



GSSCC Questionnaire
Montgomery County Council Candidates

Name: Cary Lamari

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Council District for Which You Are Seeking Election: District 5

Number of Years Lived in that District: It is a new district but was formerly District 4 now redistricted to the new district 5, Approx. 38 years

Party Affiliation: Democrat

Relevant Non-governmental Professional Experience/Positions Held:

Electrical Contractor and Civic Leader and Activists for over 40 years, former member of Mid County Citizens Advisory Board, Civic Leader and Civic Association President leading me to rise through the ranks of the Montgomery County Civic Federation. I have been on numerous County, State advisory and Focus groups, Georgia Ave Busway Study, Governor Glendenings Collaboration Council for Smart Growth, SHA Norbeck/198 Improvements study advisory group, Norbeck and Georgia Ave. Grade Separated Intersection advisory group. Numerous Master Plan participation and appointments for their advisory groups, Lately the HEAT group advisory for The Attainable Housing Initiative. And as President of the MCCF I sponsored several County wide Forums, (Mental Health, and Transportation Etc.)

Please insert your answers after each question below, or answer using a separate document. Please return the completed questionnaire to jredicker@gsscc.org no later than close of business on Friday, March 4

1. Over the past two years, the COVID-19 pandemic affected our lives and our economy in unprecedented ways. The County provided financial assistance to help businesses through these unprecedented times, but many businesses and employers have still not recovered.
 - What are you prepared to do to get businesses and our economy back to a sense of normal?

I will work to create policies which allow and encourage best practices for workers to return to work as safely as possible using the Department of health standards and guidelines. Plan for the future, look at obstacles in Planning and Zoning which can prioritize economic growth, what I call Top down Planning where we identify economic dynamics,(commercial development proposals) use that data to build amenities, infrastructure to support business and finally balanced residential growth which provides Market rate and Affordable housing for employees across

our County. We should also hold round table discussions between the business community, residents, and our County.

Finally stop the dysfunction which exists to develop and promote a comprehensive economic growth strategy which has been hampered in recent years by the constant bickering and contentious relationship which exists between our Legislative Branch and the Executive Branch of Government.

Also seek more financial resources to entice new anchor businesses for regional economic hubs which in turn should help revitalize local small business climate. This may require State and potentially Federal support as new growth will benefit our State revenue.

- What will you do to support business should the COVID pandemic remain with us?

The Covid experience has changed everything. We need to learn from this experience. I assume many businesses will change their business plans, requiring less office space, more telecommuting and potentially less commuter traffic. And will hopefully recognize how important interior environmental air Circulation and filtration should be part of a good installation in commercial businesses.

Should the pandemic morph into more frequent occurrences with variants. We must be better prepared. We must have strategic plans to work from home with necessary support. I would hope in the future our County and Federal Government prepares for the necessary business support contributions for rent and PPE to respond to future impacts from Covid. Unfortunately there is no official catastrophe playbook developed to date. I would work with the Department of Health and one thing I would do differently would be to include the business community to devise ways our County may persevere and prosper if possible under the difficult circumstances and mitigate losses to businesses in the most expeditious way possible.

There are no promises in a Pandemic as the dynamics change. What we should have learned going into the future is more planning needs to be developed, our rainy day fund must be more robust and we as a community must work in unison to get through the tough times. What I will not do is hide from the challenge and would listen and develop working groups with stakeholders to address the needs. Should I be elected I will pull together a Planning Committee which will include Businesses, Residents and nonprofits to develop a guide (playbook) for future catastrophic events such as Covid. Why we did not have a written General Plan for economic sustainability disaster. I do not know.

Plan for everything hope to not have to use those plans.

- What kind of financial support (grants and loans) will you support to help businesses and nonprofit organizations (i.e. commercial rent support, reimbursement for testing kits, grants to support continued telework)?

This all depends on available funds. The Federal Government and State Government along with County Reserves. All will be needed to normalize the business community. I am aware some funds were made available to some businesses who applied for telecommuting and rent assistance and personal protection equipment and test kits, Low interest forgivable loans, Debt relief Loans, however it is hard as a non-incumbent candidate to know what is or was available. What I do know from talking to leaders in the business community the most important thing to the business community is to be included in the discussion and to be kept informed. Also prepare for the future.

