



# Montgomery County 2022 Candidate Questionnaire - Pamela Queen

## Personal Information:

**Name** Pamela Queen

**What Office Are You Seeking in the 2022 Election?** State Delegate

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

Voters can learn about my position on issues from my website - [www.pamelaqueen.com](http://www.pamelaqueen.com). I have responses to questionnaires from the League of Women Voters and Baltimore Sun which are published. Also, I have written some OpEds about my experiences, perspective, and position on incarceration, gun violence, pay equity for women, racial biases, and substance addictions. These topics are related to legislative actions that I champion.

**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 Agricultural Reserve was created to preserve farmland and rural space in the northwest region of Montgomery County. With over 93,000 acres, the Ag Reserve represents about 1/3 of the county's land resources. It is a national model for farmland protection. The Ag Reserve offers agricultural, horticulture, livestock, and outdoor recreational activities. It is important because Montgomery County's agricultural industry has over 500 farms, employs more than 10,000 people, and annually contributes about \$280 million to the county's economy.

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

Agriculture is essential to the environment, food supply, people's general health, and the economy. In Montgomery County, a challenging, but critical priority is to preserve the earth's natural resources by maintaining soil quality, reducing land erosion, and preserving quality water supply while providing for food, wood, and fabrics. The COVID-19 pandemic emphasized our dependency on agricultural products for basic food and shelter, as well as, a need for open space and outdoor activities for physical and mental health. My vision is to broaden the Ag Reserve's uses for farming, livestock, wineries, horseback riding, hiking, bike routes, and other outdoor activities which are paramount for a healthy environment and productive economy. Working with all stakeholders to balance the benefits of agriculture against potential negative environmental impacts is a must for me and my colleagues.

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

Montgomery County has a good structure with the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission to plan, regulate, and protect the county's natural resources including land acquisition and conservation efforts. With the creation of the County's Park Planning & Stewardship division, the right balance of recreational and natural resource stewardship goals can be monitored and achieved. With this structure, I and my colleagues in Annapolis can work collaboratively with county counterparts to ensure the vision and objectives to preserve, protect, restore, and enhance our natural resources for current and future generations are aligned.

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

My goal is to raise awareness of the impact of pollution from septic system drains into our ground and surface water which is known to cause dirty drinking water from excess nitrogen and bacteria. Conventional septic systems do not prevent nitrogen from entering groundwater. Better awareness and routine inspection of home septic systems is an important step to avoiding pollution of drinking water. Suggested legislation includes increasing knowledge about septic systems for residential homes with the "Sale of Residential Real Property – Septic Systems Outreach Toolkit" and annual "SepticSmart Week" education programs in Montgomery County and across the state.

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

In addressing climate change, the Ag Reserve can continue to be a model by increasing sustainable farming practices such as organic farming, cover crops, crop rotation, and other sustainable farming efforts. These efforts are shown to significantly improve the health of neighboring communities and the Chesapeake Bay.

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

I support efforts with state resources and support to help farmers transition to sustainable farming practices, including helping small farmers access more markets, reducing costs via cost-sharing initiatives, and decentralizing processing. Also, I support 'buy local' programs and the creation of urban agriculture zones, especially in underserved areas with limited access to fresh fruits and vegetables. I had the opportunity to visit several farms participating in the Million Acre Challenge (a great initiative) which helps the bay, trains urban farmers, and addresses climate change in underserved areas. Expanding this effort is important.

### **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?**

Emissions from transportation are a significant source of pollution and negatively impact the environment. In support of Maryland's net-zero carbon emissions goals, transportation plans for the M-83 and other highway construction must be revised to a more eco-friendly transportation system approach for Montgomery County.

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

In Montgomery County, trash incineration at the Dickerson incinerator is phasing out. This is an opportunity for the county to be a model for the state in ensuring municipal solid waste is compostable or recyclable. In low-income areas and in areas with high environmental injustice, the county should invest in education and training on the benefits of composting and provide free resources to encourage composting. In addition to free recycle bins in all residential housing, free reusable grocery bags should be provided to residents in low-income areas.

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

With the population growth that Montgomery County is undergoing with more residents coming to the County and with 85% of land already developed, it is imperative that the County government address how to accommodate more growth while maintaining the quality of life that attracts individuals to the County. Thrive 2050 forces a much-needed discourse about a strategy to accommodate the growth in the County. I agree that key outcomes should focus on racial equity and social justice, economic competitiveness, and environmental resiliency. This plan is a work in progress which must be done.

### **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?**

I would build on in-person regional-based forums and road shows to ensure all residents have access to local government. Similarly, with the County Executive having in-person budget briefings throughout the County, other key briefings and presentations such as legislative priorities at state and county levels should be conducted in-person at locations throughout the region, not just in Rockville. Continue to record and live-stream meetings in Rockville and Annapolis, but allow for in-person sessions. Annually, there should be joint briefings with local and state governments to educate residents on the impact of legislative actions.