

Montgomery County 2026 Candidate Questionnaire



Personal Information:

Name Allison Eriksen

What Office Are You Seeking in the 2026 Election? Montgomery County Council District 3

Where Can Voters Learn More About Your Positions Or Contact Your Campaign?

allisonformoco.com



Please Answer the Following Questions- responses will posted in their entirety and will not be edited. There are no word limits but please try to be consise.

(pictured above: One Acre Farm)

Please share 3 sentences that help us to know you better:

I spent my career at USAID, where I managed government funds to provide services that helped communities around the world that experienced disasters and conflict to get back on their feet. I grew up in an agricultural community in central California, was in the FFA as a teen, and studied Animal Science at UC Davis. Before working at USAID, I served in the Peace Corps as an environment and sustainable agriculture volunteer and worked at DC-area nonprofits focused on the environment and on education.

When we recently surveyed residents throughout the County, they shared that their top priority was a lack of government transparency - How can Montgomery County ensure transparency in their legislative and land use decision making? How would you grade current public engagement? Do you support re-establishing the Office of the People's Counsel?

The County Council and Montgomery County government does not promote transparency. While county meetings are public, they are held during most people's working hours, limiting who attends and speaks at the meetings. In addition, important decisions seem to come suddenly and without adequate warning for impacted communities, which cements the idea that they are making decisions without public input. Montgomery County residents deserve to have more input in the decisions being made and I will hold

myself accountable to amplify the voices of my constituents to the council. The council should have more after hours events for public input, such as the AI Data Center Community Forum that was held in February. That event was very well attended because the public wants to be heard on issues like land use and zoning, but they feel that the Council does not take their views into account when making decisions. I get newsletters every week from councilmembers, and they never include information on upcoming meetings and what topics will be covered or how I can submit testimony, which can be online. People want to be engaged on issues that matter to them, but not if they feel they are wasting their time and the decision is already made. The council should be engaging with residents on these issues and encouraging their feedback.

I never interacted with the Office of the People's Counsel, but would like to hear from your members if they feel that it was beneficial and how it can be re-established and improved.

Do you believe that the way that local government branches (executive, legislative and planning), and state entities currently interact can be improved? If so, what steps would you take to bring better collaboration?

There is absolutely room for improvement in how different branches and entities work together locally. One of my frustrations as a resident is the feeling that different parts of our local governments just want to make any issue someone else's problem. If I call in to report something, I get told that it's actually a state road, or a city problem, or a different agency, etc and they can give me the number to call. My husband once spent nearly a week trying to get information about our own property that required calls to several different state entities. As a federal employee, if someone contacted me with a problem, I worked to connect them directly to the relevant person or liaised myself to ensure that it was resolved. That is how I worked in the government and I expect the same in local government. Residents want to see their problems addressed, not get into the middle of a dispute between government agencies about whose territory it is. As a councilmember, I will work to ensure that county agencies and entities understand their role as public servants, and that the needs of residents are the highest priority. Our residents pay for the services the county provides and deserve to have their problems addressed, not given the runaround.



Source water protection is a priority for County residents. Rural residents are served by wells drawn from a federally designated Sole Source Aquifer. What specific actions will you take to protect groundwater quality and ensure a sustainable supply of drinking water for residents, farms and businesses? And what do you propose with regard to protecting the Potomac River, a drinking water supply for more than 5 Million people in the Washington DC metropolitan area. Given increasing drought conditions, growing data center water consumption, and projections that the Potomac River may not meet future demand, how will you plan for a water-constrained future? What policies or investments would you prioritize during your term?

I oppose the development of new AI data centers until impact studies can be conducted. If approved, I would hold firm to limit water (and electricity) usage by these facilities. The entire county is already under drought conditions and from growing up in California, I know the impact that has on agriculture. Under drought conditions, agriculture will have to take priority over excessive urban water usage. Protecting the Potomac, especially in light of the recent leak there, will be a priority and require the council and relevant departments to work closely with their counterparts in DC. My career at USAID taught me how to work with other government agencies and entities to get the work done, and I see no reason that can't happen here. In our water constrained future, we will have to promote behavior changes that reflect reality, and that may mean fewer green lawns In order to protect local food growers.

What role can the Ag Reserve play in helping our County address Climate Change? Do you have plans to bolster the county's funds to address climate change, i.e. expanded grant making, review of energy tax structure for high energy consumers such as data centers?

The Ag Reserve has a huge role to play in helping Montgomery County address climate change. The urban areas of the County can work to reduce climate impacts, but the Ag Reserve has the ability to sequester carbon and actually contribute to reversing emissions. I plan to ensure that the County meets or exceeds its commitments to fund programs that fulfill its climate goals and fully funds its Green Bank commitment. Improvements to transit to help reduce vehicle emissions are a central part of my campaign, and I support additional taxation on high energy consumers that can be used to expand grants for climate programming. Having seen the impact of climate change on communities around the world, I believe that we do not have time to waste on this issue.



