

## Budget & Tax

### **1. What is your vision of taxation and spending in Montgomery County? Some revenue sources include property tax, bag tax or a potential business tax similar to what Fairfax County imposes. How do you think we should raise money?**

The property tax is the best source for real, sustainable revenue. Yes, the tax is a little regressive, but it can be adjusted on the bottom end. Rockville has done this thoughtfully with its Homeowners' Property Tax Credit Program, which I have supported and which I worked to expand my first year on the City Council. A bag tax, while a good idea when directed toward the environmental reforms it's meant for, doesn't raise real money.

### **2. In good times what are your spending priorities? How would they differ in hard times? If you ranked human safety net services, education, transportation and libraries for county spending, how would you rank them and why?**

Overall, my priorities are schools, economy/jobs, and transportation. During the Great Recession, Montgomery County cut staff, services, and facility hours in addition to imposing furloughs on many workers. The cuts were huge and included essential services such as public safety, libraries, and building maintenance. Our fortunes are reversing, so our job now is to strategically restore services where there is an undeniable need.

For example, the Working Families Income Supplement and programs for at-risk youth should be fully funded immediately. We need more police officers, and library hours should be restored. As the economy drives revenue up, I will pursue the school construction and transit projects we need to succeed.

I would choose the rankings as you have them: 1. Human safety net services are life-and-death services for some and the highest priority here. 2. Education touches tens of thousands every day, and we get only one chance to teach kids – we can't cut now and go back later to make up for it. 3. Transportation. You can put things off here for a while but have to catch up during good times. I'll take a few potholes over a bunch of hungry kids. 4. Libraries. As much as I cherish libraries – I basically learned to read in Davis Library – these have to follow other things on this list.

### **3. How would you ensure that taxes/fees do not unduly impact those with lower incomes?**

The choices our government makes have enormous effects on people's lives. I fully support the county's efforts to raise the minimum wage and county programs that provide an essential safety net. We must make sure that the recovery rate for fees is appropriate for each service and give breaks on fees according to income.

Targeted tax credits work. Consider Rockville's Homeowners' Property Tax Credit Program and the county's Working Families Income Supplement, which provide relief to those in lower income brackets, and the Sustainable Communities Tax Credit Program, which promotes affordable, energy-efficient housing.

**4. Do you have any innovative approaches to income and wealth disparities? Please share them.**

I have been focusing closely on the tools that the County Council has at its disposal to address income inequality. Economic inequality is the greatest threat to Montgomery County's quality of life, education system, and future. There are global pressures smothering the American middle class, but there are real steps the Montgomery County government can take.

One tool the council has is zoning. We need to zone for more density near our transportation corridors to provide more affordable housing and to provide opportunities for employers to bring better jobs to Montgomery County.

Another tool the council wields is investments in infrastructure. The bus rapid transit system under discussion now represents an opportunity for the County Council to remake the county, making it easier for people to get from their homes to their jobs.

Affordable Housing

**While renters in Montgomery County account for 25-30% of households, the affordable rental housing supply continues to shrink. In 2009 the Tenant Work Group, convened by Ike Leggett, expressed the following concerns:**

- **Unaffordable rent increases**
- **Fear of retaliation for voicing concerns about the property**
- **Unreasonable month-to-month surcharges**
- **Crime and safety**

**5. What can you and the County Council do to support the County's 250,000 renters?**

Sometimes the best defense is a good offense. When a Florida developer threatened to price 236 moderate-income Rockville families out of their neighborhood, I built an alliance to save the Fireside Park Apartments. Overcoming well-funded opposition and keeping these working families in their homes is one of my proudest achievements, and I continue to look for opportunities to serve our renters.

I have been a strong supporter of Rockville's MPDU ordinance, and of transit-based affordable housing in general, and I have the scars to show for it. I am leading a rewrite of

the MPDU ordinance to better suit the types of development Rockville is likely to see in the future, near its transit centers. I support incentives that increase the affordable housing supply in central business districts and Metro station area zones and will oppose measures to weaken these standards and incentives.

