

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR COUNTY COUNCIL CANDIDATES

Responses of Roger Berliner, Democratic Candidate, Council District 1

Budget & Tax

1. Do you support raising revenues through more progressive tax and fee structures to preserve County services and programs instead of focusing solely on making cuts? How specifically would you do this without unduly adding to the burden of moderate and modest income County residents?

I believe our current progressive tax structure is appropriate. Given the current economic climate, I do not think raising taxes is a good idea, but we do need to look for creative ways to raise new revenue which is why I proposed a carbon tax which the Council passed this spring. This tax is estimated to generate approximately 15 million dollars for the County.

2. Do you support, at the state level, imposition of a 'millionaire's tax,' requiring upper income residents to pay higher taxes?

I supported the millionaire's tax when it went into effect during my tenure on the Council.

3. If you believe that some cutbacks are necessary, please explain how you would prioritize cuts to the County budget, including cuts to "safety net" programs, education cuts, and other human services. What specific programs and services would you cut?

Education, public safety and safety net services have always been my budget priorities and I believe the budgets passed during my service on the Council reflect those priorities. Due to the nationwide recession, our County revenues have plummeted and left the County facing a billion dollar deficit. As a result, numerous cuts to services and programs were necessary but education, public safety, and safety net services for the most vulnerable were protected to the maximum extent possible. And more cuts will need to be made in FY 12. That is why I proposed the Montgomery County Organizational Reform Commission which the Council passed this spring. This Commission, comprised of County residents, will take a hard look at County services and programming and make suggestions for ways the County can achieve greater efficiencies and savings.

Affordable Housing

1. What programs and policies do you support to preserve the existing stock of affordable rental housing in the County and stop its further decline? Do you have a plan for increasing the number of affordable housing units in the County? If yes, please explain.

I have been a strong supporter of the Housing Initiative Fund and have spent a lot of time

thinking of ways to tackle our affordable housing challenges in the County. One way I think we could increase the number of affordable units is to utilize County owned facilities and properties whenever feasible. I have encouraged the Executive Branch to collocate affordable housing whenever a new County facility such as a library or a police station is being planned and constructed.

2. Do you support mandatory reporting of rents and other increases by landlords with 4 or more units? Do you support making the County's voluntary rent guidelines mandatory based on the cost-of-living, or some other method of rent stabilization with reasonable exceptions?

Yes, I support reporting of rents and other increases by landlords. I understand the perspective of those who believe that rent stabilization is necessary, but I do not believe there is sufficient evidence of a countywide problem to justify rent control at this time.

3. Have you read the March 2010 Tenants Work Group Report?

(http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/Content/EXEC/TWG/pdf/twg_report_3-2010.pdf)

Which, if any, of the recommendations contained in the Report do you support?

I support the reporting requirements, the "just cause eviction" recommendation, and the formation of a tenants advocacy group.

4. Do you support State enabling legislation which would allow Montgomery County to pass county-level "just cause eviction" legislation to allow evictions only for specified reasons such as non-payment of rent or on-site criminal activity? If the legislation is passed at the state level, would you support just cause eviction legislation in Montgomery County?

If the intent is to protect tenants from discrimination and abuse, then I support the intent of such legislation, but I would need to see the exact language of such a bill before I could say I support it or not.

Transportation & Infrastructure

1. Do you support the expansion of public transit, including building the Purple Line, CCT, and Bus Rapid Transit?

Yes, I am a strong supporter of transit expansion. I have supported that Purple Line, the CCT, and was a very early supporter of Councilmember Elrich's BRT proposal. I have also encouraged State officials to declare Rockville Pike a "Sustainable Transportation

Corridor” which would transform the Pike into a walkable, bike-friendly corridor with transit such as BRT up the middle. We simply must find ways to get people out of their cars if we are to grow in a sustainable manner moving forward.

2. What other ways would you expand the building and usage of public transportation in the County?

We should be providing incentives to residents to use public transportation if affordable. We should focus growth on transit oriented development that is coupled with strong mode share goals. We must keep investing in existing transit services such as ride-on and keep planning for the future by advocating for the implementation of a BRT system in the County. We must also work closely with our State delegation to ensure funding for the Purple Line and the CCT.

3. Do you support tax or other incentives to promote telework, vanpools, and carpools?

Absolutely. And I believe our county lags other jurisdictions in its support of telework among our own workforce.

Education

1. What measures do you support to maintain the high quality of education in Montgomery County Public Schools, given the current budget situation?

