

Montgomery County 2026 Candidate Questionnaire



Personal Information:

Name

Prabu Selvam

What Office Are You Seeking in the 2026 Election?

Montgomery County Council At-Large

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

www.prabuselvam.com

email: campaign@prabuselvam.com



Please Answer the Following Questions- responses will posted in their entirety and will not be edited. There are no word limits but please try to be concise.

(pictured above: One Acre Farm)

Please share 3 sentences that help us to know you better:

I am an Air Force Veteran, emergency physician and humanitarian aid worker, born and raised in Montgomery County.

A major motivation for my entry into politics is to ensure a safe environment and climate for my son and future generations.

I view the natural environment around us as a vulnerable constituent that deserves our protection.

When we recently surveyed residents throughout the County, they shared that their top priority was a lack of government transparency - How can Montgomery County ensure transparency in their legislative and land use decision making? How would you grade current public engagement? Do you support re-establishing the Office of the People's Counsel?

I work in humanitarian response, where meeting people where they are is central to delivering care. I want to bring that approach to Montgomery County by rethinking outreach and public hearings.

Holding hearings during the workday systematically excludes many of the families most affected by county decisions. We need community ambassadors who can work across language, cultural, socioeconomic, and scheduling barriers.

I envision a distributed public engagement system where written and video testimony is collected directly in communities through trusted messengers connected to community groups, local language-specific media, faith organizations, and other local networks.

This is especially important now, as many immigrant communities are afraid to engage with government buildings or the political process at all.

I support a community advocacy group such as the Office of the People's Counsel but it must be designed to be representative of the needs of the entire community and not simply to amplify a minority of voices that have outsized political engagement.

Do you believe that the way that local government branches (executive, legislative and planning), and state entities currently interact can be improved? If so, what steps would you take to bring better collaboration?

We need more transparent decision-making and accountability. Ultimately the executive and legislative branch are the representatives of the people and should be the ones to take responsibility for ensuring that decisions are made in the best interest of our residents.



Source water protection is a priority for County residents. Rural residents are served by wells drawn from a federally designated Sole Source Aquifer. What specific actions will you take to protect groundwater quality and ensure a sustainable supply of drinking water for residents, farms and businesses? And what do you propose with regard to protecting the Potomac River, a drinking water supply for more than 5 Million people in the Washington DC metropolitan area. Given increasing drought conditions, growing data center water consumption, and projections that the Potomac River may not meet future demand, how will you plan for a water-constrained future? What policies or investments would you prioritize during your term?

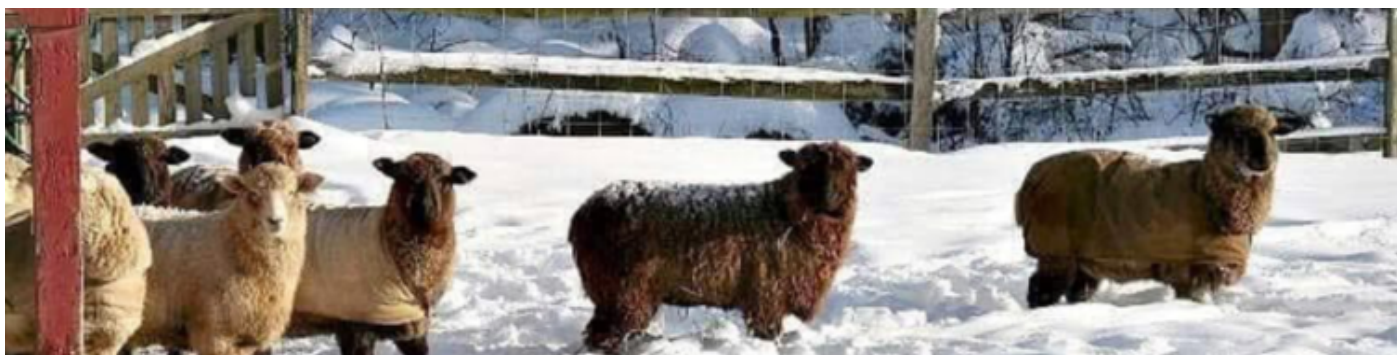
Protecting groundwater and the Potomac River must be central to how Montgomery County plans for growth and climate resilience. I would strengthen protections against contamination from industrial uses, stormwater runoff, and poorly planned development, while requiring rigorous groundwater-impact reviews for major projects. The Potomac is already under stress from drought, the recent sewage spill, and rising demand. Data centers should be required to use closed-loop cooling systems to leave the Potomac unaffected. We must prioritize conservation, water reuse infrastructure, and long-term drought preparedness. Montgomery County can pursue economic growth, but we must set enforceable environmental safeguards first so residents and our natural spaces are not left paying the price for unsustainable development.

What role can the Ag Reserve play in helping our County address Climate Change? Do you have plans to bolster the county's funds to address climate change, i.e. expanded grant making, review of energy tax structure for high energy consumers such as data centers?