As I mentioned in the spending question, we need to restore cuts to public safety. No housing – rental or owned – is “affordable” at any income level if its residents are unsafe. County residents need to trust that their government will enforce the laws for their protection.

### Transportation & Infrastructure

#### **6. How do you propose funding the Purple Line and the Corridor Cities Transitway (CCT)? RTS/BRT has been accepted as a way to decrease gridlock in the future; how will you work to assure that funding is available and that communities are part of this solution?**

Bus rapid transit, the CCT, and the Purple Line must be among the county’s highest priorities. Designing this system as a whole is one of the most important tasks of the next council. Because we’re starting from scratch, by designing I mean not just its layout and its routes but also its funding mechanism. I definitely favor dedicated funding sources. One of Metro’s biggest problems is that it lacks a dedicated funding source; it’s the largest transit system in the country without one.

Bringing communities into the transit system design process is a given. On the council, I expect to hear from hundreds of people at dozens of meetings on how this system should best be built. The process is a fantastic opportunity for the future of Montgomery County.

#### **7. What can the Council do to promote telework, vanpools, and carpools?**

The county offers businesses a telework tax credit on computers bought for eligible employees. There’s also the Telework Partnership With Employers program, which offers free consulting services for starting or expanding telework at county businesses. This is a great idea because study after study shows that employees who telework even a day or two a week are more productive and less stressed; they often put in more hours than commuters do. The county should make the tax credit, the TPE, and federal telework centers better known because use of them reduces congestion, wear on our roads, carbon emissions, and so on.

The county has made a good start by offering help with starting car- and vanpools, offering free or discounted parking at some county lots, and working with the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments’ Commuter Connections program. The County Council can do more, though. For instance, there are spaces set aside at or next to Twinbrook, Wheaton, and Silver Spring Metro stations. How about other stations? The county’s

downloadable park-and-ride guide (for I-270 and US 29) was last updated in 2006. If nothing's improved in eight years, it should have.

Public transit and such is one of my favorite topics. Permit me to brainstorm here: Find more safe, lighted lot areas for van/carpool parking/drop-offs? Create an award to increase telework among county businesses? Use the bully pulpit of a County Council seat on this topic at Chamber of Commerce meetings, economic development meetings, Montgomery College, and elsewhere? Sponsor a contest for the best ideas from high school and college students? Give a grant to Commuter Connections to increase awareness or expand access? Offer gas-card reward grants to start a vanpool (San Francisco does this)?

## Education

### **8. School construction has fallen behind in projected Capital Budgets. How will you work with the Montgomery County Delegation in Annapolis to insure adequate capital budgets for MCPS?**

With six kids in the school system, I've always been a major supporter of this on and off the Rockville City Council, testifying before the Board of Education and the County Council. Early this month, I traveled with the Montgomery County Council of PTAs to Annapolis to advocate for more spending on school maintenance and construction. Baltimore cut a deal last year to get the funding it needed, and as difficult as this will be in Annapolis, I suspect that we too will have to cut a deal with other jurisdictions to get the funding our families need and deserve.

### **9. Since approximately half of the students in the County do not go to college, what should the county be doing in economic development to ensure that these graduates find jobs?**

Part of the solution is building an economic base that can employ all our people, whether high school graduates or PhDs, longtime natives or recent imports. I supported economic incentives to bring Choice Hotels International headquarters to downtown Rockville, and soon one of its hotels will open next door.

Another part of the solution is education. Whether our people come directly from high school or work a few years first or take a night or weekend class, more than 60,000 of them a year end up at Montgomery College. This is one of the nation's best community colleges. It serves everyone: The young man who's first in his family to go to college. The young woman saving money near home before finishing her degree either at the Universities at Shady Grove or farther afield. The man switching careers. The mom or dad returning to the labor force. The woman earning a certificate to achieve a higher wage or a promotion at work.

