

Montgomery Countryside Alliance 2014 Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Duchy Trachtenberg

City: North Bethesda

Office Sought: Montgomery County Council, District 1

More Info: www.duchytrachtenberg.com

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

The County's Agricultural Reserve is vital to the County's overall quality of life. Our residents and even visitors are able to experience the extraordinary intersection of urban and rural life. One of the primary benefits of the Ag Reserve is the environmental protection it offers -- to our water, our air, our trees and wildlife. Importantly, local farm products are produced and sold in both the County and neighboring communities. Its recreational offerings and rural beauty are well-known in the metropolitan DC/Baltimore areas. The preservation of the Ag Reserve has been in existence over 30 years and must be maintained for future generations.

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

The Ag Reserve is an important County resource specifically in terms of farming enterprises. This is one of the dimensions of the Ag Reserve that should be supported more generously with County investment and a primary focus should be placed on this County asset, in terms of providing incentives for expanded economic development. Over 10,000 people are employed in the Reserve farming industry today. This should be multiplied in the years to come as County residents, health experts and policy makers understand the significance and advantage of a thriving farming industry in our own backyard.

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

More economic development incentives should be weighed and prioritized. And very importantly, a stronger connection should be made between our County agricultural industry and academic settings. This should start at the elementary level and continue through enhanced college courses and activities. The County and MCPS must form a more collaborative approach in this regard. That would be an important first step in attracting more participation by colleges and universities.

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

Given the myriad of social challenges that the County does face, adequate financial investment may continue to lag. On the other hand, given the increasing awareness of the value of local farm products

and an interest in supporting local businesses, I do believe a higher prioritization of investment can be made in the years to come.

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

It is clear that a far greater connection must be made between our schools and the local agricultural community. Students must be exposed more regularly to both the Reserve and farming activities. I remain a strong supporter of the Brickyard Educational Farm as this location could easily serve as a premier learning experience for both youth and adult students. There is no reason why the County cannot maintain several school sites for this purpose and quite possibly one or more could be situated in the Ag Reserve.

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?

My impression of the County's zoning code enforcement program is that it is not sufficiently funded yet. Given the comprehensive nature of the zoning re-write, more investment needs to be made in this important oversight function. The important zoning changes will have no value if inadequate oversight continues.

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

No.

