

Arlington Tree Action Group (ATAG)

Questions for County Board Candidates

June 2020

- 1. Preserving Arlington's dwindling natural resources, especially trees: Will this be a priority and how will you do it? What first steps would you take?**

To protect trees on County and APS land I would support enhancing the role of the existing Urban Forest Manager position and requiring the inclusion of a report from that position as part of every APS and County use permit and construction approval that comes to the County Board. This change will ensure that the County Board and the community have information that crosses departmental and organizational lines, designed to ensure a consistent policy approach to tree canopy preservation/creation and to existing mature trees on public lands.

Protecting trees on private land where by-right development is occurring is a greater challenge. To be successful, I believe we need a collaborative, multi-sector process to consider new policies and other tools that the Board could adopt to intentionally shape Arlington's regulatory environment so that preserving mature trees becomes the most profitable way to accomplish in-fill development.

I am all for advocating for enlightened environmental protection policies and laws in the Richmond legislature that could have a significant positive impact on Arlington's ability to enforce and protect trees on private property.

- 2. Requiring comprehensive environmental assessments before design of County projects: How can the County explicitly factor the value of our "natural capital" in to projects? Will you do this and if so, how would the assessments be used in the design phase?**

I support appropriate environmental assessments for all County and School projects, although it is difficult to value natural capital. I would support asking the Urban Forestry Commission and the JFAC to work together to gather testimony from knowledgeable experts and stakeholders and then report their findings and suggestions for adjustments to the design phase of facility planning back to the Board.

- 3. Incorporating the preservation of natural resources into all of the County's daily functions like streets, sewers, traffic, etc.: Will you do this? And how?**

As an urban planner, I know the importance of providing natural spaces throughout the County and the importance of taking care of them once they are established. The Public

Spaces Master Plan (PSMP), adopted in 2019, lays out a number of goals and strategies related to the care of the environment generally and to the County's daily maintenance functions specifically. I support an Annual Progress Report to the Board and community that outlines actions undertaken and results achieved as a key way to keep our eyes on this area of public policy. We all know that "what gets measured, gets done".

In addition, I strongly support Arlington's commitment to expand biophilic planning and design principles across all its policies and programs. Joining the Biophilic Cities Network provides significant opportunities for a renewed focus on management and stewardship of our natural resources and leverages public awareness.

4. What steps can be taken to break down silos in County offices whose projects directly impact the environment?

I will hold the Manager accountable for this by requiring the annual report on PSMP progress and by asking environmental questions related to projects at the Board table. I will work with my colleagues to build support for this approach with a goal of ensuring that all departments—DES (public works); Parks and Recreation and Cultural Resources; Permits Office; Inspectors; Zoning; and the County Attorney—provide the Board and community with regular information related to Arlington's natural environment across all its dimensions.

5. Ideal population growth for Arlington: The County's population is currently 236,000 and growing fast. What, in your mind, is the ideal population for Arlington and how will you ensure adequate infrastructure and services, along with environmental sustainability needed to sustain every resident?

If I am elected, I see my role as one of stewarding the special character of Arlington against the forces of indiscriminate urbanization. I support intentionally planning for growth in Arlington AND managing it using robust civic engagement as we have been doing since the subway stations were planned in the 1970s. I support the intentional integration of storm water and other unseen infrastructure needs with the more obvious needs like roads and schools. Explicitly planning across all infrastructure dimensions can drive more strategic investments. I also support establishing a dashboard of goals across Comprehensive Plan elements that would measure progress and would be discussed by the Commissions and the Community at least every 3 years.