



Roger Berliner (D), Montgomery County Council District 1 Incumbent

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:

Supporting a region-wide gasoline tax to create a dedicated infrastructure fund for Metro.

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 wish that county residents had more trust in their elected officials.

We tend to see the "regulars" at hearings and meetings and it would be good to see more new faces.

They are the backbone of the County.

I rely on them.

I would like to see more of them.

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.

Overall, the Council made tough decisions in a highly unfavorable economic situation.

The Council has a balanced voting record on growth issues.

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

On almost every major development related issue, Councilmember Elrich and I have worked together to forge a winning coalition that I believe has resulted in a much more balanced approach. On question 2, it is the phrase "still has not made gains" that causes me pause. I do believe we have made some gains, but I certainly don't believe we are where we need to be. With respect to your third question, while I have not always agreed with my colleagues on issues, I do believe that they perceive their own positions to be "in the best interest of the public." On question 4, our Council has adopted virtually all of the County Executive's fiscal suggestions and, this year, we reduced spending by the most in the past 40 years.

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.

I would prefer not to answer.

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

While I am proud of the 8 environmental laws that I sponsored, our work is not done; my work is not done. One example: protecting our tree canopy has been a priority of mine for the past 4 years, but we have not yet made the progress that I hoped for. Our forest conservation law needs strengthening, and I remain hopeful that we will get that done. Example 2: we should also make sure that our enforcement mechanisms are tough enough and look to increase our fines. Finally, I look forward to the ongoing work of the Sustainability Working Group that my legislation created to guide us in future

actions.

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?

Not sure

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)?

Yes

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

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?

I am a strong supporter of protecting trees in our urban areas. I have championed, along with Councilmember Elrich, the concept of a local tree ordinance to complement the Forest Conservation Law. We have worked with members of your organization and builders. Ultimately, we concluded that the concept should be folded into the Forest Conservation law rewrite, which we hope will move forward this fall.

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

New residential development clustered around mass transit with adequate ratios for workforce or affordable housing

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

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

I think the evidence is clear that the level and placement of development as envisioned by the current plan is incompatible with the health of Ten Mile Creek and must be revised.

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.

Yes

I think we can do a better job. As a member of the Board of Directors of the Council of Governments, I have suggested that all of our jurisdictions ask themselves when they are acting on a natural resource issue or otherwise whether the action is consistent with and in furtherance of regional goals.

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

Because this project is in another district, it has not been on my radar screen like other more local and time sensitive issues. I recognize the concerns that have recently been brought to my attention, and I look forward to understanding the issues surrounding M-83 and the options in the years ahead.

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?

1. Mass Transit. Our county is not among the nation's leaders when it comes to mass transit, and we need to be for air quality and quality of life issues. Councilmember Elrich's BRT proposal must be at the heart of what we do going forward.
2. Water Quality/Sediment. We have major issues to resolve in Clarksburg, which makes this one of "the two most pressing issues". We can not allow development to proceed in any manner that would further risk 10 Mile Creek and this fragile eco-system.

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.

M-NCPPC should advise the County Executive more closely than in the past.

Planning Board should communicate more closely with the Council.

Planning Board should be more deferential to the Council.

The Planning Board does report to the Council and the Council does give the Planning Board direction and policy guidance. In that context, it is proper for the Planning Board to "defer" to the Council. However, on specific site plans and the Board's ongoing "regulatory" function, those are matters that are best left to the Board's discretion.

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):

Reorganize: Take the street tree program out of DOT and move it to the Parks Department or back to DEP.

Increase the funding level of the street tree program.

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

While I have approved budget cuts, and next year will be challenging, I will certainly be fighting to restore funding once we have regained our fiscal equilibrium.

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			X
Increasing the county tree canopy			
Developing alternatives to reduce the number of daily car trips in the county		X	

Other (please specify): While I have put "climate change impacts" third, focusing on climate change encompasses all of these items.

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.

No Response

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
Offering tax credits as incentives to businesses and residents reducing energy consumption
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

I am not comfortable with "requiring local business to allow teleworking", while I do favor being as aggressive as possible in this field.

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?

Yes

I sponsored it!

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.

10,000 square feet or more

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): My environmental concerns have always been one of the touchstones of my voting record.

30. Please rate your agreement with the following statement:

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
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 am in favor.

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.

Yes

Legislation can and will be effective -- at least at time of sale, when, as a result of my legislation, prospective homeowners will be given a year's worth of utility bills. This is also where our partnerships with non-profits and environmental organizations can be most helpful -- including organizations like Bethesda Green. In addition, I believe it is a responsibility of PEPCO and our Maryland Public Service Commission to help educate the public. Finally, the Home Energy Loan Program that I sponsored, should be, assuming we are able to overcome some of the federal hurdles, an effective instrument to both educate residents and reduce consumption. We are also funding, thru our federal block grant dollars, "energy ambassadors" to educate the public.

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

The solutions to addressing the cleanup of the Bay are multi-dimensional and multi-jurisdictional. We need strong federal leadership and funding, which Senator Cardin is providing and proposing; and we need to attack it from all segments: air, sediment, nitrogen/phosphorus, storm water runoff. Each of these last four are solutions that our residents can help address.

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

Of the contributing factors to the Chesapeake Bay's condition, we have made strong advances in two -- air (through the carbon tax and energy efficiency measures passed) and storm water management (with the adoption of the most recent reforms). We can probably do a better job on the nitrogen/phosphorus and sediment components, and I would look forward to working with Conservation Montgomery in thinking more about these issues.

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

There are a few questions that I feel require a little amplification: 7. I do not know the details of the Plan, so I am reluctant to "sign on" to anything that I don't know well enough to commit to. I am committed to affirmative action and our County doing its share. 8. The amount of the increase must be sustainable economically for our citizens. 16. I have not had a single meeting on M-83 in my 4 years on the Council. Your questionnaire did not allow for "other" to be considered an answer for purposes of submittal. I have explained my "answer" and do look forward to more conversations in the future about this project. 23. I obviously voted to cut park funding, and I look forward to when we can return to more appropriate funding levels. Finally, I am proud of my record and leadership on natural resources issues, and I hope you are too. And, as noted above, we have a lot of work still to do, and I look forward to working with Conservation Montgomery in getting this work done well. Councilmember Roger Berliner

37. Please fill in your name.

Name - Roger Berliner

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