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Address: Gaithersburg
What office are you seeking?: County Council District 3
Where can voters learn more about your positions?: www.sidneykatz.com

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

Montgomery County's Agricultural Reserve is one of our greatest natural resources. I've lived in Montgomery County my entire life, and I remember when the County Council made the decision in 1980 to create the Agricultural Reserve. Growing up in Gaithersburg I have many friends whose families have worked hard to maintain their farms. I am a strong supporter of the people who work in agriculture and keeping the Reserve as the place it needs to be for them to remain viable.

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

It is of the utmost importance that we maintain green space in the County as it is important in the Ag Reserve as well as throughout Montgomery County. I am very supportive of the parks initiative for energized public spaces, which will create places near where residents live to gather and enjoy open space.

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

We need to keep it and enhance it as best we can. We need to continue to have a dialogue with the people who live and work in the Ag Reserve to make certain that what we are doing is working for them.

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?

Any family owned business can have challenges. I think it is necessary to continually hear from the people of agriculture to keep us up to date as to their needs and to keep us informed as to how we can be of assistance. We need to make certain that the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program remains viable.

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

Businesses change with time. We have seen many farms change from dairy operations to having different livestock. We have seen farms becoming a 'pick your own' and places that board horses. We have also seen places become wineries and breweries. We need to make certain that the County's regulations and planning processes are allowing a farm operation to prosper and change to remain viable.

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

I strongly support expanding composting and recycling options for Montgomery County residents.

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?

Education is of utmost importance for all types of businesses and agriculture is certainly one that the more a student knows the better off all of us are. I believe all discussions about schools and any other topic should be thoroughly discussed to see what is the best way to proceed to achieve the goals that are being suggested.

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?

We must make certain that the County's processes and procedures allow for these businesses to flourish. We need to include the Ag community into the planning process to a greater extent than it is now.

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?

We need to have a multi-modal approach to transportation solutions. I support continued investment in transit, like Metro and our bus infrastructure. We need to have a dedicated funding source for Metro, and I voted in support of Delegate Korman's dedicated funding bill. We must continue to push for the implementation of bus rapid transit, and I supported the new Ride On Extra bus. When I was Mayor of Gaithersburg, I worked with MARC to get them to run the noon train. Today, we need the MARC train to run all day to Frederick and beyond. On M83, the alignment should be kept until we are certain that the other measures that could be taken would alleviate the transportation problems, and it should not be counted for development capacity in sector plans. Regarding a second crossing, I do not support it going through the Ag Reserve, and I do not believe we should be thinking this is a way to solve our transportation problems when it is in great doubt if this would ever happen.