

2024 County Board Candidates Questionnaire

James DeVita

In recent years Arlington has experienced intense rainfall, flooding, record breaking temperatures, and periods of unhealthy air quality as the impact of the growing climate crisis and broader degradation of our natural environment becomes clearer, Arlington is experiencing. County Board members will be expected to lead efforts to mitigate and adapt to these changing conditions. To assist voters in assessing how candidates will advance the County's climate goals for carbon neutrality and protection and enhancement of tree canopy coverage and natural resources, EcoAction Arlington and Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions requests that you complete this questionnaire, which we will share with our membership and the public at large.

1. Arlington continues to face significant development in residential and commercial sectors. While new buildings can be more energy efficient and environmentally sustainable, the tear down of existing structures have significant climate impacts and community displacement. Given private developers rights and significant leeway in choosing how to develop land parcels, if elected, what specific solutions and policies would you endorse that would better ensure a more climate solution and equitable outcome to the county's residential and commercial development?

I would explore the possibility of enacting restrictions on the clear-cutting of lots to save older trees and protect drainage.

2. How can Arlington County best lead by example in phasing out fossil fuels, reducing its carbon emissions from facilities and operations, and advancing its zero waste goals? How can the County use the annual budget, the Capital Improvement Plan, and internal policy guidelines for construction, purchasing, and operations to advance a whole of government approach to addressing the climate crisis?

I would convert County vehicles to electric vehicles and make sure that existing county buildings are also electric.

Achieving the County's goal for carbon neutrality, zero waste, tree canopy coverage, and other environmental goals requires actions and behavior changes by residents and businesses. What strategies, policies, and programs would you pursue to promote and incentivize the private sector to reduce their carbon footprint. In particular, how can Arlington County promote reduced energy use and electrification of both buildings and transportation, encourage use of transit, biking, and walking over single occupancy vehicles, foster waste reduction, reuse, composting, and effective recycling?

I would negotiate with developers of new buildings to make sure that new buildings are environmentally friendly.

4. Arlington's tree canopy and green spaces are in crisis, while stormwater impacts from impervious surfaces are increasingly severe. Site development, whether commercial or residential, usually results in clear cut lots and limited replacement of mature shade trees. Yet the County Board has made climate resilience and mitigation a top priority. With the recent adoption of a new Forestry and Natural Resources Plan that calls for restoration of a 40% tree canopy cover, what "new" approaches are needed to reverse the tree loss trends and gain the greater climate resilience benefits that mature tree canopies provide, particularly in Arlington's more disadvantaged neighborhoods?

I would make sure that the 40 percent tree canopy requirement is actually enforced rather than just let builders donate to a fund.