



# AIM County Council Candidate Questionnaire

Responses from Meredith Wellington candidate for District 1

## **Affordable Housing**

How would you work with AIM to increase the Housing Initiative Fund to \$100M by the year 2022? Montgomery County is facing multiple crises as a result of poor planning, poor decisions, and unwarranted optimism regarding its finances since the Great Recession. The economy has been improving for several years but the County has a \$200 million shortfall this year, with no easy relief in sight. This means that funding for the HIF is in competition with other County needs. I believe a complete review of the entire budget, including a close review of housing related expenditures, will identify funds that can be reprogrammed into the HIF. I would explore charging an excise tax on short term rentals (studies show they deplete housing stock) and demolition fees applied to demolition of market rate (naturally occurring) affordable housing. There are other viable proposals considered in the Rental Housing Study. AIM members, with long expertise researching and advocating for affordable housing, are an important partner to the County and Executive in helping to resolve the housing crisis.

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

I support current County law that requires the Executive to consider placing affordable housing on available public land in compliance with the zoning code's compatibility and infrastructure requirements. I support working through each Master or Sector Plan to add affordable housing to public land, other public buildings like libraries, parking garages, and other public agencies, and then following up annually to review progress.

## **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?*

Excel Beyond the Bell is an opportunity for the business community to invest in the futures of Montgomery County students. I would work with AIM to enlist local companies, whatever their size, to support Excel Beyond the Bell with grants, contributions in kind, and services and experts to support our students in achieving college and career readiness and becoming productive citizens.

## **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?*

Given the budget challenges the County faces, this is a daunting effort. I would first seek to encourage local attorneys to provide deportation defense on a pro bono basis, focusing on avoiding family



separation. To the extent that resources in the office of the County Attorney can be directed to this goal, I would support such uses.

*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?*

The state is responsible for funding most of WMATA through the Maryland Transportation Trust Fund; Montgomery County covers its share of the balance through a property tax earmarked for mass transit. Non-regional service (e.g., RideOn) is the County's responsibility. These rely on a fee/tax network; any increases or additional taxes are likely to face strong opposition. I would make as strong a case as possible that providing funding for transit for low-income workers so they can continue supporting their families is far wiser fiscally than making it impossible for them to get to jobs. I would consider reducing service from more affluent areas (not job centers) during non-rush hour to maintain service to low-income areas during rush hour. I would also explore providing alternative transportation for those who work hours or shifts that do not coincide with periods of demand, for example, subsidized vans as part of Ride On when demand doesn't warrant a large bus.

### **Democracy with Accountability**

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

Yes