Students who don't "go to college" have access to training and apprenticeships and workforce development courses at a couple dozen locations, including the Rockville campus, the Shady Grove Innovation Center, and the Gaithersburg Business Training Center. Montgomery College is the way forward even for people who don't want or need a degree, which is why I want to be sure we're investing in it fully, so it can invest in our people.

### New Development and the Environment

**10. It is obvious that our infrastructure needs are not being met as the county continues to grow. How should and can the County Council review and impact proposals for development that will create significant infrastructure issues such as:**

- **Traffic and transportation**
- **Water and sewer**
- **Power, gas, phone and cable**
- **Preservation of the environment**
- **Health**
- **Small business**

(a) We cannot solve our congestion problems by building more roads. The real solution is bus rapid transit (BRT), the Corridor Cities Transitway, and the Purple Line. These connect the excellent transit systems we already have. A robust BRT system will give our residents the kind of local access to jobs that would otherwise require long commutes via Metro or car or less-convenient Ride-On bus service. No major roads should be planned without accounting for bus, rail, and bikeways; there's no going back to fix that later.

(b) Developers have to pay the cost of the higher demands here. The county and its taxpayers cannot and should not make up the difference.

(c) When possible and feasible, putting these underground is best for safety, maintenance, connectivity, and aesthetic reasons. The county or region should explore the idea of a public electric utility, an overhaul of the Public Service Commission, or both.

(d) Our environment is a top priority, and the council can help by encouraging transit, bringing jobs close to home, and setting a good example with its own carbon emissions. Recent council action saved Ten Mile Creek upcounty, which is the backup water supply for 4.3 million people. If we develop Clarksburg in a way that preserves our environmental spaces, it can be a model for sustainable development throughout the region.

(e) Threats to health are at the top of the scale. Most of these are going to be at a higher pay grade than the council – hazmat teams, the EPA, Superfund? – but I would refer to action on Ten Mile Creek, which *was* a health issue. If you lose access to safe, reliable drinking water, even as a backup, that's an immediate threat to human life and health.

(f) As Montgomery County has become a more complicated jurisdiction, our regulatory scheme has grown to become even more complicated, which makes life difficult for our small businesses. Let's get rid of regulations and processes that don't serve our environmental, social, and neighborhood goals and keep the ones that do.

**11. What changes in the County Master Plans are required to ensure that smart, sensible, environmentally sound growth is a continued priority? How will you support development that does not take down trees and disturb watersheds?**

The county is heading in an unwise direction with Mid-County Highway Extended (M-83), and I hope there will be reconsideration of a plan that includes public transit. Given the impacts on wetlands and stream valleys, I am not convinced that the federal government will even allow the construction of Alternative 9.

I have worked hard in Rockville to support the smart-growth Town Center Master Plan we have put in place to guide our downtown's future. I led the way in making changes to our Adequate Public Facilities Standards that would allow Rockville's smart, environmentally sound, transit-friendly town center to thrive.

I will make sure the county pays its debts to municipalities on its stormwater-management bill. Its failure to do so is bad policy and weakens public support for cities' stormwater-management regimes. Individuals, nonprofits, and businesses are all paying too much as a result of the county's policy here.

**12. How would you ensure that the Agricultural Reserve continues to be viable as an economic center and environmentally protected area?**

Of the two, its role is primarily as an environmentally protected area and far less as an economic center. The Ag Reserve provides a home for farmers, a natural protective area for the Chesapeake Bay, and a place for people to enjoy the beauty of nature. Ten Mile Creek is the county's last pristine reservoir and serves as the backup water supply for millions of people. Fortunately, the County Council has moved to scale back plans for development in and around Clarksburg and protect the creek.

