

Montgomery Countryside Alliance 2014 Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Richard (Dick) Jurgena

City: Darnestown

Office Sought: Montgomery County Council District 2

More Info: www.dj4mc.org

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

The County's Agricultural Reserve is a portion of Montgomery County set aside in the Master Plan to retain our county's heritage as a farming community. The reserve area is planned for open spaces and small family farms, some of which have been here since colonial days. The area is protected by our Master Plan to avoid urban sprawl.

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

My vision is to continue to support and protect the County's Agricultural Reserve against any incursion of urban sprawl.

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

The County needs to enforce the laws that are already in effect to protect the Ag Reserve from development. The County needs to continue to provide the for which it is intended, law enforcement, fire protection, education. The County needs to review its regulations to make it easier for a meat packing plant to locate in the Ag Reserve to give the meat producing farmers a facility to process their meat products locally.

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

The major challenge is see to the Ag Reserve is Greed. Developers see the Ag Reserve as prime land to build houses, shopping centers, and business centers. Young adults inheriting farm lands see the money offered by the developers as a way to get rich quick after their parents or grandparents pass on. We need to work on more ways to allow owners of farm land to dedicate that land to be forever dedicated to farm land, with simple but safe and secure documentation of their intents. We only need to look at what has happened to Belward Farm to see how easy it is for an owner's intentions to be thwarted by developers with government officials in their pockets.

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

Our County Board of Education needs to give more emphasis to the training of students, who are not necessarily cut out for college, in agriculture, mechanics, and home economics studies. In past years these were a part of the program for schools in agricultural areas. I am concerned in our effort to lump everyone into one big effort to get students into college, we are overlooking our students who do not see college in their future; but, still want an education to prepare for careers in agriculture and agricultural services.

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?

As long as we have a One-Party system, I will always be suspect of a government department being bought off by people with money who are only interested in making more money. At this point in our County's development, the entire County Council appear to be in the pockets of the developers, who provide the lions share of the campaign funds they use to finance their campaigns. Witness the dancing the County Council had to do over the Ten Mile Creek controversy. Until we get balance in our County Government we are going to see short sighted decisions that result in losses of our Ag Reserve. Until we have sufficient counterpoints to the down county influence of our County Council (3 At-Large members from Takoma Park and the 4th from Garrett Park) the Ag Reserve is going to be continually at risk of being compromised.

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

I do not. I can see no way in which such projects will help the Ag Reserve or any part of my Council District. Who would benefit from these projects? Developers in the Baltimore (BWI) area and Northern VA (Dulles) area. Why should we sacrifice part of our AG Reserve for these developers? I would support modernization and expansion of the Point of Rocks Bridge which would give improved access to Northern VA from BWI and would improve emergency routes out of DC and Montgomery County across the Potomac river in the event of a national emergency.