

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR COUNTY COUNCIL CANDIDATES

Responses of Sharon Dooley, Democratic Candidate, Council District 2

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?

The Progressive tax has been debated over the last 4 years and I have heard the Cty Exec claim that it will lose our most highly paid residents because many of them have multiple homes and will just call another their principal residence. If you don't believe this is happening – look at the number of Florida plates coming out of Leisure World and other places. I think a progressive tax may hurt us in the long run, especially since our income tax revenue this year was 21% lower than expected. Real estate taxes are also flat, so I think this is the wrong question for this year.

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

I want to find a dedicated source to guarantee the social safety net funding, such as licenses paid to the health dept. or some such. I would also require that a portion of funding come from the group itself in local fund raising. I would look to find and cut any redundant services and look to save by consolidation of such things as motor pools. I also want a line item look at school budgets.

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 would like to see public private partnerships go into run down neighborhoods and re-vitalize them and make them into up to code affordable homes. I would like to find a legal way to decrease the condo conversions; actually the economy has done much of that as the numbers have drastically slowed down since the boom years. If legally possible, mandate retention of ten per cent or so for elderly residents who have lived in apts. for more than ten years and have few options regarding affordable moves.

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?

Again the county has shown a reluctance to demand rent control and only Takoma Park has made it happen. 4 units is pretty small – perhaps we could look to regulate land owners who own more than one building or a complex before we looked to impose controls. There may also be a range where it was not used – such as in Bethesda where rents can be several thousands. Would the imposition reduce the length of leases so new tenants can be brought in at higher rents; is this an unintended consequence that has been considered?

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?

YES.

The report was quite illuminating, especially the case study. I support enacting the provisions as much as possible, given the current economic climate and the reluctance of the council to establish new programs right now. I would also urge that adequate data be maintained, senior units especially be rent stabilized, as actions depriving seniors of their social network is isolating. The suggestion of zip coding the voluntary rent guidelines is certainly worth while as is requiring the LTO to keep statistical data on computer files regarding types of disputes, parties involved and any resolution.

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? **Yes**

Transportation & Infrastructure

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

YES

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

Increase community Ride-ons instead of more cuts – don’t expect the system to be self sustaining. Actually collect fees as riders say fare boxes don’t work 30% of the time. Create more transit centers and park ‘n’ ride lots at the Howard County and Frederick County lines with Express buses and Van pools as is done now with the MTA in Howard County.

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

All of them should be utilized as viable options.

Education

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

With the MCPS taking up to 57% of our county revenue, non classroom expenses must be closely scrutinized. I would like to see a line item expense budget, even though I know the council cannot change it, I think transparency might eventually save money. We need to maintain high standards and reasonable classroom sizes. I would like to see where consolidation of services could save money.

New Development

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

YES

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

That seems to be both ambitious and reasonable. Who would pay for these assessments? Would they make projects more expensive? I would need to know more about this.

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

I believe that the regional Master Plans can address this issue. The plan to have density in Metro Zones and mixed use zoning or CR zones have been approved already.

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?

The line should be constructed with community input in order to reduce the displacement. There will apparently be some as all routes have residences nearby; even if the line were underground, which is quite expensive, some homes would be lost. I do not believe that it can totally be prevented.

Elections

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

YES

2. Do you support such State enabling legislation?

YES

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?

No – Treasurers are volunteers and having been a treasurer, I think that would be very difficult. If I had just to report a bill for website hosting and had to file a report each month a year after an election, that is just too much reporting. Waiting from

year to year is quite long and in an election year, January to August and then 3 reports in 6 weeks makes no sense, but quarterly reports would be OK, especially if there were no contributions at some interval, one could simply state nothing to report. Sometimes we go over board in trying to correct perceived inequities.

4. 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?

Doesn't the League of Women Voters already do this and make it available in libraries? Are you asking for it to be mailed to every voter? Possibly the financing for sending it out could be done through some foundation, but I do not think it should be public financing, when we are in such tight times.

Immigration

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

YES.

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

YES

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

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.)

I would need to know more about this.

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?

As I understand it, if restrictions were enforced, the Ag Reserve would not be endangered. What additional protections are proposed?

Other

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

I have lived in this county for more than 30 years. I have seen it grow, change, become both more urban and more diverse as I raised my two children and had a consulting business in this county. I have been a part of the fabric of the community and volunteerism that makes this county great. I just served two years as the President of GOCA, the Greater Olney Civic Association and have been part of the group that has had to address ICC issues as they impacted our area.

I have also served on the Board of Mobile Med, helped start the Olney Farmers Market, started an advocacy group - Upcounty Action, and host an informative TV Show on Montgomery County Cable Channel 21 called Upcounty Perspective.

I have volunteered for non-profits, health care issues and fair voting. I have worked in health care my entire career, starting out with ten years as a nurse at DC General; I know what happens to those who have no health care or access to services. I taught for ten years in work-force development at Montgomery College and helped my students find jobs.

I have worked for progressive candidates and causes and am now asking for your support. Many people only support District Council candidates if they are in their District. But our county is linked across many lines. Transportation problems unique to my upcounty area transfer down county to crowded Metro parking lots; lack of adequate housing in one area may cause another area to be over crowded. Educational concerns are county-wide. Public Safety issues are present both in Takoma Park and Germantown, so we are linked and need to be able to provide support for each others' issues. I may not agree with every issue espoused by every group, but I pledge to have an open door and an open mind.