



Robin Ficker (R), Montgomery County Council District 2 Candidate

Environmental Views

1. Do you believe that the county is in a position to meet the challenges that growth has placed on our natural resources and neighborhoods?

No

2. Given that the pressures on Metro's Red Line have become severe in recent years, with the growth in Montgomery County's residential sector creating big increases in Metro ridership, which of the following policies will you actively support and promote:

Adopting policies to encourage jobs growth rather than housing growth in Montgomery, so that more riders on the Red Line will come north for jobs in the morning, and travel back south to the District or Prince George's County in the evening (the available capacity on the Red Line is in these directions and times).

3. What is your perspective regarding citizen activists in the county and their role in governance? Check all answers that apply.

I rely on them.

I am one of those people.

4. How would you rate the performance of the current Council over the past four years? If you are an incumbent, give your most candid assessment and supply comments to suggest ways the Council could improve as a body over the next four years. Also, please provide examples for your answers whether you are an incumbent or a challenger.

The Council has not always acted in the best interest of the public.

The Council has been irresponsible, particularly in financial matters.

The Council could do a lot more to support the growth of green businesses and green jobs.

They have supported monster developments at West Gaithersburg and White Flint and are about to support the monster plan at Germantown. Their first reaction after the election will be to raise property taxes.

5. Please provide a brief assessment of the performance of the County Executive over the past four years related to environmental and quality of life issues. Supply comments if desired.

Environmental issues have not been a priority for the Executive.

6. If you are elected, will you introduce and support legislation geared toward quality of life issues as they relate to natural resource conservation? If so, describe in the comment field what you have in mind.

Yes

Oppose the monster plans.

7. Roughly 2/5 of the land that drains into the Anacostia River is in Montgomery County. The Anacostia is one of our nation's most polluted rivers. There is a plan to clean it up that recommends 3,000 specific restoration projects, including 1,700 "low-impact," green infrastructure projects like rain garden retrofits for parking lots. Will you support Montgomery County's role in the Anacostia Restoration Plan, including in allocating necessary funds from the County budget, along with working for State and Federal funding, in order to ensure that these crucial retrofits will be built?

Yes

8. The 2010 stormwater permit issued to Montgomery County by the Maryland Department of the Environment is the result of a four-year collaborative effort on the part of the Stormwater Partners, DEP and other agencies. In order to ensure the success of this important pollution clean-up mandate, will you support annual increases in the Water Quality Protection Charge (now at \$45.50 per household per year)?

No

9. Our region has experienced a record number of water main breaks in recent years, some of them catastrophic, and WSSC has warned repeatedly that this trend will accelerate unless we approve the funding increases

necessary to fill the massive backlog of deferred maintenance. WSSC has for many years, requested that both of its counties, Montgomery and Prince Georges, support and enact an Infrastructure Renewal Fund. While Montgomery has traditionally supported higher rate increases for WSSC than has Prince George's, neither County has yet supported or achieved establishment of the absolutely crucial Infrastructure Renewal Fund at the levels requested by WSSC. Will you support establishment of the WSSC Infrastructure Renewal Fund at the level required to rebuild and maintain our water and sewer infrastructure?

Yes

Take money from WSSC benefits and put it into the Fund.

10. Montgomery County faces a conundrum when it comes to future land use. We have residential green wedges and the Agricultural Reserve to protect. In the 1980s, the county lost a significant amount of forests to development. The Forest Conservation Law has made some progress in terms of protecting or replanting forest in the Up County. However, with shifting development patterns and about 6% of land left in the county for new development, there is a need to protect trees in urban areas. What approach would you recommend increase the tree canopy in the Down County?

plant more trees

11. What types of development would you be most supportive of from the list below? Choose two.

Redevelopment/adaptive re-use of previously developed land (Downtown Silver Spring is a good example.)

Business and industrial or technology centers

12. Ten Mile Creek in the Clarksburg area, straddles the Agricultural Reserve, and is the last best creek in Montgomery County, according to surveys by both County biologists and citizen stream monitors. Ten Mile Creek has more diversity and abundance of fish, aquatic bugs, and amphibians than other creeks throughout the County, and it is part of our Little Seneca Reservoir backup Drinking Water Supply. Montgomery County has proposed a huge bus depot and transportation equipment maintenance facility for the Ten Mile Creek watershed, near the existing County Jail. Environmental and civic groups have called on Montgomery County to find another location for the depot and to split up the dual-purpose facility if that is what it takes to protect Ten Mile Creek. Do you support moving the proposed County Bus Depot to a location outside of fragile Ten Mile Creek watershed?

Yes

13. As called for in the 1994 Clarksburg Master Plan, Montgomery must now apply the lessons learned from Clarksburg Town Center development, including the pollution of streams and loss of groundwater, in deciding how to proceed for Ten Mile Creek. The Ad-Hoc Water Quality Working Group report was issued in July 2010 to the Council. In this report, members of civic, environmental groups and county agencies called for a Master Plan amendment (already recommended by the Planning Board in the summer of 2009) that will enable the County to apply protections proven to work in Upper Paint Branch and Upper Rock Creek. Will you support a Master Plan Amendment in order to apply necessary protections to Ten Mile Creek? Please explain why or why not.

Yes

clean water

14. Do you believe Montgomery County goes far enough to work collaboratively with adjacent jurisdictions (meaning other counties, cities and towns and state and federal parkland) to address environmental/quality of life concerns? Use the comment field to be more specific about our current efforts.

