



# AIM County Council Candidate Questionnaire

Responses from Paul S. Geller candidate for At-Large

## **Affordable Housing**

How would you work with AIM to increase the Housing Initiative Fund to \$100M by the year 2022?  
First and foremost, we need to increase our tax base. Along with Melissa McKenna, my fellow At-Large candidate, we were two of the most successful advocates ever for the Montgomery County Public Schools. Our efforts have infused MCPS with \$108M more annually from now on. The way things are currently set up, there is a lack of funds for major new initiatives. We need to get creative. With more than 10,000,000 square feet of vacant office space in Montgomery County, enough for 200,000 people to work here, we need to expand our tax base and make Montgomery County significantly more business friendly. By expanding the opportunities for businesses to flourish, the way they do in Northern Virginia, we will have significantly more funding available for the Housing Initiative Fund.

*How would you work with AIM to put 200 units of affordable housing on public land, in the development pipeline each year?*

We need to get more creative with how we develop and redevelop our county land. Select library construction projects should be reimagined as multistory buildings with the library in the first two floors, and housing, some of it affordable, in the rest of the building. We need the Planning Commission to work closely with AIM and other interested parties, especially the County Council and new County Executive to make sure we reach these goals.

## **Equity in Schools**

*How will you work with AIM to expand the Excel Beyond the Bell Elementary program to four additional Title I elementary schools each year so that the program serves 2,400 students by the year 2022?*

As President & VP of the 43,000+ member Montgomery County Council of PTAs (MCCPTA), I worked with Melissa McKenna to make sure our schools received the funding needed to serve our students. AND we were very successful at it. At my local school where I served as PTA President, I built a language program from scratch to include nearly one-third of the students, coordinated a successful art program, and am in my seventh year of leading a Science Fair with more than a quarter of the students participating. It is imperative to have well run programs like Excel Beyond the Bell and the BELL Program, along with a myriad of others, in every one of our 205 schools. Our kids need the opportunity to experience learning outside the classroom for the pure joy of it. I will continue my work as one of the statewide leaders in endeavoring to secure casino gambling revenues for programs such as this. This money was implied to go to our kids, yet little of it ever does.

## **Protecting Immigrants and Refugees**

*Many Montgomery County families are living in fear of one or more parent being separated from their children because of deportation. How will you work with AIM to include funding for deportation defense*



*and family preparedness in the county budget, as well as work with AIM to find private funding for these efforts?*

I just addressed the County Council and made a specific request to open a new Charles W. Gilchrist Immigration Service Center in Silver Spring as a resource for our immigrant neighbors. There is much additional work we can do in this area. As the past president of a legal clinic based in D.C. that assisted renters in landlord-tenant issues in court, I know the importance of having high quality legal counseling available for people who cannot afford it. We should be partnering up with some of the law schools in the D.C. area to establish deportation defense groups to assist our neighbors who may be having immigration issues. The law schools themselves would back such an initiative. I also would encourage AIM to reach out to other non-profits in the area to pool your resources and Rolodexes to fund this effort.

*Will you commit to work with AIM and Montgomery County landlords to house refugees in Montgomery County?*

Yes.

### **Transportation**

*Will you work with AIM to protect good transportation jobs from privatization?*

Yes.

*How will you hold WMATA accountable to prevent cutting bus service in the county, particularly to low-income areas?*

Bus service is one of the great equalizers in this county. Many people take the bus a long distance to get to their job(s) each day. In many cases, it is their only way of getting around. I will always be available to hear any concerns or comments of my constituents about this or any issues. That is the hallmark of what government service should be all about.

### **Democracy with Accountability**

*Do you commit to meeting with AIM within a month of taking office, and on a quarterly basis subsequently?*

I will meet with anyone and everyone interested in meeting with me. As an elected official, this is the way it should be. This was a hallmark of my successful leadership in PTA, and is certainly what I will do as your next At-Large member of the County Council. Thank you.