This development has become a hot potato from the start. While Clarksburg deserves an opportunity to develop its downtown and badly needed transportation to connect it with the rest of the county, we cannot sacrifice either the creek or the Ag Reserve. Mid-County Highway Extended (M-83) must allow for mass transit. I oppose the current alternative, which does not – and is the most expensive and most environmentally harmful as well.

Montgomery County has a continuing obligation to guide Clarksburg's – and all of upcounty's – progress and to couple economic development with environmental

sustainability. For the County Council, this is a matter of vigilance.

### Immigration

**13. What can the County Council do to support our immigrant community? Do you support free, readily available English language classes and other education programs to help immigrants become full participants in the civic life of our County? What other approaches do you favor?**

I do support these. Our English-language classes have eager students and a waiting list of more than 2,500. We cannot afford, economically or morally, to discourage any group from full participation in the American dream.

That means we also have to look beyond ESL/ESOL to the county's broader support services, such as the Gilchrist Center for Cultural Diversity (the county's welcome center) and the County Language Corps (which helps in everything from conflict resolution to parent-teacher conferences). I'm proud of our outreach and inclusion through all kinds of county programs, from the English conversation clubs at most public libraries to Montgomery College's integration of international students and local high school graduates through the Maryland Dream Act. My job as a council member will be to make sure that we fully fund these programs and oversee them carefully to assure quality.

In addition, we need to take a wider view here in terms of family viability. Yes, learning the language is proven to mean a boost in average wages, but that's just the beginning. Job programs and a higher minimum wage will translate to higher family income, perhaps less need for that second or third job, less time commuting, parents' having more time with their kids, and a better economy for all.

### Elections and Transparency

**14. Maryland is making many improvements in transparency at the state level regarding hearings and legislation. Given the fact that currently many hearings and council meetings are televised, how would you improve this process in the county?**

This issue resonates particularly deeply with me, as I served as a reporter and editor for *Congressional Quarterly (CQ)* during my first career. *CQ* was created specifically to provide public accountability for congressional votes. The public cannot properly evaluate its elected leadership if it cannot find out how its representatives vote.

Montgomery County has several initiatives that I support strongly and would continue to expand. OpenMontgomery, the umbrella effort, is a great idea and is off to a terrific start. DataMontgomery is nicely done but needs to make more datasets available. I have been particularly surprised that a lot of election data is not readily available electronically and

will work to correct that. It is important that data be available in usable formats, as directly manipulable electronic records, not just as formatted Acrobat documents.

I will continue to strongly defend the rigorous financial-disclosure requirements enacted by the Maryland legislature in 2010 that cover county, school board, and municipal officials. I organized a statewide group of municipal officials to defeat an effort during the 2013 legislative session to substantially weaken these provisions – an effort led, unfortunately, by some in Rockville and by the entire Gaithersburg Mayor and Council.

On the Rockville City Council, I have consistently worked to make the city government more open and transparent. I led the rewrite of the city's ethics laws that required greater disclosure and created an independent Ethics Commission. In addition, I protected residents' privacy by limiting the city government's retention of locational data of those who were suspected of no wrongdoing.

**15. Should elections be financed with public funds? Should limitations be placed on private funds, money from development interests and PACs? Explain why you support a particular option. How can the voters be assured that elected officials keep the public interest as a priority?**

I support Phil Andrews' bill to set up the area's first system of voluntary matching funds for local elections and was the only candidate for Council District 3 to testify in favor of it. This legislation would encourage small donors, level the playing field for candidates without major means, and keep the focus on the voters of this district rather than on the biggest contributors. No corporate or PAC money would be allowed for those who opt in.

Courts routinely strike down mandatory funding limits, but voluntary incentive programs like public financing pass constitutional muster easily. The thresholds have to be carefully drawn to allow new voices to be heard but not to reward extremists on either end with an artificially large megaphone. Bill 16-14 achieves that balance.

This bill will allow candidates to connect with voters as we would want them to – talking to people's hearts rather than their checkbooks. It will allow those with deep roots but shallow pockets to compete effectively. And it will allow those with the best ideas, not the best Rolodexes, to guide Montgomery County into the future.

