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What office are you seeking?: **House of Delegates**
Where can voters learn more about your positions?: **www.ericluedtke.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 national treasure. Uncontrolled sprawl around many of our major cities has paved over agricultural land and open space. But in Montgomery County, a decision was made decades ago to preserve the northern third of the county as rural land, with functioning agriculture. The Ag Reserve helps maintain our rural heritage, provide a source of locally grown products, and limits impacts of overdevelopment on another national treasure - the Chesapeake Bay.

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

I am a strong supporter of the Agricultural Reserve, and for the past few years have been involved with the agricultural community in the county in securing legislation addressing their needs. We made significant changes to hunting laws in Montgomery County to help farmers to better manage deer overpopulation that threatens the economic vitality of their farms. And just this year I began working to find new funding streams for Montgomery County's agricultural land preservation work, to make sure we have the money to continue purchasing easements, particularly building lot termination easements.

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

We need to continue our commitment to the Agricultural Reserve. We need to address some key issues in order to do so. These include the need to find reliable funding sources for agricultural land preservation programs, continue efforts to manage the deer herd such that agriculture remains economically viable, and support opportunities for farmers to develop agriculturally related businesses such as agritourism and agritainment.

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?

Development remains a key threat, there are still 7,000 or so acres in the Reserve that don't have significant easements, and we need to finish purchasing easements on that land, and well as strengthening protections on remaining acreage by fully funding the building lot termination program. Deer overpopulation remains a concern, particularly for commodity farmers, and I continue to support efforts to address this.

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

I'm glad you mentioned rural communities, because while I discuss a lot of ways we can address farm businesses elsewhere in this questionnaire, we also need to ensure that smaller rural towns that are linchpins for our agricultural economy are economically healthy. Much of our county's economic development strategy is focused on large downcounty businesses, but we also need to be investing in smaller upcounty businesses, particularly locally owned small businesses such as the Shops at Damascus Electric.

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

I got involved in politics in high school through environmental advocacy, and the first effort I was involved with was the fight against the county incinerator. I strongly believe we can and should do more to reduce our solid waste stream through recycling and composting, and hope that we can reach the point one day when we can shut down the incinerator.

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?

There are a number of steps we can take. First, we can strengthen the Jane Lawton Farm to School Program, which aims to encourage schools to buy local. My very first bill in the legislature added reporting requirements to that program. We can also encourage the development of CTE pathways and extracurricular activities, which encourage young people to engage with the agricultural economy. For example, MCPS only has a single chapter of Future Farmers of America, fewer than Baltimore City. I strongly support the concept that our education policy should be responsive to local needs, but would need to learn more about what is meant by a rural schools policy before taking a position.

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 strongly support agritourism and agricultural businesses like farm breweries so long as they are consistent with continued production agriculture in the reserve. In particular, I have worked to change state brewery laws to give farm breweries like Waredaca and Brookeville Beer Farm the flexibility they need to continue to grow their businesses. In the past I also sponsored legislation to support farmers markets.

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 the second crossing and the outer beltway, and additionally have been on record opposing M-83, although I believe that if M-83 doesn't get built we need to explore other ways to address transportation concerns of Clarksburg and Damascus residents. My focus in terms of transportation has been building out the pedestrian and bicycle network, particularly around schools, and supporting construction of a BRT line on Route 29.

