

Montgomery Countryside Alliance 2014 Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Beth Daly

City: Dickerson

Office Sought: Montgomery County Council At-Large

More Info: www.bethdaly.org

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

The Agricultural Reserve is the green lung of our county. But more than green fields, fresh air and water, the Reserve provides thousands of local jobs, tons of local produce, millions of dollars in tax revenues, and protects over 90,000 acres of traditional and historic farmland. Thanks to some visionary elected officials and county planners, our Reserve is now a national model of land management.

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

I am the only candidate for Montgomery County Council who lives in the Agricultural Reserve. I believe its future survival hinges on its importance to the Metro region as a local and abundant food source, as land where conservation based practices are an accepted way of life, where school children experience aspects of growing food and good stewardship, and as an oasis from the stress of urban and suburban life. This means that the current zone shall prevail, that no highways (aka Techways) from Virginia will bisect our lands, that a school curriculum which includes Agricultural Reserve components will yield new generations of Montgomery County residents committed to the Reserve's long term survival and who will vote for leaders who share that vision.

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

We must give our local farmers and producers the tools they need and Ag Services and extension support; aggregation of food at hubs to ease economies of scale and distribution challenges; connection to new, emerging consumers and markets(MCPS, immigrant communities); and access to new technologies. We need to foster a relationship where our farmers are sustaining our community and our community is sustaining our farmers. Working in partnership with groups such as MCA, Sugarloaf Citizens Association and Montgomery's Food Council will be key in advancing this agenda.

The Reserve rests atop the Federally designated Piedmont Sole Source Aquifer, the only source of potable water for residents, crops and farm animals. We cannot rest on our success in protecting Ten

Mile Creek from development. The County should always examine and rely upon science based standards to study the impact of any development on natural areas, water supplies, ecosystems, and important habitat.

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

We need careful long-range protection through sound science-based land-use planning, zoning, enforcement, and education. And we need to make ALL County residents feel vested in the Reserve -- not just those that live in the Reserve.

In the midst of a strong "Buy Local" movement, our County should do a much better job promoting the Ag Reserve as a food source close to our nation's capital. We also need to provide more robust support for our farmers large and small in a variety of ways including, creating a food hub in Poolesville; mentoring programs for new farmers, and working to find new markets for food production, such as MCPS for fresh produce in our cafeterias and real turf grass for fields.

Not surprisingly, there are some landowners and developers seeking to open the Reserve to other uses and more development in an effort to undermine the zone. Constant vigilance is needed on the part of residents, elected officials and our County agencies against such incursions.

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

The Reserve and its products should be made a part of the MCPS curriculum - it is not just for picking pumpkins. Our nation's obesity, diabetes, and behavior problem epidemics call out for a change in the way we feed our children, and how we teach them about food. MCPS Division of Food and Nutrition Services, as they move their central kitchen closer to the Reserve, should be required to source as much food as possible from Montgomery producers.

Some on-site components of an expanded curriculum embracing the Reserve could include visits to local producers in spring or fall or producer visits to the classroom off season, a water quality monitoring tutorial, gleaning of crops for Manna Food, and tours of important natural habitats and historic sites in the Reserve. I support the programs such as Real Food for Kids Montgomery, MCA, and other non profits to increase real local food production.



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 County must be proactively enforce the zoning code. Instead, the Department of Permitting Services and the Department of Housing and Community Development both operate primarily on a complaint response system. The Department of Environmental Protection and Planning Department are also key to make sure land owners comply with code. The county has done a good job in creating and publicizing a central 311 service, but follow up is weak, and changes to code violations are not necessarily sustained.

I would review the complaint, violation and follow up system, and work with the appropriate agencies and their chiefs to make sure we have enough staff in place to enforce zoning and housing code. Education is the best prevention for code violation, but fines are also a very effective tool and need to be used more often for results.

Neighbors and the environment should not be punished because the county does not provide sufficient code enforcement.

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

No. I do not support an additional Potomac bridge or highway in the Reserve or adjacent rural zones. I have testified before the Army Corps of Engineers to oppose the M-83 extension, because of its adverse impacts on the communities surrounding it and its

routing through a sensitive wetlands and the east side of the Agricultural Reserve.

The upcounty needs traffic relief, and I support extending the 355 bus rapid transit route to Clarksburg, establishing a bus express network on I-270, and adding a third track on the MARC Brunswick line to serve commuters along that route.

