



Montgomery County 2022 Candidate Questionnaire - Saqib Ali

Personal Information:

Name Saqib Ali

What Office Are You Seeking in the 2022 Election? District 15 Delegate

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

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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?

In 1980, the Montgomery County Council designated 93,000 acres – almost one third of the county's land – as an "Agricultural Reserve". They passed a package of accompanying ordinances to protect farmland, agriculture and keep the density of buildings very low. The Ag Reserve is important because it ensures that we have a large area of farmland that won't be converted to commercial development and sprawl.

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

I hope to see 3 things happen in the future with our Agricultural Reserve. First, I hope that we maintain our opposition building a second bridge over the Potomac river. This is important to maintain the purpose of an Agricultural Reserve, reduce traffic and minimize job losses. Second, I'd like to see wider adoption of MARC in Boyds/Germantown/Poolesville by upcounty residents so we can prevent more urban sprawl and to continue on achieving the goal of minimizing traffic and car usage in exchange for mass transit. This will help reduce our carbon footprint and incentivize targeted development. Thirdly, I hope to serve as a liaison between the state and county to help find a waste management plan for Montgomery to transition away from trash incineration as a way of disposing waste and powering our homes. This will further reduce our carbon footprint and minimize risks of asthma development and exposure to carcinogens.

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

Our county's delegation in Annapolis aren't acting aggressively enough on pushing for a transition away from single-car transportation in exchange for

MARC/Metro, a transition away from the Dickerson incineration plant, and eliminating PFAS contamination in the Potomac. This is a multi-generational hazard that will continue to bring more cases of cancer, asthma, and overall poor health outcomes for our residents in the county if we don't act fast to reduce fossil fuel emissions and eliminate pollution sources. Since the Seneca Creek area is in the Ag Reserve, we also need leaders in Annapolis that stress the importance of funding our public parks so more residents can enjoy the beauty within the county and help preserve our natural resources.

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

As mentioned above, Annapolis isn't tackling PFAS pollution as aggressively as it should, and it's a major cancer-causing chemical that is found abundantly in our rivers, lakes, and the Chesapeake Bay. We have residents that consume local seafood and swim in these waters, so it is a major concern we need to address. Since we still have homes in the county that are sourcing water supplies from wells, we must maintain top of the line communication and coordination with state and local officials on future development projects in the county to ensure proper storm water management and erosion control. Elected leaders need to have these concerns in mind when making policy decisions for their constituents so we can have safer and happier outcomes for our residents.

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

The agricultural reserve is a carbon-sucker, and we need to keep it that way. Paving it over with concrete would be disastrous.

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

We need to raise awareness, and make sure that farms in Montgomery County stay viable by reducing unnecessary red-tape and promoting their crops to local customers. I would like the county government and school system to purchase more locally sourced food. Additionally the county should hold more farmers markets' and promote more heavily.

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?

I oppose M83 and a second bridge over the Potomac. This is a backwards approach to addressing transportation needs in the county. It's time to focus on MARC/Wmata/BRT expansion instead of additional roads and lanes. Inducing demand for more carbon emissions doesn't solve the climate crisis.

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

As mentioned earlier, it's a priority of mine to shut down the Dickerson incineration plant because of its numerous counts of failing environmental regulations and serving as a net negative to our goal of becoming carbon neutral by 2045.

The waste that's carried along from Derwood into the Ag Reserve is extremely toxic and dangerous for all life and is unfortunately prone to spill while in transit. The County Executive made it his goal to find an alternative to trash disposal before the end of his first term, yet we're still without a solution. Talks have been made about switching to a landfill in the county, but that also carries its own environmental burden. There's plenty more we can do to expand our recycling program in the county, and that will prove to be a crucial necessity as we switch away from incineration waste management.

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

I am not very familiar with Thrive 2050. I have been focusing my attention on State-level legislation rather than county-level issues.

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?

There are ups and downs in this regard. Notably during the pandemic, there was poor communication between the office of Governor Hogan and County Executive Elrich. We should always strive for transparency, collaboration and coordination between different levels of government. But politics sometimes gets in the way.