

## QUESTIONNAIRE FOR COUNTY COUNCIL CANDIDATES 2014 Elections

### Progressive Neighbors

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#### **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?

***Since we have hit the charter and state limits on property and income taxes, and the energy tax is truly regressive, in my view, I believe we need to continue to grow the job base.***

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?

***My priorities do not change based on fiscal times. I rank education first, followed by safety net, transportation and libraries. When we had to deal with the recession, we shaved dollars from all of them, regrettably. Education is most important to children's and the county's success; safety net services are our moral obligation to help the needy; transportation - primarily bus services – allows community mobility to jobs in particular; and libraries are the source of knowledge and access to information for everyone.***

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

***We provide income-based waivers and exemptions in nearly all areas of fees and taxes, except for the energy tax.***

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

***We have just initiated a Workforce Investment Board-based effort to realign services and programs for youth who are not in the workforce. I hope this will help. I'll continue to push for additional programs and services, particularly job training, in low income areas. And I am particularly interested in ideas coming out of the recent Poverty Conference, especially based on the experience of the Buffalo PUSH project.***

### **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?

***We have worked with the renters on an action plan on these items, and the Department of Housing and Community Affairs is implementing a number of improvements. For example, the Department of Housing and Community Affairs has modified its annual rent survey to understand better the challenges that renters experience.***

### **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?

***On BRT we have required community advisory groups on each***

***route. However, there is no funding plan beyond application to the federal government and the state. On the Purple Line, the President's Budget includes initial funding for the Purple Line. Now we need to see if Congress follows through with the appropriation. Funding the CCT is a work in progress that we may be able to manage with state resources and through a special taxing district imposed on businesses and new development. We are seeking authority to exceed the charter limit with this in Annapolis.***

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

***Historically, alternatives to single occupancy vehicle job trips have been required as part of regulatory review of new projects. Periodically, the county has engaged in a full-fledged marketing campaign to encourage 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?

***The delegation has not prioritized Montgomery County's financial needs. You would do well to ask the delegation about this.***

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?

***As I noted above, we have just directed the department of Economic Development to put together an action plan involving MCPS, the disparate groups, and the approximately 72 programs associated with this effort to develop a revamped and coordinated approach. The plan is due December 1.***

### **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

***We have been working on these issues for many years through the regulatory and master plan processes. We are constantly debating these policies and their solutions. However, as technology changes, communities evolve, and more information becomes available, we always need to question past assumptions about the right solutions and be ready to try new approaches. I believe we need to do a better job of integrating planning efforts with the often disparate regulatory efforts in the areas you have identified. These days, nearly every development matter must be seen through a lens that includes concern about the listed issues, as well as job growth, our growing ethnic and economic diversity, fiscal sustainability, economic justice, and affordability.***

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? ***That is what our community based master plan process is all about--establishing community priorities and finding the appropriate balance, community by community. Engaging members of the affected communities is a hallmark of our master planning process. We will assuredly require future development to maximize tree canopy and stay out of protected watersheds.***

12. How would you ensure that the Agricultural Reserve continues to be viable as an economic center and environmentally protected area? ***The Agricultural Reserve will continue to be protected by our limits on water and sewer and our Transfer of Development Rights program. Further, we included new provisions in our rewrite of the zoning ordinance to enhance the feasibility of economically sustainable agricultural activities. In addition, the Farming at Metro's Edge effort has illuminated some more pathways to economically successful farming.***

### 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? **Yes. Workforce training is also terribly important, as well as a general open arms approach to the cultural and religious needs of the immigrant community.**

### 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? **All full Council and Council committee meetings are now televised live either on television or on County Cable Montgomery's Web site. Recordings of all meetings are available on demand. This service was recently upgraded to enable access on mobile devices too. We could probably improve our Town Hall schedule to be out in more parts of the community more frequently.**

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 am not so personally sanguine that there is any easy answer to this. I would personally prefer a totally publicly financed election process, with campaigning limited to a certain period of time, and the prohibition of campaigning, advisories, or other advocacy by any group of any sort. Period. However, that all runs afoul of the First Amendment, and advocacy groups will always find a way around the restrictions as they have at the federal level. As someone mentioned at our public hearing on campaign financing, the real challenge is obtaining the attention of and accurately educating the voting public about their options.**

### 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?

***I have a track record of working on behalf of, and with Montgomery County residents for the past 30 years, including 8 years on the Planning Board, 12 years on the County Council, and many years as a community activist. I have served as PTA president, and as a board member of Montgomery Housing Partnership, the Montgomery Parks Foundation, and the Jewish Council on Aging. In addition, as their attorney, I have represented community groups throughout the county - Silver Spring, Olney, Darnestown, Montgomery Village, Potomac to name a few - in advancing their concerns.***

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

- Why do you think that this organization should support your candidacy?
- Give an example of a progressive issue that you have supported in the past 5 years.

***Progressive Neighbors should support me because I have a long history of effective law making, master planning, community engagement and leadership. The most recent "progressive issue" that I supported was the minimum wage bill.***