



Montgomery County 2022 Candidate Questionnaire - Daniel Koroma

Personal Information:

Name Daniel Koroma

What Office Are You Seeking in the 2022 Election? Montgomery County Council District 5

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

Campaign Website: <https://www.danielkoroma.org> Campaign Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/daniel.koroma.7> Campaign Twitter Account:

https://twitter.com/DanielKoroma?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor

Please Answer the Following Questions- responses will posted in their entirety and will not be edited.

Someone new to Montgomery County may ask, "What's the Ag Reserve and why is it important?" What's your answer?

The Ag Reserve for 40 years has been a national treasure because it provides a haven for local farmers, preserves about one-third of Montgomery County from heavy development and provides needed open space that helps the environment.

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

My vision is to keep the Ag Reserve largely as it is, although some compromises may have to be made while preserving the essential character of the area. In addition, I would like to give access to the Reserve to farmers who would grow culturally appropriate crops as this is desperately needed in East Montgomery County. East Montgomery County is a food desert. It just makes sense to create pathways for young farmers to grow sustainable hyper-local nutritious, and healthy food that is both affordable and available. Our majority minority population in District 5 needs our farmers to grow and produce these foods. The market is there for the farmers and the need is growing daily. We need to integrate the Ag Reserve into East Montgomery County.

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

Over the years, again, we have seen development plans that would pollute local water supplies, encroach on parkland and shrink open spaces. There will be pressure over the next few years to do these things again. And again, I will fight to preserve the essential Reserve.

What role will you play with regard to ensure that we safeguard our drinking water supply both surface and groundwater?

I will oppose development plans that would pollute our drinking water supply. We also need to closely monitor Glyphosate and Atrazine endocrine inhibitors, other herbicides and pesticides that some farmers apply to their fields, which sometimes filter into our water tables, aquifers or stream runoff. I would also like to turn some of our conventional fields into regenerative organic operations by using holistic farm management practices.

What are your top priorities to help the County address climate change? What role will the Ag Reserve play?

The existence of the Reserve helps the County address climate change. The one area in which I differ with the Alliance is that I support conditional community solar in the Reserve. Solar panels can also be looked at as a temporary and gentle energy solution until other technologies become available. Solar panels also do no harm to the soil so long as we use animals for weed control instead of herbicides. But let me be very clear on this; I don't want solar displacing farmers and changing the character of the Reserve. Nevertheless, more can be done to allow solar development than the Zoning Text Amendment approved by the County Council allows. If we are serious about combating climate change, all elements of the County have to contribute, including the Reserve. Perhaps the biggest opportunity we have in the Ag Reserve is to embrace holistic animal grazing and regenerative farming practices where we focus on the living soil to draw down CO₂ levels and Methane through rotational grazing and best holistic practices.

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

For farmers, we can promote the use of CSAs more widely and connect farmers to markets. Rural communities can be protected by making certain development preserves the rural nature of the area. We also need to work on distribution so our small and hyper-local farmers can get their produce and products into market. I'm a big fan of food sovereignty. We need to eliminate the costly regulatory issues that strangle our ethical and organic farmers. We can create certification programs focused on food safety to assure the public that our local farmers are doing a much better job with food safety than the Federal Government regulates. We can create these programs with the help of the Montgomery County Food Council. The County can also help by establishing commercial kitchens and food distribution storage centers that farmers and producers can affordably lease and use as distribution hubs. Additionally, there is no reason why the Ag Reserve and Montgomery County can't become a food destination. From cooking schools to Michelin Star chefs and restaurants, we have all of the elements right here in Montgomery County to drive agro and food tourism into our rural communities. From beer farms to wineries, mead, hard cider, and spirits, we have the opportunity to generate needed revenues and jobs in and around the Ag Reserve. Additionally, Maryland Hops and Industrial Hemp open up unique opportunities for farmers and producers. We have a very unique and valuable asset called the Ag Reserve that can be marketed to the world as a destination for recreation, education, and Agro-tourism.

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?

My regional transportation priorities are expanding the Red Line up to Gaithersburg, work to electrify our bus fleet, the completion of the Purple Line and, building out the BRT going up New Hampshire Ave, Veirs Mill Road and 355. I support M83 and the additional Potomac Bridge.

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

There is certainly much more to be done with composting and recycling and reducing food waste. We have to push out the concepts more widely to homeowners and to owners of commercial and residential buildings. The incinerator has bedeviled the County for years. I would like to close it once we find acceptable alternatives. We also need to emphasize composting as food compost can be converted into valuable products such as LeafGro which can generate revenue for the County.

What are your views on the general plan update "Thrive 2050," both the process and the draft now before the Council?

Thrive 2050 is a concept plan. It is not prescriptive. There has been considerable public input into the plan and there will be more as individual projects and policies are debated. I note that Thrive included as a policy goal, "Preserve and enhance the Agricultural Reserve."

Do you believe that the way that local government branches, state entities, and the public currently interact can be improved? If so, what steps would you take?

Any time that people are involved who have different opinions and goals, there will be some political conflict. It doesn't have to be nasty, but any given situation is based on people, not on institutions. If everyone is committed to civility, then civility will reign. If not, then things get more combative. Compromise is a necessary part of improving relationships, although some may disagree with that assessment. If elected, I would address how we can better communicate with each other and address the unnecessary road blocks that exist. Getting everyone a seat at the table, respecting their opinions and differences, and establishing a constructive environment to learn and grow together is a great first step.