



Montgomery County 2022 Candidate Questionnaire - Paul Schwartz

Personal Information:

Name Paul Schwartz

What Office Are You Seeking in the 2022 Election? Montgomery County Council District 7

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

My website is www.paulkschwartz.com. It has everything anyone would want to know about me and my campaign.

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 Agriculture Reserve provides many important benefits to our community such as environmental protection. These include tree canopy, storm runoff absorption, protecting our water, and providing wildlife habitat. It also provides for local farm products from the more than 500 local farms as well as protection of historic sites and offers hiking and biking trails.

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

My vision is to maintain the rural character of the AG Reserve and protect it from the threat of over development especially the threat of highways through the reserve. I would fight against Virginia's plan to build a bridge over the Potomac that would create a highway that cuts right through the reserve and would create additional vehicular traffic and lead to over development and jeopardize the rural nature of the reserve.

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

We, on the County Council, must ensure that they are protected. We want to avoid the over development that has occurred in such locations as Houston, Texas which, because of the over development, saw historic flooding due to not enough surface area to absorb the climate change producing rainfall. If Manville, New Jersey can flood out, so can Montgomery County unless we balance development with protecting our environment. I also support stronger protection for the Ten Mile Creek.

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

Safeguarding our drinking water is must quite obviously be a top priority and it is the responsibility of the County Council to ensure that there are rules in place to do just that. Those rules must include accountability measures for those who violate those rules.

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

Reduce carbon emissions by investing in renewable energy and instituting code requirements as

appropriate; transition to emissions-free public transportation by converting to electric buses; expand the availability of electric charging stations to transition the public to electric vehicles; protecting and expanding forests, wetlands, grasslands, the tree canopy and all green spaces by conserving land including protecting the AG Reserve. I also support the opt-out program instead of the opt-in current program regarding conversion to solar energy.

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

Food security for the most needy is a critical issue for the county. Manna Food Center, the largest food bank in Montgomery County, has estimated that the number of food insecure residents has grown during the pandemic from 80,000 to 120,000. The Farm to Food Bank Program allows local table food farmers to receive wholesale prices for food that is offered to soup kitchens and food pantries. This program has given an important boost to local food farmers and has helped to address the growing food insecurity problem. Moreover, the food at food banks is often non-perishable whereas the local table food is perishable and provides for a more complete diet. As a member of the County Council, I will support continuing subsidizing this program to provide locally grown fresh food for the needy and small business opportunity for farmers including minority farmers.

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?

No I do not. Investing in more roads is an investment in more traffic congestion. I support investing in public transportation to alleviate vehicular traffic congestion, not add to it. I support providing for bus lanes and converting some lanes to bus lanes during particular times of the day and depending on the specific location. I am for lane reversal on I-270 during specific times of day to help alleviate traffic congestion and obviate the need for widening I-270 and create the negative environmental impact it would create. The funding for widening I-270 would be better spent investing in public transportation. I also support traffic light synchronization to help manage traffic in our community and I also support technology that would use sensors on traffic lights to better manage traffic at traffic lights.

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

Definitely more effective and increased recycling and composting efforts throughout the county and elimination of incineration. Apparently there are some waste disposal facilities outside the county that has the capability of more effectively handling waste and the county is looking into the feasibility of sending our waste there for treatment. This would obviate the need for the Dickerson incinerator that we all acknowledge is harmful to our environment.

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

The word most used to describe Thrive 2050 is "aspirational". This means it provides a good deal of the "what", but less so on the "how". I acknowledge that we have to consider the impact of 200,000 more residents in our community in thirty years, but we should not address it to the detriment of our current residents. The plan development should have been in coordination with the community from the outset, and not rely on providing an opportunity for comment after the plan was basically developed. Moving forward on the "how" requires a partnership between the community and developers from the get go to ensure that the rural character of the community is maintained. Moreover, zoning is a commitment to residents, is like a contract, and re-zoning, therefore, if needed, should only be permitted with the overwhelming support of the impacted community.

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?

Absolutely. Interaction between the county, state and federal governments must be formalized since all three must interact effectively to provide the best services for our local community. I am convinced that my experience at all three levels of government will be a great asset for the County Council and the community it serves. My long and hard-fought advocacy for tax relief for retirees is a perfect example of reaching out to the state legislature and the governor's office as it resulted in passage of

the Retirement Tax Reduction Act of 2022 and tax relief for retirees to help them retire in place in Maryland and keep their tax money, their buying power and their community service here in Maryland and not take it to Delaware or Pennsylvania. This type of interaction must be standardized especially during a period in which funding from both the state and federal governments is so heavily relied upon in the management of our county government.