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What office are you seeking?:

House of Delegates, District 16

Where can voters learn more about your positions?: www.samirpaul.com

2 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 a firewall that halts suburban sprawl, a filter that cleans our air, a breadbasket that give us local foods, and a retreat that reminds us of nature's beauty. It is the perfect counterpoint to the paved-over nightmare that is Northern Virginia, and it is a powerful force that incentivizes proper land use -- protecting and preserving green spaces and pushing new development revolve around transit.

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

1 - Stormwater management: I support a state-mandated substantial stormwater remediation fee for large jurisdictions. Governor Hogan's disingenuous attacks on the so-called "rain tax" and leadership's capitulation on this opened the door for local jurisdictions to cut this fee at politically convenient moments. As a step toward supporting stormwater remediation fees, I would support efforts to allow municipalities to levy the charges on government property (a la last session's SB472/HB656).
2 - Forest conservation: Every day, we lose forest the size of four football fields. Requiring a 1:1 replanting ratio is a no-brainer, especially if jurisdictions provide developers the option of a fee if they cannot find a suitable place to plant. One of my core political values is that we should plant trees whose shade we'll never get to enjoy. This is the rare occasion where I mean it quite literally.

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

As a teacher endorsed by 314 Action -- scientists and STEM professionals fighting climate change -- I am particularly excited by the Ag Reserve's role in education. Namely:
1 - Helping students understand the connections between agriculture and climate change. High-school earth science classes should include visits to the Ag Reserve to learn about sustainable agriculture.
2 - Raising up a new generation of agricultural innovators by bringing the Ag Reserve to the rest of the county. Let's start small-scale, student-run urban farms on large plots of land like at my school, Montgomery Blair HS. Is it too much to dream of a student-run CSA?
3 - Teaching young people about how food is made and improving nutritional/health choices. The Ag Reserve can be a powerful resource for strengthening proven programs like "Friday Try-Days," where students can learn to love fresh and local food.

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?

- 1 - Farming is expensive. Most Ag Reserve farms are family operations, and as the county's cost of living increases, it becomes harder and harder for these small producers to preserve their way of life. I would support targeted funding increases aimed at University of Maryland programs helping small farmers.
- 2 - Seductive real estate developers. Even with county subsidies, the pressure to develop the land is intense. I would help strengthen and maintain those subsidies and to promote the idea that this land is not simply pre-suburbia, but rather already has been developed as farmland.
- 3 - The zombie second bridge. People who want Montgomery County to be a bedroom community for Tysons continue to raise the idea of a second bridge across the Potomac. I do not support this construction, which would require us to pave right through the Reserve.

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

As a teacher, this is particularly important to me, and so my proposals revolve around schools:

- 1 - Farm-to-School. Let's connect local Ag Reserve producers to schools across the county, so that kids can learn where food comes from, how sustainable agriculture fight climate change, and how to make healthy food choices for themselves. At the state level, we can make sure procurement processes are as smooth as possible for local foods, and we could fund a State Department of Education staff position to work exclusively on farm-to-school.
- 2 - School-to-Farm. Let's repurpose some of our closer-in open spaces to teach young people about urban agriculture and light a fire in their hearts for farming. We could provide tax incentives to use vacant lots for food production, and we could fund special programs for seniors and kids.

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

The State should bring back the O'Malley-era “zero waste” rules that Governor Hogan rolled back. The old plan would have eliminated landfill waste within three decades and would have mandated a state government recycling rate of 65% by 2020. Of course, O’Malley’s plan relied heavily on trash incineration to divert waste from landfills; we should change that. Instead, we should radically increase composting and recycling while reducing incineration. At the state level, this can mean removing trash incineration (and black liquor incineration) from Maryland’s Renewable Portfolio Standard’s set of green energy sources. At the county level, let’s close down the Dickerson incinerator, which is bad for our climate and bad for our air quality. The younger generation deserves better.

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?

Please see my prior answer for farm-to-school and school-to-farm ideas. One of the best things we can do to support healthy local foods in schools is to fund a county-level educational agriculture coordinator. This individual would be the Johnny Appleseed of school ag programs, going through the county and starting small programs working with Earth Science, Horticulture, Agriculture, and Biology classes to raise awareness for the local food system and create a pipeline of future producers.

A continuing challenge we face is the pressure for new school construction as the Clarksburg cluster grows

rapidly. We should focus intensely upon concentrating growth and construction near transit so that we are not forever faced with the temptation of paving over the Ag reserve to build new schools.

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- 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?**

- 1 - Remove limits on beer production, taproom sales, and take-home sales
- 2 - End the “buy-back” provision for certain take-home sales, which forces producers to buy their own beer back from distributors if they exceed a certain production amount
- 3 - Devolve taproom operating hours authority to counties
- 4 - Reduce civil liability risk for agritourism providers as long as they post sufficiently prominent warnings and the risks are not unusual

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- 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?**

- 1 - Funding and governance reform for Metro
 - 2 - Two-way, all-day MARC service with an infill White Flint station
 - 3 - Bus Rapid Transit on Routes 29 and 355, with dedicated lanes for as much of the route as is possible
 - 4 - Manage Purple Line construction to mitigate costs and disruption to local residents/businesses
 - 5 - Maintain state roads and tackle 270/495 gridlock without widening either highway.
 - 6 - Get cars off the road to fight climate change and make commutes easier
 - 7 - All new development should be clustered around transit hubs like Metro and the Purple Line
- Please see www.samirpaul.com/transit for more detail