

Name: **Ben Shnider**
Address: Rockville
What office are you seeking?: Montgomery County Council, District 3
Where can voters learn more about your positions?: www.shniderforcouncil.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, almost 1/3 of Montgomery County, represents the County's explicit commitment to preserving agriculture as a vital part of our local economy. It underscores the importance of an environmentally friendly and diverse economy and has set an example for the country for how fast-developing communities can protect their agricultural heritage and open space.

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

I will advocate to close down the County incinerator and focus on waste prevention and more recycling, including timely curbside food waste composting and banning disposable carryout bags. I will also push for careful oversight of forest conservation law enforcement, including adequate resources for staff and any potential strengthening revisions, in collaboration with the agricultural community. Also, I will prioritize creative exploration of funding approaches for park preservation and expansion, including proactive collaboration with all stakeholders. Finally, I will press the State to enforce the strictest emissions standards on the NRG power plant at Dickerson. I am proud to have earned the endorsement of the Sierra Club because of my strong support for careful stewardship of our precious natural resources.

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

I will proactively advocate for keeping the Reserve focused on agriculture as an essential component of our economy, culture, and environmental stewardship. It cannot become "cheap land" for any purpose that doesn't sustain agriculture here for generations to come. This means expanding countywide education about the Reserve, along with any needed fiscal and/or legislative actions (local & State) that might be required.

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?

Moving promptly towards a zero waste policy, as discussed above, should be a top priority. Redoubling efforts for mixed-use redevelopment of places like large, underused parking lots and failing malls, matched with enhanced transit, to lessen pressure for sprawl development in the Reserve must be another pressing priority. Finally, collaborating directly with the farming community on creative ideas to foster the next generation of farmers is essential to preserving the economic viability of the agriculture sector in our community.

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

Greater education among residents in the denser areas of the County about how the Reserve contributes to our local economy and environmental health is essential. Too many residents are unaware or hardly aware of the Reserve and the role it plays in our community. Also, focusing Economic Development Fund resources, as needed, on our small business - including our farms - at least in balance with the funds directed towards large corporations, is critical.

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

As discussed above, incineration is harmful to our overall environment, let alone the well-being (and very purpose) of the Reserve. We must move towards more countywide composting (including food waste composting), waste prevention (i.e. outright banning of disposable carryout bags) and devising other creative steps towards a zero waste policy.

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?

First, I will advocate for expanding programs like Close Encounters with Agriculture beyond fourth graders, including for Montgomery College students. I will also proactively advocate for the highest quality education for all MCPS students, including wrap around services, regardless of where they live.

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?

Farm breweries, wineries, etc. are a prudent element in creative approaches to the Reserve's long term health - provided those activities are truly consistent with the current health and future of the agriculture industry. This requires careful attention as the County promotes the Reserve and its overall land use planning, so wineries and breweries are focused on those literal operations, instead of as a mechanism for just inserting general commercial activity into the Reserve. We must also continue to improve bike facilities in and around the Reserve to draw cyclists from around the region.

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?

I oppose M83. I also oppose an additional Potomac River crossing/outer Beltway into any part of Montgomery County. My focus is on enhancing alternatives to driving, including Bus Rapid Transit, bi-directional MARC service throughout the week, more express Ride-On service and preserving Metro.