No, we can do more and should reach out to our adjacent counties more for information-sharing and best practices.

15. Does Montgomery County do a good job of integrated regional planning when it comes to setting the policy agenda for natural resource issues? Please explain your answer in the comment field and provide ideas as to what more we can and should be doing in this regard.

No

The Anacostia River is a disgrace.

16. M-83 is a proposed highway project that could slice across parts of the Montgomery County Agricultural Reserve, increase sprawl in the Up County, and otherwise wreak havoc on our remaining high-quality rural streams in its path. Environmental groups including Audubon Naturalist Society and local landowners, including Day Spring Silent Retreat Center, oppose M-83 and want it removed from the plans. Do you support or oppose M-83? Please state your reasons in either case.

Oppose

Have not yet decided.

17. What do you think are the two most pressing issues facing Montgomery County in terms of quality of life and protection of our natural resources?

The Monster Plans at West Gaithersburg, White Flint and Germantown are going to lead to unstoppable pressure to develop the green parts of the county.

18. What role do you see the Maryland-National Capital Parks and Planning Commission in regarding the relationship to the Council in the future? Would you like to see changes at M-NCPPC? If so, please explain in the comments field.

M-NCPPC role should be a strong partnership with Council.

Planning Board should communicate more closely with the Council.

19. Montgomery County has been losing its street trees at a rapid pace, with the rate of replacement far below the rate of tree removal. Which of the policy options listed below do you support to replant and support a vibrant street tree program? (Check all that you support):

Change the current default situation: When a street tree is cut down, a tree is replanted only at the owner's request. Change this to a requirement for automatic replanting where a street tree has been taken down.

20. If you were to recommend budget cuts and could make cuts in one of the following program areas, which would it be? And please tell us why in the comments field.

Environmental education in county schools

The schools spend too much on administration. Focus on the classrooms.

21. Please rate your level of concern on each of the following environmental issues:

	Not concerned (1)	Somewhat unconcerned (2)	Somewhat concerned (3)	Very concerned (4)
Watershed protection and stormwater management				X
Loss of tree canopy in the County				X
Impacts of climate change and the need for county action		X		
Condition of street trees in County neighborhoods				X
Sustainable transportation				X
Parks and green space preservation				X
Energy efficiency in Montgomery County businesses and homes				X
Smart growth land use planning				X
Citizen involvement in environmental and quality of life issues				X
Walkable and bike-friendly neighborhoods				X

Other (please specify):

22. If you were to rank and prioritize the following in order of the top three most important, how would you rank these areas?

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)
Watershed protection	X		
Climate change impacts			
Increasing the county tree canopy		X	
Developing alternatives to reduce the number of daily car trips in the county			X

Other (please specify):

23. Montgomery County has an award-winning park system of nearly 35,000 acres. The Parks Department, under M-NCPPC, has demonstrated a strong commitment to stewardship of the wide range of natural resources within our parkland. But the County Council recently made budget cuts severe enough to endanger the continued maintenance of these resources. Do you support restoring vital funding to maintain our parks?

Yes

24. If you have any other environmental concerns/issues, please list them below.

The Monster Plans at West Gaithersburg, White Flint and Germantown are going to do in the environment.

25. What will get Montgomery County to the target of 80% in reduction of greenhouse gases by the year 2050 that is cited in our county Climate Action Plan? Choose the following policies that you will commit to supporting.

Increasing tree canopy to a healthy countywide percentage

Preservation of mature tree cover throughout the county, including protection of street trees in the right of way

Going full scale on community and business education on energy efficiency

Encouraging pedestrian and bicycle commuting

Working with adjacent cities and counties on a regional plan of action

Pressing for more state and federal funding for mass-transit projects

26. Are you supportive of the carbon tax recently passed in Montgomery County? Please tell us why you are or are not supportive of the legislation?

No

I would reduce the property tax by the amount of the carbon tax.

27. The current Montgomery County Forest Conservation Law only applies to tracts of land that are 40,000 square feet or larger, approximately one acre. Would you consider lowering the threshold to protect more forest?

Yes

28. Please tell us what you would consider to be a reasonable threshold for triggering a forestry law.

5,000 square feet

29. Have environmental concerns changed your voting patterns in the areas listed below? If you are not an incumbent, then please skip to the following question.

	Yes	No
Watershed protection	X	
Green building and Low Impact Development or LID	X	
Climate change impacts in and around Montgomery County	X	
Increasing tree canopy	X	
Energy efficiency	X	
Land use planning	X	
Pedestrian safety	X	

Other (please specify):

30. Please rate your agreement with the following statement:

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
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I would vote to support legislation that would strengthen tree and forestry laws in Montgomery County.

X

31. If you are not in favor of adopting stronger tree and forestry legislation, please explain your position and how you have come to this conclusion.

I live on a farm and have many acres of trees, so I know how important they are.

32. Should the State have more jurisdiction to regulate natural resources in Montgomery County?

No

33. Does the county need to be more active in terms of educating residents about energy consumption? If yes, please provide ideas as to how.

No Response

34. What are the solutions to addressing the cleanup of the Chesapeake Bay? What role should Montgomery County residents play, if any?

The Monster Plans at West Gaithersburg, White Flint and Germantown will result in more runoff and less green.

35. Can you recommend a proposal for action within the legislative and Executive branches of government in Montgomery County to address Chesapeake Bay restoration?

No Response

36. Please provide any additional comments you care to provide.

No Response

37. Please fill in your name.

Name - Robin Ficker