



Montgomery County 2022 Candidate Questionnaire - Joe Vogel

Personal Information:

Name Joe Vogel

What Office Are You Seeking in the 2022 Election? Maryland House of Delegates District 17

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

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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 is one of the most unique and impactful agricultural land reservations in the country. Covering 93,000 acres, it protects lands that might otherwise have been swept up by trends of sprawling development across the state. The Ag Reserve is important not just to the agriculture industry (contributing millions of dollars to our economy through family farms), but also to the culture and health of our community.

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

Protecting the Ag Reserve should be a principal goal of any Montgomery County candidate. First and foremost, I intend to ensure the existing tradition of small farms and resident amenities continue, with people from across the state continuing to be able to visit the Ag Reserve and enjoy all it has to offer. Secondly, I believe that we need to look at the role the Ag Reserve can play in efforts to mitigate the impact of climate change. The Ag Reserve already serves as a "Green Lung" for our region, sucking in CO2, but it can do much more. We need to bolster recent legislation promoting safe waste disposal to protect aquifers running through the Reserve. We need to incentivize Regenerative Agricultural practices to increase yields while reducing pesticide use and capturing carbon. We need to accelerate reforestation to increase carbon capture.

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

The natural resources of our county are some of our greatest assets, and I am committed to protecting them for future generations. I am in favor of passing an Environmental Human Rights Amendment here in Maryland that will make it easier to hold polluters accountable. I also believe that we need to protect and expand the green space we have to increase carbon capture and decrease runoff. This ties directly into my vision for parklands and forests. I want to see Montgomery County grow, but not at the cost of its environment. We need to incentivize public and private reforestation, and ensure that decisions about development properly factor in the importance of preserving and building in greenspace.

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

surface and groundwater?

Protecting our water is key to the health of Marylanders across the state. I will push for the Environmental Human Rights Amendment that will increase enforcement of and accountability for pollution minimization standards. I will support allocating increased funding for regulatory and monitoring agencies to ensure companies and communities continue to comply with rules around waste disposal, chemical storage, and run-off prevention. I will incentivize usage of non-toxic alternatives for farming and garden use.

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

I believe Maryland can and must be the first state in the country to reach net-zero emissions. We need to lead the way on electrification, deployment of renewable energy infrastructure, and climate adaptation. We have a shrinking window to act, and need to take significant steps in the next few years. I believe we do not have time to waste. The Climate Solutions Now Act and the Maryland Clean Energy Jobs Act were important first steps. If we make the necessary investments in the next few years, I believe we can exceed the goals set by those plans. However, the pace we have been moving at is disappointing.

Expanding solar power utilization is the key first step to improving our energy portfolio. We need to be smart about leveraging rooftops, brownfields, and unproductive urban space for solar panels and clean energy production. I will support measures to alter the regulatory structure around solar installations to make these options more affordable. Wind is the second key component. The Maryland Wind Energy Area located in the Outer Continental Shelf of the Atlantic Ocean has the potential to produce 850-1450 megawatts of commercial wind generation. As delegate, I will fight to ensure this potential is realized as part of the plan for 100% renewable energy, all the while creating new construction projects that offer good paying jobs to Marylanders.

Other priorities need to include grid modernization, expansion of the climate conservation corps, significantly expanding access to electrified public transportation, significantly increasing the number of charging stations, and providing funding support for resiliency projects in low-income communities.

I'm not taking a cent from fossil fuel executives, Annapolis lobbyists, corporations, or corporate PACs. My campaign is 100% funded by real people. That's important when it comes to fighting back against the powerful corporate interests in Annapolis—especially the interests of the fossil fuel industry. As Delegate I will be committed to fighting for progress and accountable only to those who I represent.

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

We need to do more to support local farms in our state, as well as rural communities in general. When it comes to farms, I will support increasing government purchasing of farm surpluses to supply to food banks and food pantries across the state. This decreases waste and addresses the continued challenge of food insecurity across the state, all while increasing income to local farmers. I will also support expanding state level Farmers Market Promotion Programs that encourage in-state consumption of locally-farmed produce.

I will be a strong advocate for real equality when it comes to investment and growth in rural communities. I hope to subsidize the availability of broadband internet, reinvest in schools, sustain rural hospitals, and push for a future where zip code is not determinant of opportunity or quality of life.

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?

We need a reliable and accessible public transportation system. Investing in public transit will expand access to economic opportunity while helping us address the climate crisis. I believe we can and must commit to 100% clean transportation for public vehicles, including school buses, by 2030 by replacing the fleet with electric vehicles. I will work with local governments to support growth of public transportation networks across the state, and engage local, state, and federal leaders to install fast

charging electric vehicle stations along major highways and in communities to encourage and prepare for increased electric vehicle usage in the future. We must expand Maryland's existing walking and biking paths to allow for safe personal travel in communities to homes, schools, and workplaces.

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

Reducing waste is another key step we need to commit to to protect our environment. Maryland produces 21,000 tons of solid waste every day, a number that puts strain on waste processing facilities as well as our ecosystems. We should cut all subsidies and incentives for trash incineration as it is harmful to our environment and the health of surrounding communities.

We need to take decisive action. Ten states have introduced bans on single use plastic bags; I will advocate for Maryland to join these ranks. I will also advocate for Maryland to join California, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont in passing laws requiring food waste generators, such as grocery stores and restaurants, to utilize organic waste bins that take food waste to be composted rather than added to landfills. Policies like these reduce the size of our landfills and the pollution our waste adds to the environment.

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

I am supportive of the "Thrive Montgomery 2050" plan. It brings into focus the important issues of housing affordability, nutrition and health accessibility, climate-conscious transportation, and greenspace preservation. Plans like this are key to putting our county on the right track for decades to come, even if they require tailoring and refinement.

The plan proposes options for what a more inclusive, climate friendly, equity-conscious county might look like in the decades to come. However, I also recognize that the process by which it was presented left a lot to be desired. Plans like this should be developed with high levels of transparency, and bring a diverse set of perspectives and stakeholders to the table. As a legislator, these will be priorities for me.

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?

This is a relationship that can always be improved, and I am committed to this improvement if elected. The first step I will take is one reflected in the way I've run this campaign: physically closing the divide between communities and their candidates and representatives. I have traveled across the district to meet with constituents—renters and teachers, students and health practitioners—with the goal of meeting them where they are to discuss how their representatives can best serve them. By bringing people to the decision making table, we can make the change our district needs together.

Second, I believe that government digitization must be a priority in the coming decade. We need government websites, databases, and service platforms to be comprehensive, intuitive, and reliable so that Marylanders have access to the facts, contacts, and support they need. Policymakers do not make change in a vacuum—far from it, actually. I will work to build relationships across state entities and with community leaders, and translate our conversations into the legislation needed to facilitate progress.