



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: **Al Carr**

Campaign Website: www.alcarr.org

Candidate for: **District 4**

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

A: My name is Al Carr and I am running for the open District 4 seat on the Montgomery County Council. As a Maryland State Delegate since 2007, I've voted for and cosponsored many pieces of state legislation to advance local food systems initiatives. I've enjoyed attending briefings by MCFC and appreciate MCFC's work in addressing food security, especially during the pandemic and the SNAP Benefits Outreach and Enrollment Workgroup. Continuing collaboration between MCFC & DEP to advance commercial and residential food waste recycling is essential. MCFC's work on food education also advances sustainability, along with public health. The goal of the MoCo Made initiative to promote County agriculture and food businesses is consistent with recent State legislation supporting the cottage food industry. In 2022, I was proud to co-sponsor legislation to double the revenue limit for food entrepreneurs to qualify as a cottage food businesses. Before serving as a state legislator I was elected to 3 terms as a municipal councilman. In that role I supported the operation and growth of the Kensington Farmer's Market, one of the few year-round markets in Montgomery County. On a personal note, I am an avid gardener and enjoy growing my own food.



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: The Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation is all about marketing, which is important, but insufficient. The County must have a designated team focused on minority, female and disabled (MFD) private sector development, including a comprehensive review of applicable regulations (i.e. zoning, permitting) and coordination with the Office of Agricultural Services. The adequacy of the County's Business Innovation Network, especially regarding the role of MFD farms/businesses is needed. With our large immigrant population, Montgomery County is ripe to promote entrepreneurial opportunities for immigrants in food and agriculture.

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: As a State Delegate, improving the safety net has been a priority for me and I will continue that work if elected to the County Council. I've worked to increase the minimum wage, accelerate the process of energy assistance

applications and to shore up the homeowners and renters tax credit program. I believe the County can better partner with the state to promote and supplement these tax credit programs which are undersubscribed. I've also exercised legislative oversight of Montgomery County's Health and Human Services department after learning that Montgomery County processes energy assistance applications more slowly than any other jurisdiction in Maryland. If elected, I will also continue my oversight of WSSC to address the problem of overspending, leading to high water/sewer bills (rates in Moco/PG are double those in Fairfax for many people). I will also work to improve equity for broadband - too many tenants are overpaying for inferior broadband service. If elected, I will expand my focus on SNAP, support for entities like MANNA, the cottage food industry, and school-based meals.

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

A: These programs need to be modernized and made more flexible. I support strong advocacy with Federal legislators and coordination with administration by State/County in program administration, plus County supplemental funding. Montgomery County is one of the most WIC-intensive jurisdictions in the U.S. so any efforts to ensure the program's proper functioning could help many.

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: I support increased investment in the Office of Agricultural Services and base-budget review of their program- ming. This includes farmland preservation at State and local level. I support programs to encourage the idea of buying local and to allow people to garden and grow their own food.

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

A: See answer above, plus I support a review of the Transferable Development Rights (TDR) program's viability, including zoning ordinance/master plan review, as needed. The County can press our public schools to maximize purchase of locally produced food, at the Montgomery County Correctional Facility.

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

A: I support expanding the Single-Family Residential Food Scraps Recycling Collection Pilot. (Single-family residents in the Silver Spring pilot area receive weekly food scraps recycling collection service every Thursday. The County started collecting food scraps in the Potomac pilot area on December 7, 2021. Single-family residents living in the Potomac pilot area receive weekly food scraps recycling collection service every Tuesday. Takoma Park already has a residential food waste collection program). I would support an Office of Legislative Oversight review of DEP's Commercial Food Scraps Recycling Partnership Program. Personally I am an avid at-home composter and would seek opportunities to increase adoption of at-home composting.

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: I would examine efforts in MCPS AND Montgomery College curricula, in partnership with the Board of Education and the Board of Trustees. I would explore programming at MCCF/County jail as part of the pre-release center process. I would explore the expansion of applicable laws, like the existing statute on calorie content for certain restaurants. MCPS has/had an "Adventures in Agriculture" program to expose MCPS students to farming - if it still exists I would investigate how it could be improved. If it doesn't, I will investigate whether it could be restored.

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: The biggest challenge is access to affordable, healthy food for all residents. The County has a role to play, including through zoning, permitting and other regulatory review. I believe that the County's partnering with the Food Council and other social service entities, along with civic groups is vital to sound policy making. Learn more about me on my website: www.alcarr.org