Experience

**16. Please describe your professional experiences that will allow you to be an effective member of the County Council. What organizations have you worked with and why will that help you to serve the public?**

My day job is candidate coordinator for Progressive Majority, which recruits, trains, assists, and helps elect a national team of candidates who will fight for a broad progressive economic and social agenda at the local and state levels.

My “night job” is councilmember of Montgomery County’s largest and most complicated city government. Rockville’s operating budget is twice the size of Gaithersburg’s, for example. Conservative fiscal management has earned both Rockville and the county the highest possible bond rating: AAA. Careful management pays off: Throughout the recession, Rockville kept property taxes steady; Gaithersburg raised its property-tax rate 23.6 percent.

Vocationally, I’m an attorney, which is invaluable to legislating. I served as executive editor of *The Georgetown Journal of Legal Ethics* and served on the executive board of the Georgetown Law chapter of the American Constitution Society. I’ve also been a litigation associate for an international law firm and an elder-care attorney, allowing me to see and anticipate more than one side of the many issues that come before our elected bodies.

Avocationally, I served my community as an ambulance driver with the Rockville Volunteer Fire Department and recruited others into the volunteer fire service as membership committee chair. I was a leader of the successful citizen effort to get the Rockville Memorial Library fully funded and built on time and served on the board of Peerless Rockville, which safeguards Rockville’s history and heritage. These have contributed immeasurably to my understanding of our community and its people, which will add to my ability to serve the county as a whole.

## **17. Progressive Neighbors is committed to supporting progressive candidates and issues.**

- **Why do you think that this organization should support your candidacy?**

The people of Montgomery County’s biggest city entrusted me with a Rockville City Council seat twice because they know I’m principled, direct, energetic, and effective. Whether rallying people behind a cause (our ethics law or affordable housing) or immersing myself in legislative details, I get results.

I have experience running the municipality with a budget most like Montgomery County’s. Like the county, Rockville builds its infrastructure using solid, safe municipal bonds. Both Rockville and Montgomery have a AAA bond rating. By contrast, Gaithersburg officials, using a simpler but riskier cash strategy, had their citizens pay millions for a swim center that they never built. Gaithersburg has no bond rating.

I champion public ethics. My principal opponents work to weaken them. Last year, when Gaithersburg’s Mayor and Council worked behind the scenes to gut Maryland’s ethics laws, I led the statewide coalition of municipal officials that kept them strong. I opposed my Gaithersburg opponents’ unsuccessful attempt *this* year as well.

Progressive Majority endorsed me in my 2013 reelection bid, months before I went to work there.

- **Give an example of a progressive issue that you have supported in the past 5 years.**

In question 5 above, I described building the coalition that beat back great opposition and money to keep 236 moderate-income families in Rockville's Fireside Park Apartments. Let me give you two more examples, one current and one that continues to resonate:

- I have led the move to shift Rockville elections to presidential election years. I wrote the question for the Charter Review Commission to consider and wrote the advisory ballot question for voters to consider last fall. I am now writing the resolution to make the actual change. Moving elections will do more to expand the voter base than anything else we can do. We will be putting a Rockville city ballot in front of thousands more voters on a day when these folks are already out voting. We will end up with an electorate that is bigger and more diverse and better represents the city of Rockville.

- I completely support full civil rights, including marriage, for the LGBTQ community and have made this historic battle a centerpiece of my public life. I was an active participant in Equality Maryland's successful campaign for marriage equality. I organized a group called Rockville for Equality in Marriage that distributed yard signs promoting the passage of Question 6 on the 2012 ballot. For a month, my family and I even hosted volunteers who flew in from Scotland to canvass on the question. The opportunity to provide leadership on this fight is one of the principal reasons I serve in public office. Achieving serious progress in LGBTQ rights is the defining struggle of my generation.