Maintaining an excellent school system is paramount for our County. In addition to the educational benefits of a high quality education for our County's students, a reputable school system helps attract new businesses and residents to the county, thus aiding the overall health and vitality of our economy. Education has and always will be a top priority for the County - both in terms of funding the MCPS operating budget and ensuring a robust capital improvements program to ensure our teachers and students have access to modern facilities.

New Development

1. Do you support the recent increases in school and transportation impact fees?

Yes, I believe these fees are necessary to help fund needed infrastructure and public facilities. I supported a trigger in the growth policy that requires school impact fees when a

school cluster reaches 105% of capacity despite a recommendation from the Board of Education and Planning Board that the threshold be higher.

2. Do you support assessments of infrastructure, service, health, environmental, human, and small business impacts prior to approval of new developments? Yes.

3. What changes in the County Master Plan do you support to promote smart, sensible, environmentally sound, and managed growth?

As our county continues to grow, I believe that we must focus on transit oriented, mixed use development. We must invest in mass transit and build livable, walkable, bike-friendly communities like envisioned in the approved White Flint master Plan.

The White Flint plan will provide a model of smart growth that can hopefully be replicated in other areas of the County. We need to get people out of their cars by enabling them to live close to their work and improve our jobs-housing ratio. I am committed to supporting master plans that embrace smart growth objectives and environmentally sound policies.

4. How do you propose to prevent displacement in communities along the route of the Purple Line, such as Long Branch and Langley Park, if the Purple Line is built?

I have worked diligently with the communities in District 1 and other communities that will be affected by the Purple Line to minimize adverse impacts. There is no question that the development of the trail and transit combination will change the character of the right of way as we know it today. It's proximity to homes and businesses will have impacts but we must and will continue to mitigate these effects as best we can we move forward to the design and implementation of the Purple Line.

Elections

1. If State enabling legislation is passed, would you support campaign finance reform in Montgomery County, including publicly funded campaigns for County races?

I am a supporter of campaign finance reform, have been a strong advocate of giving the county authority to pursue it, and do support public financing.

2. Do you support such State enabling legislation?

see above

3. Do you support legislation making monthly reporting of campaign contributions

mandatory for candidates for County office? Whether such legislation is passed or not, will you pledge to make such monthly reports in this and future campaigns?

During an election year, I would support additional reporting requirements. I would be open to making more frequently reports available if all candidates agreed to do the same.

1. Do you support issuing a publicly-financed voter guide, prepared by an independent body, with candidate statements and information that would go to all registered voters?

Yes, if it was not cost prohibitive. A better educated voter is a good thing.

Immigration

1. Do you support equal access to education and other County services for all County residents regardless of immigration status?

That is the County's current policy. All children in Montgomery County are welcome in our school system and deserving of an education.

2. Do you support the policy of not asking or checking immigration status unless there is a felony charge arrest?

I have had conversations with the Police Chief on this very issue and understand and respect the County Executive and the Police Department's judgment and policies on this set of issues. Immigration enforcement is a federal responsibility.

3. 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?

Yes, I believe the integration of our immigrant population is in the best interests of our County and I support such programs.

4. Do you support legislation making Montgomery County a "sanctuary county?" (In a sanctuary county, no agent, officer or employee of the county may assist the U.S. Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement in the investigation or arrest of any persons for violation of the U.S. immigration and nationality laws.)

No - I would not support such legislation.

Agricultural Reserve

- 1. Do you support the protection of the County Agricultural Reserve including additional protections against development for the Reserve or do you think current restrictions are sufficient?**

I wholeheartedly support the protection of the Agricultural Reserve and believe we have strong restrictions and appropriate funding mechanisms in place. I believe we need to further restrict the sale of "child" lots as well as ensure that the use of "sand mounds" does not turn the Ag. Reserve into suburbia.

Other

- 1. Why should an organization such as ours, which supports progressive policies and representatives, endorse you in this race?**

Your organization should endorse me because I am the progressive candidate in this race. I have been a progressive all of my adult life, coming to Washington to try to defeat Jesse Helms for the United States Senate in 1972, and subsequently serving as Legislative Director for United States Senator Howard Metzenbaum, the most progressive Senator of his era, and Chairman Henry Waxman. My opponent, on the other hand, just became a Democrat two years ago.

On the Council, I have continued to push the progressive agenda, including sponsoring the first carbon tax in the country which should raise \$15 million from our biggest polluter to use for high priority budget needs, including transit. My opponent criticizes me for that groundbreaking measure. I am proud of the support of the progressive elements of our community, including United States Senator Ben Cardin, Governor O'Malley, every member of the District 15, 16 and 18 delegations, County Executive Leggett, the teachers, SEIU, the AFL-CIO, and ATU.

I would welcome your support for the only progressive candidate in District 1.