is important to educate county residents about the value of the Ag Reserve, how its resources positively affect their lives, and how they can both enjoy the opportunities that it provides and be involved in its protection.

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?

Some of the top challenges are 1) the threat of the extension of sewer lines into areas in the Ag Reserve; 2) making sure that farming remains economically possible and accessible; and 3) the threat of the highway (and bridge) bisecting the Reserve. If elected to the council, I would advocate for and support policies that favor the use of septic over sewer systems; 2) encourage residents to buy local and to visit the wonderful farms and orchards in the Reserve, as well as support financial assistance and incentives for farmers; and 3) support efforts to prevent highway development (and the Potomac River bridge) through the Reserve.

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

I believe that we can do more to educate residents about all of the wonderful resources, products, and opportunities that Montgomery County's local farm businesses and rural communities provide. I would use my position on the council to work in partnership with constituent organizations to help get the word out about how unique the Ag Reserve is and to encourage more residents to take advantage of the wealth of local farm businesses that are right here, almost like an extended backyard. We can also encourage local businesses to buy locally-sourced farm products. And finally, we can provide financial assistance and incentives to make sure that those who want to farm are able to do so.

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

I would support a Zero Waste Plan for Montgomery County that focuses on waste reduction, recycling, and composting. I believe that the county should reduce its reliance on the Dickerson trash incinerator, setting steps to accomplish this, and increase recycling and resource recovery and composting.

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 build on past partnerships between Montgomery County Public Schools and the Office of Agriculture to provide hands-on opportunities, both in and out of the classroom, for students to learn about the healthy food sourced right here in the county and about the breadth of local agriculture. I acknowledge the issue regarding equity for Reserve cluster schools and would be open to considering how such an equity policy would be shaped to benefit and support these schools.

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 believe that agritourism is a necessary part of supporting local agriculture and the local economy in general. In addition, it further opens up the richness of the Ag Reserve and all that it offers to visitors from near and far. However, it requires an examination of, and potential changes to, existing zoning and other regulations. It also requires that we seriously consider input from all potentially affected stakeholders as to the effect on their property, the need and desire of farm owners to expand in terms of various events onsite, the feasibility of using land to accommodate expanded offerings, and the expected effect on the local economy.

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 support Metro, light rail and bus rapid transit infrastructure in the county as effective and environmentally protective options that will reduce emissions and congestion. I also support bike transportation and the need for good bikeway access throughout the county. I support M83 to the extent that there are alternatives that

do not bisect the Ag Reserve or involve the building of a second Potomac River bridge. I would not throw full support behind M83 without understanding more about the extent to which it would affect the Ag Reserve.