



2022 County Council Candidate Questionnaire

The Food Council invited all County Council candidates to complete a 9-item questionnaire, which was developed in collaboration with our community partners. Our goal is to provide information on local candidate's food system priorities and commitments. As a 501c3 nonprofit organization, we do not endorse candidates.

For more information, please contact Heather Bruskin, Executive Director at hbruskin@mocofoodcouncil.org.

Name: **Amy Ginsberg**

Campaign Website: **www.AmyGinsburg.com**

Candidate for: **District 4**

1. Please describe your personal and/or professional engagement in any local food systems initiatives, policies, and programs.

A: I was the executive director of Manna Food Center for five years. Through my consulting work with Capacity Partners, I worked on Manna Food Center's capital campaign and with the Community Foundation's on the Food for Montgomery campaign during the pandemic. Throughout my 40-year career as a nonprofit leader, I have worked on food policies and programs, including through the United Way, Combined Federal Campaign, Neediest Kids, and the Coalition for the Homeless.

2. Please describe any plans you have for creating economic opportunities for individuals who identify as Black, Indigenous, Latinx/Latino, and/or a person of color, particularly in food and agriculture?

A: 1) First of all, Montgomery County must welcome businesses and development with enthusiasm. Rather than citing 3 obscure regulations that demonstrate why something can't be built, government must say to builders and businesses, "we will figure this out because we very much want you to be part of Montgomery County." This doesn't even cost money -- it is only a matter of will. If



Montgomery County doesn't change its attitude toward business and development, all the tax incentives in the world won't persuade a business or builder to choose us over Northern Virginia, DC, or other counties in Maryland.

- 2) Montgomery County must better support small businesses, especially businesses owned by immigrants and people of color. This includes everyone from an Ethiopian family trying to open a coffee shop in Silver Spring to a small developer trying to build a quadraplex to an independent contractor looking to expand and hire his first employee. Too often Montgomery County and MCEDC offer little or no support to small businesses, especially businesses owned by people of color. Imagine the difference it could make if Montgomery County advised a small business owner on how to meet regulatory requirements and acted as an ombudsman when there was a glitch. Imagine the difference it would make if there were knowledgeable, enthusiastic county employees who understood that time is money and that delaying an opening by a month or even a year for permitting delays or other issues turns a once-profitable venture into one that will soon close. The Department of Permitting Services and other agencies that work with small businesses must be committed to helping small businesses, not thwarting them. Again, this takes no money, except for training. It is only a matter of the council and others leading a sea change in attitude.
- 3) Targeted incentives should be used to bring corporate headquarters into the county from a variety of industries. We must also ensure we build the infrastructure -- roads, transit, schools, data lines, sidewalks, bike lanes, etc. -- that we promise to build, and we must build it in three to five years, not ten to twenty years.
- 4) We must create places that are attractive to business and development. Smart growth, 15-minute communities with robust placemaking and a vibrant combination of residents, businesses, and tourists are essential to attracting new growth. That means the county must actively support smart growth, dense communities by building promised infrastructure, supporting BIDs and other marketing/placemaking organizations, and marketing those communities nationwide.

3. Please describe your position on addressing income insufficiency, which is a major contributor to food insecurity in our County. Please describe any positions or initiatives in your platform that focus on food security.

A: I believe we should fully implement the Food Security Plan -- without food security, job security, education, and a high quality of life are elusive for too many of our residents.

4. What role should the County government have in improving resident access to federal benefit programs, such as SNAP and WIC.

A: We should work to engage community groups, including faith-based organizations, nonprofit organizations, schools, youth groups, and others to reach out to Montgomery County residents and educate them about benefits such as SNAP. We should make sure these groups have access to materials in languages other than English, too. We should train volunteers and ensure that school counselors, faith-based leaders, employers, and nonprofit organizations are aware of SNAP and able to offer support navigating the application process.



5. It is likely that the impacts of climate change, national and global politics, and future disasters will further disrupt food production, supply chains, and food security networks. Please describe any policies and programs that you will propose or support to address local food system resilience?

A: We should support "grow local" initiatives, because that ensures a resilient supply chain. We should also promote community gardens and patio gardens for all residents, which remove the supply chain altogether. Ensuring we have sufficient stocks of food to get us through the first weeks of a future crisis is essential.

6. Please describe any initiatives or policies you would propose to increase local food production and access to affordable agricultural land.

A: Food to Farm Bank is an innovative, noteworthy initiative. Providing technical assistance to people who want to grow food in community gardens, backyard gardens, and patio gardens would be useful for many people across the county. Providing learning opportunities for students at local farms would also promote the MoCo Made program.

7. Please describe any initiatives or policies you will propose to reduce food waste and advance zero-waste strategies.

A: I believe we should have a composting program that picks up compostable material/food scraps just like we pick up recyclables. Takoma Park and other cities have such programs, and this could remove 1/3 of our waste-stream. Offering free and highly-discounted vermicomposting and other composting containers to residents and offering 'Composting 101' classes will also increase composting efforts.

8. Where do you see opportunities for the County government to support food education? How can the County support residents in making healthy and sustainable food choices easier?

A: School health classes can be a potent force for educating residents about making healthy and sustainable food choices. Offering cooking classes, recipes, and tips in a variety of languages and including food from a variety of cultures can help many people prepare economical, healthy, culturally-relevant food.

9. What do you see as the biggest food system challenges in the County and what do you believe is the role of the County Council in addressing them? How should community stakeholders be engaged in that work?

A: Primarily, the council should work with experts, including the food council, Manna Food Center, and other nonprofits, to understand what is required to address food insecurity and then fund those initiatives. I believe that the county council should partner with community and nonprofit organizations since they are the true experts.

