



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: **Laurie-Anne Sayles**

Campaign Website: www.laurieannesayles.org

Candidate for: **At-Large**

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

A: Our agriculture reserve in Montgomery County is truly a gem. We need access to affordable and nutritious foods, a safe environment, and sustainable agribusinesses for a thriving community. I'm proud to be a vocal leader on critical issues that profoundly impact the health and wellness of our community. I've hosted meetings, discussions, and events highlighting the challenges of food insecurity. As an experienced lawmaker and advocate, I've also supported increased investments for our nonprofit partners that kept our most vulnerable residents safe and nourished. Finally, I've spent the last 15 years working professionally as a Senior Project Manager for the FDA, NCI, and NIH agencies advancing the health and safety of Americans nationwide.

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: I am very interested in creating a local food ecosystem and incubator for small business entrepreneurs interested in various industries, including hospitality, tech, biopharmaceutical, and



other innovative sectors that will bring parity to our workforce and economy and diverse families. Having visited some of our new local farmers, we have an opportunity to cultivate a diversity of foods given the growing interest in farming from BIPOC communities that can be executed here in our Ag Reserve and other parts of the county.

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: When elected, I will support creating a renewed, post-pandemic strategy. It would be a wasted opportunity not to take what we've learned to improve how we tackle food insecurity. I would prioritize the first-year recommendations to support and implement policies that address food insecurity in alignment with the guidance of the current Food Security Plan. For example: Implementing mechanisms to gather more and better data; Establishing policies that will bring food assistance programs into better alignment by collecting consistent data; Deploying near-term tactical solutions to increase participation of existing programs such as SNAP and summer meal programs; Increasing the availability of culturally appropriate food assistance; Expanding the senior nutrition program to serve meals five days per week.

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

A: As a former SNAP recipient, I will continue to be sensitive to our vulnerable residents needing access to healthier, more culturally-appropriate foods. Agencies like the County's Community Action Board and the Food Council have worked with our legislators to increase funding for SNAP, which has grown by more than 300% since the pandemic. Food insecurity and hunger facing so many of our residents are unacceptable, and I'll be a vocal advocate to remove barriers to SNAP enrollment.

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: As your next Councilmember At-Large, I am committed to advancing sustainable local food production in the Ag Reserve by: Reimagining local food production in an equitable way and the Ag Reserve's role in feeding our County, thereby decreasing reliance on importing and exporting goods and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Providing infrastructure to process and distribute food locally to enhance the affordability and accessibility of the farming industry countywide and safeguard us against future threats to the supply chain.

Streamlining access to purchase affordable land, cultivate crops, acquire food, and building permits for new and existing farmers to produce healthy food options.



Leveraging this unique and sacred resource in our community to support and invest in expanding the “farm to food bank” program.

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

A: To sustainably expand the food business sector, state and federal funding, technical assistance, workforce development programming, and infrastructure investments would need to be identified and coordinated with our stakeholders to reimagine local food production in an equitable way, and the Ag Reserve’s role in feeding our County.

My S.M.A.R.T. agenda calls for investments in workforce development that prepare the workforce now to increase local food production.

Providing infrastructure to process and distribute food locally to enhance the affordability and accessibility of the farming industry countywide and safeguard us against future threats to the supply chain.

Streamlining access to purchase affordable land, cultivate crops, acquire food, and building permits for new and existing farmers to produce healthy food options.

Supporting the hospitality industry through increased investments in supporting our restaurants and local food providers through marketing and advertising campaigns.

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

A: I’m proud to have built and maintained strong positive working relationships with our Delegation members and look forward to working with them to craft this legislation so it can receive a favorable vote from both chambers as I was successful in advancing the successful passage of the Climate Action NOW bill. Further, I support investments in local food production and the government has a role to play to ensure recourses are available to those with innovative ideas for scaling up support to the most vulnerable communities, investing in organic local farming practices – resilience and regenerative farming, and increase social partnerships to expand composting programs.

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: As a public health professional with a deep understanding of advancing equity, to improve access to healthier more sustainable food choices, especially in communities that have been historically disadvantaged regarding affordable access to nutritious food and education resources by leveraging our Office of Community Partnerships to target communication tools and resources for residents to make decisions and work in partnership with their communities to make more culturally appropriate choices regarding 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: Our county is growing fast, and we have limited land for cultivating crops that could adequately support our residents. Unsustainable food production threatens food security, such as over-fishing, soil erosion, or water shortages. Climate change will increasingly be impacted by storms, droughts, and biodiversity issues.

Rising obesity rates and diet-related illness are significant drivers of ill health in many parts of the world and place increasing strain on health services. Overconsumption and waste further exacerbate these issues by placing unnecessary pressure on the food system. We cannot do this work without our community partners, that have been shouldering this burden on the front lines. As a Council member-at-large, I am committed to working with my council colleagues and community stakeholders to address the challenges mentioned above.

