

Montgomery Countryside Alliance 2014 Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Tim Willard

City: Kensington

Office Sought: County Council At Large

More Info: timforcouncil.org

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

The Agricultural Reserve is an enormously valuable resource that the county wisely set aside from development. The reserve contains more than 90,000 acres of farmland that will be increasingly valuable as local food production becomes more important. It serves as a "green lung" for the greater Washington, D.C. area, cooling and cleaning the air. The reserve employs over 10,000 people and contributes to \$250 million to the economy. At the same time it provides a refuge for plants and animals who are seeing their habitats carved up by development.

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

The Agricultural Reserve will be an increasingly important source of organically grown food for Montgomery County and the surrounding area. As fuel prices increase over time and climate change affects food output the Agricultural Reserve will become ever more important. Becoming more self sufficient in food production is an important step the county can take to reduce it's carbon footprint.

The reserve will also serve as an important habitat for animals and plants that face pressure from the increasing urbanization and suburbanization of surrounding areas in Maryland and Virginia.

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

While the number of small farms in the Agricultural Reserve has been growing, the average age of farmers has been increasing. We need to encourage and support a younger generation of farmers to take up farming in the reserve. We should expand on farmer pilot programs that provide training and support in obtaining land for farming.

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

One major challenge is the attempt by Virginia to resurrect the outer beltway and build a new bridge across the Potomac that would lead into the Agricultural Reserve. We must make sure Maryland does not support such an effort.

The constant pressure for development in the reserve is also a threat as was seen by the recent effort to build a mega-church on reserve land. We must stand firm to protect the reserve as an agricultural resource.

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

County schools should plan more education about farming and the Agricultural Reserve. Schools can have their own vegetable gardens to give students the experience of growing crops. The students can also learn about the Agricultural Reserve, the presence of farming in Montgomery County, and careers opportunities that are available in farming.

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?

The zoning code rewrite creates an Agriculture Reserve zone that replaces the current zoning of the Agricultural Reserve. It focuses solely on preserving agriculture but leaves out other interests such stream and groundwater quality, natural landscapes, and rural character of the houses. This will make code enforcement more difficult and strain resources.

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

No. The highway and traffic would be a major source of pollution and a threat to the quality of the reserve.