The Agricultural Reserve is one of Montgomery County's most important climate assets. It protects

groundwater and the Potomac watershed, reduces heat, strengthens food security, and prevents sprawling development that increases emissions. I support using the Ag Reserve as part of a broader climate resilience strategy by expanding conservation efforts, supporting regenerative and sustainable farming practices, and protecting mature forests and tree canopy. We must also look at ways to responsibly use the Ag Reserve for renewable energy production that leads to a net reduction in GHG emissions compared to traditional farming.

We need stronger funding mechanisms for climate action. I support fully funding the Green Bank through the full 10% fuel energy tax allocation and exploring additional financing tools such as bonds to supercharge its capability. For high-energy consumers like data centers, we must have updated zoning and energy policies that require renewable energy sourcing, strong efficiency standards, and meaningful contributions toward the infrastructure and environmental impacts they create.



Do you support the long planned closure of the trash incinerator in Dickerson? Please provide some details as to why or why not. (pictured above: Shepherd's hey Farm)

We should take real steps toward closing the incinerator. Right now, 70% of our trash is burned there, releasing harmful toxins into the air, while the ash is transported to Virginia and buried. That practice is neither sustainable nor consistent with our values.

Over the coming years, we need a clear phaseout plan with concrete milestones. That should include expanding composting and recycling programs. We must address organic food scraps, which make up a large share of our waste stream, as well as construction materials, which are likely to increase as housing development continues.

As we transition away from incineration, the remaining waste will still require landfill capacity. Any decisions about landfill use must reflect our commitment to equity and environmental justice, ensuring that already vulnerable communities are not asked to bear an unfair share of the burden.

Should Montgomery County host hyperscale Data Centers? If so, what zoning standards and regulations should be established? Have we gathered all the necessary information to make an informed decision at this time?

The benefits of a hyperscale data center must be weighed against the costs. Once built, these facilities often create 50 or fewer permanent jobs, raise energy prices, and risk harming local waterways. While property taxes may generate about \$50 million annually, that is small compared with the billions these corporations can earn from the same site.

The proposed Dickerson data center would also carry major energy and climate impacts. A 360 MW facility could generate emissions comparable to 150,000 gasoline-powered cars each year, undermining our Climate Action Plan. Across the region, aging coal plants are being kept online to meet rising data center demand. Experts also warn that rapid expansion could increase household electric bills by roughly \$70 a month over the next four years. Montgomery County families should not be subsidizing corporate profits through higher utility costs.

We need growth done responsibly. Any hyperscale data center approved in Montgomery County must use 100% renewable energy, use closed-loop cooling systems that protect the Potomac River, and fully fund needed infrastructure upgrades so residents are not left paying the bill.

I testified at the County Council in support of a task force to develop our policy and still would advocate for this. At the least we need a moratorium for this purpose.



Forests are a key tool for climate protection and protecting public health. How would forest protection and control of non-native plant species factor into your administration's goals? (Picture above - Wib Middleton)

Forest protection should be treated as core climate and public health infrastructure. Forests reduce heat, improve air and water quality, absorb carbon, and protect our watershed and biodiversity. I would support stronger protections for mature trees and forests, increased investment in reforestation and urban canopy, and supporting efforts to combat invasive non-native species that are most responsible for destroying woodlands.

Where do you stand on synthetic turf playing fields for school and community use?

I oppose synthetic turf. As a physician I have done my research and analysis by the Mount Sinai School of Medicine has identified that synthetic turf surfaces pose multiple potential risks to children and the entire community. Synthetic turf fields carry the risk of exposure to PFAS and microplastics from direct contact and also because of leaching into nearby water sources through drainage. The higher surface and air temperatures above synthetic fields likely put children at higher risk of dehydration and heat illness. Studies have also shown a risk of antibiotic-resistant bacterial infections associated with skin abrasions known as turf burns. Given the significant environmental impacts of the production and disposal of synthetic turf fields and indirect health harms, in addition to the potentially direct risks outlined above, synthetic turf fields are not in the best interest of our children's health.



Challenges to current and future farmers are increasing. The average age of County producers is 59. The cost of leasing farm acreage (60% of farms are leasing) is skyrocketing while a diverse new crop of farmers struggle to afford farmland. Have you got any plans for how the County can help keep the industry healthy and promote expansion– with an understanding that resilience depends on local food and fiber production? (Pictured above: Afrithrive Farm)

We must support farming in a way that is modern and aligns with the interests of young people and the financial realities they face. To encourage farming, we must expand our definition of what farming can be. Farmers need to diversify their businesses to survive in the era of tariffs and high cost of energy. Mixed use of farmland for some environmentally friendly commercial use that engages people in our wild and natural spaces, and allowing for renewable energy production are approaches we need to consider as

opposed to being stuck in old ways of doing things that often have a net negative impact on GHG emissions and the environment.

My father and his family were farmers in India and growing up I spent significant time on the farmland when visiting family, riding in tractors, and checking our irrigation systems. I am just one-generation removed from my family's farming roots, and it is not disrespectful of farming to change the way we think about farming. Like all industries, those that do not adapt will not survive.