

Montgomery Countryside Alliance 2014 Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Robert Dyer

City: Bethesda

Office Sought: Montgomery County Council At-Large

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

The leading example of agricultural land preservation in the DC region. An attempt to preserve the rural character of that area, and hopefully retain the agricultural sector of our economy at the same time.

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

We should continue to preserve this area, and stop encroaching on it with inappropriate development and density in nearby areas.

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

1. Scale back Science City, as well as reduce density in rural areas not covered under the Reserve.
2. Add Future Farmers of America chapters in all public school clusters in the county.
3. Address current land use and economic challenges farmers face under current county and state regulations.
4. Overhaul the abomination of a zoning code just passed by the council.

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

My At-large opponents, with the exception of Marc Elrich, are beholden to developers. I predict that - if we do not change the membership of the council - we will see the first development in the Agricultural Reserve by 2020. It will be presented to the public in the same way that urban "smart growth" has been - that we face a population/housing crisis, and that our economy will collapse, if we do not allow development of small portions of the Reserve. And it will simply advance from there, until it is eventually entirely developed.

Science City/Belward Farm, etc. are simply a staging area for this future encroachment into the Reserve. They are doing the same thing with the Green Mile in Chevy Chase, the first step to urban redevelopment of the Chevy Chase Club green space.

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

A big role, as I mentioned in my proposal to expand FFA to all county schools. They can be a client - like other county entities - of the food producers within the county's agricultural areas.

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?

By all accounts, we need more resources for code enforcement. Moreover, that zoning rewrite needs to be reopened, and rewritten again. It is a complete disaster. The new code threatens every suburban neighborhood and rural area in the county. It is essentially a Trojan horse to pave over the entire county, and urbanize it. If elected, I will fight tooth and nail to protect our green space from the council's urbanization plans.

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

Yes. But there cannot be any additional development allowed in those areas by virtue of a new Potomac River crossing.

It is an essential priority for economic development, and for traffic congestion relief. Rather than a bridge for new development, it is needed to simply support the development that has already occurred.

A MWCOG study showed that 24% of traffic on the American Legion Bridge is heading to or from the Dulles area. No transit solution can provide the congestion relief that a new Potomac River crossing would.

Finally, the lack of Dulles Airport access has been cited by some firms who declined to move to MoCo as a major deterrent. We can no longer cede the advantage to Northern Virginia.

I've been committed to responsible growth for many years. You can be sure that any Potomac River crossing I support will prohibit additional development in the affected areas near the highway.