



Montgomery County 2022 Candidate Questionnaire - Steven Bolen

Personal Information:

Name Steven Bolen

What Office Are You Seeking in the 2022 Election? Maryland Delegate, District 9A

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?

For more than 40 years, the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Program has been working to preserve enough farmland to maintain a viable local base of food production. The program purchases perpetual agricultural conservation easements that would otherwise be developed for residential or commercial use. But, the program means more than that to me. I believe it is also about appreciation and respect for the land and those who work on it. We need to preserve our agricultural and state's historical heritage, ensure we don't destroy the resource that feeds us, and recognize the critical role agriculture plays in the vitality of our economic prosperity.

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

We need to be vigilant and continue to make investments to ensure the economic viability of our agricultural industry. We need to grow the next generation of Maryland farmers. To do this, we need to create a school-to-career-ready pipeline by offering K-12 "hands-on" learning experiences and post-secondary school to college/advanced training opportunities. We need to help new farmers purchase or lease land, support value-added agricultural enterprises, and lower taxes on farming families. We need to change the perception that farmland is an asset for future commercial/industrial use instead of using it to farm. Additionally, we need to resist the development of infrastructure such as roads and bridges that would increase urban sprawl and ultimately reduce our open space, diminish our agricultural heritage, and impact our agricultural industry's economic viability.

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

I want to expand and adapt local parks for recreational use and stormwater management. Furthermore, parkland acquisition and Agricultural Reserve can work together as part of a comprehensive approach to conserving land. Additionally, we need to encourage the installation of water-saving fixtures and greywater recycling systems and promote the re-use of production wastewater and rainwater harvesting systems.

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

I will work in partnership with the agricultural industry to reduce stormwater runoff into our watersheds to curb the flow of contaminants into our streams and, ultimately, the Chesapeake Bay. Additionally, I will work with our farming community to continue using traditional waste management systems in our rural areas and help them update their systems by replacing aging septic tanks and pipelines. I also support the installation of rain gardens and rain collection barrels.

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

I want to build a renewable, clean-energy, jobs-building economy that will reach every Marylander and will continue to support resiliency programs to mitigate the effects of flooding like we've seen in downtown old Ellicott City. In addition, I will work to preserve our agricultural land and open space to promote the healthy, natural growth of vegetation necessary to sequester carbon dioxide (through photosynthesis), reduce heat released into the atmosphere and provide cover for animals, insects, and birds.

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

I support:

- Entrepreneurship and value-added agriculture - which sustains nearly 74,000 jobs in Maryland and contributes over \$20.6B to the economy.
- Cost-share programs, grants, and loans to help farmers shoulder the cost of implementing best management practices to protect our natural resources.
- Education to create a student-to-jobs/training pipeline to continue to grow a sustainable pool of farmers.
- The Maryland Income Tax Subtraction Modification on tax returns to help farmers purchase equipment used for conservation. This tax relief should also include materials and supplies.
- The right-to-repair legislation that will give farmers the right to repair equipment without restrictions from manufacturers.
- Investment in smart technology that is already transforming small-scale agriculture. These include web-based tools for crop management.
- Value-added agricultural enterprises.
- Lowering taxes on farming families.

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 do not support transportation infrastructure programs that would reduce or impact land used for agricultural purposes.

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

I oppose incineration - especially the Baltimore Wheelabrator. According to Clean Air Baltimore, the Wheelabrator is the 10th largest incinerator in the country, accounting for more than 32% of all the air pollution emissions in Baltimore City. I support and encourage composting and recycling to the greatest extent possible. But we continue to need to work to change public awareness and participation in these things.

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

We need "smart" growth that is fiscally and environmentally sustainable. We need to protect open space and preserve our agricultural and state's historical heritage. We have the same issue in Howard County, where I live. Infrastructure, including schools, first responders, and medical resources, must keep up with our growing population. Shops, food markets, parks, and other venues need to be connected through pedestrian and bicycle paths as much as possible. Development should focus on existing urban areas, along major highways, and near public transportation hubs.

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?

Yes, we need to bring civility, respect, and understanding back into the national and local discourse. Opposing points of view are not the same as attacks on one's beliefs. Or democracy can sometimes be "messy" as we allow open debate through our rights vested in the First Amendment. But, that doesn't mean that, at some core level, we don't share common ground to build a better future for our children and a better place for all of us to work, play, and raise a family. If I become a legislator, I pledge to listen to my constituents and work for the common good of all citizens in District 9A.