

QUESTIONNAIRES FOR COUNTY COUNCIL CANDIDATES

Responses of Jane de Winter, At-Large Democratic Candidate

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?**

Yes, I support a progressive tax structure. While it is the state, not the council that has the power to make this change, I would support changing the structure of the state income tax (and consequently the piggyback tax) to be more progressive. At the county level I support the use of credits on property tax bills to attempt to achieve more progressivity. However, this is really an imprecise tool since income is not always correlated with the value of one's home.

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

While, I support changing the structure of the state income tax (and consequently the piggyback tax) to be more progressive I think this tax was counterproductive since most of the money went from Montgomery County to the state and little came back to help the residents of our county.

- 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 think that safety net services and public safety are the highest priority followed by education and other spending that invests in our future. While I am willing to consider further cuts, I believe it is prudent to see how the cuts made in FY11 play out for a couple of months to get a better sense of which programs will not be able to sustain further cuts and should be off the table for FY12 cuts.

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.**

We really need to be constantly adding new units because there will be some natural decline of the existing stock. I understand the redevelopment often replaces affordable housing with much more expensive units and I think we need to look for new ways to provide affordable housing such as working with non-profit developers who are able to utilize existing federal loan and tax credit programs to build affordable housing and this may also involve providing county land for such projects. The primary way to make the cost of housing more affordable is to increase the supply of housing. There are a number of ways to do so, such as: changes to

the accessory apartment approval process; continuing the MPDU and workforce housing programs; and supporting HOC initiatives.

When County Executive Duncan asked the Board of Education to declare a parcel of land on Edson Lane, which was part of the Tilden MS site, surplus so that it could be used for affordable housing many neighbors fought this request. As Walter Johnson Cluster Coordinator and then Tilden PTSA President, I guided the PTA response which was to ask that a right of way for another exit from the school be preserved but not to oppose the use of the land for affordable housing

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?

I support the mandatory reporting of rents and would like to see improvements in the collection method to make it easier to report and to use the information. I would like to look into the issue of month to month rentals vs longer leases, however, I do not support rent control for privately owned, privately financed properties.

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 have read this report and attended the full council meeting while the report was presented. There are a number of recommendations that I would like to pursue such as improved communications and notifications and accessibility issues; items regarding code updates, enforcement, and compliance; and requirements re security deposits and inspections. It would be helpful to have an advocacy group which represents tenants to work with on these issues.

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?

I would support "just cause eviction" legislation at the state and local level and would like to work with stakeholders on the specifics as well as legislation on retaliatory evictions.

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 transit supporter.

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

We should do whatever we can to leverage available federal and state funds. We need to

explore the use of additional transportation taxing districts which should be tied to transportation projects in their respective areas. I would tie transportation projects identified in Master Plans with the Capital Improvements Plan. Much of the backlog of County transportation projects is state funded projects and moving forward on the backlog, given the dire conditions of the transportation trust fund, will be dependent on addressing state transportation trust fund issues first.

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

Yes, and we should be pressing the state and federal government to address this with their workforce too. Not all incentives are the responsibility of the public sector. For example, if additional density is granted to a development project in return for lower auto trip generation, then the responsibility for ensuring the lower number of trips passes from the public sector to the private sector.

Education

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

I am a long time education advocate and have been extremely involved in the development of the school system budget. I believe one of the first steps is for the Council and the Board of Education to work together in a more collaborative way and for the Board of Education to be more involved in their own budget development process. If the Council decries and denounces the BOE, then it undermines the support our school system needs in the larger community. In the short run we need to make sure direct classroom instruction is impacted as little as possible.

New Development

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

Yes, and I led the Montgomery County Council of PTAs in advocating for higher impact fees in 2007.

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

While I am concerned about the impacts of new developments, I am not in favor of expanding the size of our government to perform a new level of formal assessments at the current time. We already do assess a number of these impacts. I have been looking into how the county works with small businesses that may be displaced during redevelopment. I have always been a strong supporter of community input and believe that listening to people always improves the process and the outcome.

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

I support directing growth to areas served by transit; the inclusion of adequate amenities including green space; provisions that promote walkability and bicycles; and staging or other measures that require the Council to fund the infrastructure necessary to support growth. I

have advocated for school construction and adequate public facilities for years. As a trained economist I believe there is room for improvement in the analyses of economic benefits that have recently been offered to the council during Master Plan discussions.

3. 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?

This is an area where we need to work hard to achieve the dual goals of putting more density along transit to serve more people but not outpricing the existing community. The Purple Line is intended to serve the people of this community.

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. I think this would be more of a burden on first time candidates than incumbents just due to the expertise and time commitment it takes to do this. There may be reporting dates that make more sense than the current ones.

- 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?**

The League of Women Voters prepares such a guide and they have struggled in recent years to raise enough money to cover the costs of printing and mailing their guide. I would support public funds for this printing.

Immigration

- 1. Do you support equal access to education and other County services for all County residents regardless of immigration status?**
Yes, although I know that some county agencies administer programs that must follow federal and/or state guidelines.
- 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, I have been speaking about the need for more English language programs in the county and the need to make sure that programs are accessible to people both financially and geographically. MCAEL reports that it is difficult to find locations in the Gaithersburg and

Germantown areas; these areas are particularly underserved. Learning English is a years long process but can significantly increase one's earning potential. The pay back to providing this service is substantial.

- 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 really have to look into the issue before I could answer this. I have spoken with many people, immigrants included, who support the deportation of violent offenders and I'm not sure how sanctuary laws would affect this. I want to see immigration reform; my father is an immigrant who would not have been permitted to immigrate had his family not moved from Holland to Argentina following WWII so I have always been very sympathetic to people facing the vagaries of immigration law.

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 support the protection of the Agriculture Reserve. In my opinion the current protections are adequate if enforced.

Other

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

I am a lifelong Progressive Democrat and share your values. As an Economist I understand the implications, fiscal and otherwise of decisions and advocacy positions which allows me to engage with people on all sides of an issue. Throughout my years of service to the community, my hallmarks have been to listen carefully; to balance the needs of many constituencies; and to build consensus in order to move forward with positive action.