Do you support the long planned closure of the trash incinerator in Dickerson? Please provide some details as to why or why not. (pictured above: Shepherd's hey Farm)

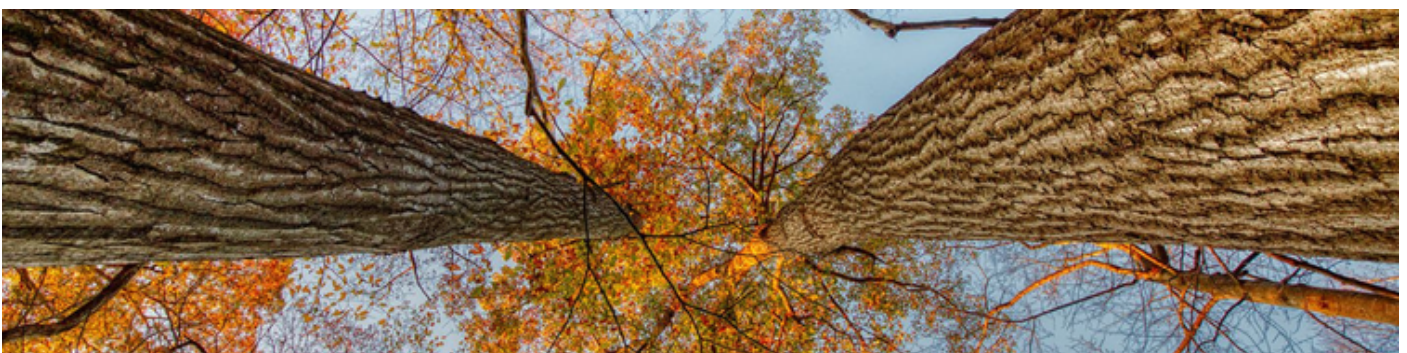
Yes, I support the closure of the Dickerson incinerator. I have looked at the alternative proposals and Montgomery County has identified several options that better align with the County's climate, equity, and environmental goals and in the long run will be more cost-effective than refurbishing an aging facility that will only need more and more upgrades over time.

Should Montgomery County host hyperscale Data Centers? If so, what zoning standards and regulations should be established? Have we gathered all the necessary information to make an informed decision at this time?

I attended the community forum about data centers and heard the overwhelming feedback from residents. People are tired of seeing their costs going up to subsidize corporate profits for tech companies that do not care about us.

Data centers are harmful to environmental and human health, do not produce value to the community, and they will worsen the affordability crisis for Maryland residents. They will be an environmental and economic disaster when the AI bubble bursts and they are abandoned.

The community speakers at the forum vastly support zoning changes to prohibit their construction, and I agree. If that is not possible, they should be zoned so that they have to provide their own clean energy, not raising our energy prices or installing air polluting generators. They should be zoned to limit noise to nearby residents and limited on their water usage. Until we can implement these zoning restrictions, I support a moratorium on new data centers until we can study them and know more about the impacts they have on the environment and community.



Forests are a key tool for climate protection and protecting public health. How would forest protection and control of non-native plant species factor into your administration's goals? (Picture above - Wib Middleton)

I support control of non-native species and promotion of planting native plants - which often have the benefit of requiring less water. I strongly support forest protection for a number of reasons, including native species habitats, carbon sequestration, and water capture. As a Peace Corps volunteer, my primary program was agroforestry, so I know how beneficial trees and forests are to communities, for agriculture, and for the climate. My goals include revising zoning regulations and encouraging more dense housing in the urban parts of the County, which I believe will help us preserve green spaces by reducing urban sprawl and allow us to better concentrate services near population centers.

Where do you stand on synthetic turf playing fields for school and community use?

I do not have a stance on synthetic turf fields at this time. I welcome information on this issue so that I can better understand the arguments for and against it.



Challenges to current and future farmers are increasing. The average age of County producers is 59. The cost of leasing farm acreage (60% of farms are leasing) is skyrocketing while a diverse new crop of farmers struggle to afford farmland. Have you got any plans for how the County can help keep the industry healthy and promote expansion– with an understanding that resilience depends on local food and fiber production? (Pictured above: Afrithrive Farm)

I have talked to a few farmers in the county who have raised the issue of costs and raised this concern. Growing up in an ag economy, I know small farms survive on very thin margins. My research has been more focused on urban housing costs, but we cannot forget the Ag Reserve and the difficulty that crop producers face. I do not have a solution to the cost of farm leasing prices at this time, but I want to work with the Montgomery Countryside Alliance and local farmers and find out more about what other regions have tried, and how we can create solutions for producers here.