



Nancy Floreen (D), Montgomery County Council, At-Large Incumbent

Environmental Views

Note from Conservation Montgomery:

Council Member Floreen opted to write a letter to address her views about some of the issues raised in our questionnaire. Her e-mailed letter is below.

August 24, 2010

Dear Conservation Montgomery:

Thanks for including me in your questionnaire survey. Because nearly all the questions involve thoughtful weighing of priorities and complex conversations, I think it is most appropriate to respond with more than a 'yes' or 'no'.

You all are wonderfully and tremendously engaged advocates for our community, and so you know me better than most. You know that I do my homework, read your emails and letters, meet with you regularly, call you directly when I have questions, personally read every relevant report that I can find, listen carefully to testimony and ask relevant questions and try to find a way to respond in a thoughtful manner to whatever is on the table.

Community activism:

I believe that citizen activists in this county are great and do a terrific job in getting us to a better place on most issues. I encourage new voices all the time because some folks feel excluded from the decision making and public process and it is my job to include them. (Of course, I started out as a civic activist with my 801 Wayne Avenue case in the '80s, and have represented many community groups as their advocate over the years when I was in private practice.)

County positioning:

Fundamentally, I believe that the county is in a pretty good position to deal with the future, dedicated to preserving environmental quality and limiting development through the master plan process. As a former Planning Board member I will be the first to admit that I continue to be committed to the master plan process, and I will resist attempts to circumvent it.

One of the reasons I ran for the Council in 2002 was my belief that previous capital budgets failed to allocate the resources necessary to grow infrastructure. I have been fighting for that since I have arrived, and believe we have made some strides in that area - although failing state and federal transportation assistance is making it difficult to proceed as rapidly as we would like. I think a statewide gas tax increase is the only way we will get anywhere. WMATA officials remind me that dedicated infrastructure funding streams do not always do the job in other places in the nation, so I remain open on the best way to ensure that we get WMATA the funding it needs (more of a federal contribution should be required). We, of course, have a myriad of other infrastructure needs as well that the state is neglecting, and, worse, has withdrawn gas tax funding for the next several years as it uses that revenue to balance the state budget.

Council Performance:

I think we have done the best anyone could. Under difficult circumstances we have found a way to balance the budget in a time of extreme fiscal stress, and have worked through a myriad of issues as carefully as we could. We have delayed various master plans as they have come to us in order to receive continued community advice and a pretty strong consensus has emerged at the end of the day on most issues we deal with. Could we do more – of course!

Resource and environmental protection:

As you know, we have approved the new storm water rules, increased the Water Quality Protection charge to support our contribution to protecting streams and the Bay and are regularly getting your advice on the best next steps.

WSSC continues to be a challenge, but know that in times of extreme fiscal stress we have continued to raise rates for infrastructure improvement purposes.

Trees:

I think that the current initiative to provide incentives to protect trees is a good one, although we could use your help – and that of all civic associations in publicizing the fact that discounted trees are available, encouraging residents to take care of what they do have, and helping them select the right kind of trees for planting. While Pepco is currently blaming us all for not doing a better job on tree pruning (and tree maintenance is indeed very important) I continue to agree that a strong tree canopy is a key contributor to environmental and energy conservation success. Street trees and tree maintenance have been hard hit in the funding decisions we have had to make. I hope we can restore the funding in the future.

Ten Mile Creek:

I support looking at the Ten Mile Creek issue through the planning process, and I hope that the community review process will result in a satisfactory location for the upcountry bus depot. As you may know, we have been unable to add additional buses to the fleet for years due to the lack of storage and maintenance space.

Regional Cooperation:

Could we do a better job in agreeing with our neighbors on policy issues? I do not know the answer to that one. As a member of the Council of Governments and related Committees for years, I can tell you that our neighbors have very different views of the world, and are not necessarily congruent with Montgomery County. Nonetheless, we continue to talk together and work together on issues of joint concern.

M-83

M-83 is on our Master Plan. The ongoing study will identify whether we really need it. If we don't, I am fine with removing it from the master plans.

Park and Planning:

As a former member of the Planning Board, I believe in its mission as an apolitical planning department and decision maker.

I am committed to moving forward with concern on all the environmental issues that face the county, and I hope we can restore funding to the Parks department in the future.

Since the State tends to have more generous requirements than Montgomery County, I do not see us recommending that they supersede local requirements.

As for the Chesapeake Bay cleanup, I think our new storm water rules should help a great deal, but would be interested in your suggestions for additional efforts.

Thank you again for your engagement in the community, and I hope you find these explanations helpful. Don't hesitate to let me know if I can provide you with more information.

Best,

Nancy Floreen

Montgomery County Council President, Member At-Large

Collected as public information by Conservation Montgomery, Inc.

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