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What office are you seeking?: Montgomery County Council District 1
Where can voters learn more about your positions?: <http://meredithwellington.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 preserves almost one-third of the land mass of Montgomery County for farming and rural open space - over 90,000 acres. The success of the Reserve is due to a pioneering land development transfer and compensation system and strict limits on sewers. The Ag Reserve is home to over 500 farms that provide fresh and often organic produce to local restaurants, markets, and shops. The Ag Reserve has wineries, inns, bike trails, and recreational activities. The Ag Reserve contributes millions to the local economy and is a major county tourist attraction. The Ag Reserve preserves and protects beautiful and functional open spaces and forests, and vital water resources. The creeks and seeps in the Ag Reserve feed the Washington area's backup water supply - Little Seneca Reservoir. The Ag Reserve is important because of its environmental, health, and economic benefits, and it is a hallmark of what makes Montgomery County great.

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

I will protect the Agricultural Reserve and the natural resources in Montgomery County as I did when I served on the County Planning Board from 1999 to 2007. My priorities are to enforce a strong policy against extending sewer that would support more development than the traditional septic system in our rural and Ag Reserve zones, and to prohibit development near our water supply sources like Little Seneca Reservoir; strengthen forest conservation and tree preservation laws including replanting forests in same watershed as where lost; require preservation of natural open spaces, and maintain and expand extensive park system to serve all residents; continue to acquire parkland through Legacy Open Space and other park programs and maintain about 70/30 ratio of conservation/active recreation parks. Park and natural space gives residents and visitors physical and mental health benefits, reduces carbon in the atmosphere, and cleans the Chesapeake Bay.

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

- Increase our residents' knowledge of and appreciation for the Ag Reserve and value it for the benefits it provides. The forthcoming Planning Dept's Agritourism Study will inform review of the County's General Plan, the cornerstone for the growth of the County;
- Work with the Economic Development Corporation to increase their support for, and understanding of the benefits and revenues that flow from the Ag Reserve;
- As septic technologies change, assure that new technologies do not undermine the foundations of the Preservation of Agriculture & Rural Open Space Master Plan;
- Support developing new crops, such as industrial hemp production, and working with the State legislature to adopt enabling legislation;

- Require development to be impervious surface neutral;
- Close the Dickerson incinerator, and prohibit similar polluting industries.

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?

1. Keeping farms in business. The County needs to support and enhance the Agricultural Services Division's operations in conjunction with the County's Economic Development Corporation. Support new crop adoption and development.
2. Make sure that new technologies do not undermine the septic policy at the heart of the Ag Reserve. In addition, reduce sewer conversions on borders of Ag Reserve. WSSC and sewer bring increased development and compromise clean water. I will strengthen the law regarding septic conversions to sewer in the Water and Sewer Plan.
3. Incinerator and composting centers. The Ag Reserve should not be the dumping ground for the County's waste. I will support zero waste efforts and local compost solutions that may benefit local farms as oppose to hurt them.
4. Second bridge across the Potomac. I oppose the "second crossing" and environmental damage it would bring.

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

Please see my answers to questions 4 and 5. In addition, the County needs to evaluate its Agricultural Services Division. I would ask the Office of Legislative Oversight to study the division, and to make recommendations as to how the County can better support local farm businesses, food industry, and rural communities. The County can improve marketing of the Ag Reserve, through both the ASD, Economic Development Corporation, and in partnership with local organizations, community, and business. We must work to get food from farm to table in a wider area, including more retail stores and farmers' markets. We can continue to strengthen the shop local, buy local campaign. I support the innovative new farmor mentoring program, and will support similar programs for Ag Reserve businesses. If elected, I will meet with Ag Reserve residents and businesses on a regular basis and have staff devoted to liaising with the Ag Reserve, listen and work with the community on challenges and successes.

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

The County needs to mount an aggressive campaign through the schools and employers to educate our residents on the County's Zero Waste Plan, and then explain to residents how to get the job done - reuse, restore, recycle. We should make the Zero Waste Plan a County-wide project in which everyone is invested. In addition, waste recycling such as food composting should be taken care of at a more local level. We must close the Dickerson incinerator and eliminate any waste treatment that harms people's health. The Ag Reserve should not be a dumping ground for the County's waste. Recycling remains an important component, although markets for recycled material rise and fall.

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?

We can expand the role that schools play in the support of a healthy local food system and the success of local agriculture by including these subjects in the school curriculum, and by allowing community service credits for programs dealing with these topics. MCPS should allow use of local foods in school meals. I also support school gardens as a hands on teaching tool.

I support formalizing a rural schools' policy that accepts low enrollment as a feature of the Ag Reserve's very low growth development mandate, and allows more liberal transfer between schools to balance enrollment. In the absence of County facilities, rural schools often serve as true community schools and centers of civic activity. I will also support rural public libraries, again serving low population areas but important in their role as one of the few public gathering places in the Ag Reserve.

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?

Please see my answers to questions 4, 5 and 6 above.

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 support more public transportation in the upper part of the County by creating transit nodes for BRT and vastly improving current bus service. I will carefully watch the Governor's proposals for I270 expansion, and insist transit is a key component of that plan.

I do not support a second bridge across the Potomac or outer beltway either through the Reserve or adjacent rural zones. This was my position when I served on the Planning Board, and it is still my position.

With respect to M-83, the County has already allowed a lot of residential development in the M-83 area with the promise that those residents would have a road for vehicular and transit access. There are environmental concerns, various routes proposed for M-83, and intense feelings on either side of the issue. If elected, I will study the proposals carefully, focussing on environmental protection and supporting public transit.