2. The Silver Spring Central Business District was envisioned to become a smart-growth, live, work, and play community. However, in the past 10-plus years, Silver Spring has evolved into a primarily residential neighborhood (bedroom community), with virtually no commercial office development. At this point, the County seems to be focused on just the “live” and “play” aspects. But local retailers and restaurants are feeling the brunt of having fewer and fewer customers during office hours.
 - What will you do to address this and help bring more employers and jobs back to Silver Spring?

In the last 10 years our residential growth rate has been .66% per year yet our economic growth rate (Jobs) has only grown .24% per year. This is not sustainable and has resulted cumulatively according to Jacob Sesker (Retired County Council Staff Analyst) to earn Montgomery County the honor of being responsible for 38% of all job losses for the State of Maryland. Silver Spring has been disproportionately impacted with today’s new extreme progressive urbanism which calls for disincentives for the Automobile, more street closings which reduces regional clients and customer base however does promote more local resident activity This new shift to local economy from a regional economy, reduces vehicle lanes to calm traffic and create disincentives for the automobile, converting lanes for parking, bus only, Bicycle lanes which cumulatively IMO has made Silver Spring into a maze making it a more local destination rather than a regional destination with fewer parking spaces. Which if Planning gets its way will become even fewer. We need to have a more balanced approach. Today our “Class A” office space, from a rent cost perspective is attractive to major nationwide employers yet it has been difficult to attract new major players (anchors) for Silver Spring. IMO we need to take a more proactive approach, once we balance our vision with these local activities and circulation network then the regional job market may rebound. We need to make Silver Spring a regional destination again rather than a primarily local community commercial market place. We need to actively seek large employers. Today our County Council has made the executive strategy decision to make Life Sciences as our major target and I agree with this with the exception that more lab space may be needed, however it made the Hospitality Technology industry our second priority. While Hospitality is a large industry and is a welcomed addition to our county, I personally believe we need to broaden our vision for new Anchor Industries across Montgomery County.

Artificial Intelligence technology is the largest growing industry in the world. While the US used to be its leader China has jumped ahead of us. AI is used in national security the medical industry, for transportation management as well as new automotive uses and retail sales. AI will soon be involved with almost every economic endeavor in the world yet in the US, Boston Massachusetts has most of this new industry marketplace. Montgomery County’s close proximity to the Pentagon, to The FDA, To NIH and NIAD as well as Walter Reed and the numerous other international agencies as well as the Federal legislative government would make us a logical location for this new and upcoming industry. As a County Council person I would attempt to pull stakeholders and other members of the business community together to seek these new AI businesses and would work to develop a package to entice new major anchors for our community. Which would benefit the hotel industry, restaurant community and other small and large business. I believe White Oak and Silver Spring would be a gold mine for this kind of outreach endeavor. I would also include the Montgomery County Delegation to help participate with State sponsored seed

funding to make this a reality. This kind of overarching stakeholder's outreach has not been demonstrated in our County since the Doug Duncan Administration.

- What will you do to revitalize our daytime economy in Silver Spring?

As I spoke to in the prior question. We need State revitalization money, we need to create ambassadors for our economy and promote new industries to anchor in the many large class "A" spaces which will help our hotels and restaurants in Silver Spring. I am concerned with the BID group as small businesses do not have a significant say in local business growth incentives and strategies. We should be more inclusive. Long Story Short I will try to build a coalition of County and State officials working with the business and resident community to achieve the goal of revitalization.

3. The Planning Board's Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan's sole answer to reviving and expanding Silver Spring's office market is to simply "improve the public realm (i.e., build more sidewalks, bikeways, parks, etc.). Please explain why you agree or disagree that this is an effective and appropriate strategy for returning economic prosperity to the downtown Silver Spring business district?

Respectfully, I do not agree with Chairman Andersons and Council Member Hans Riemers approach. IMO they are pandering to a small group of residents to the detriment of our greater public interest. There must be a balanced approach to capital projects. I have fought Thrive Montgomery 2050 partly because of their Extreme Progressive New Urbanism approach to planning, while not sufficiently addressing significant potential unintended consequences. Without doing a top down approach to planning how can we succeed? Crime is up in many parts of our county but most especially in our urban areas. We have half the compliment of police than in most counties our size nationally. Today we have 1.3 police for every 1000 residents, the national average is 2.4-2.8 per capita depending whether the jurisdiction is urban or suburban setting. This has been exemplified in Silver Spring where crime has been disproportionally increased from the more suburban areas. This also is manifested in other public services. Also we pay police, at least until this election season less than any other jurisdiction in the DMV. How does this work when our compliment of public safety personnel is smaller than needed yet our Council proposes to double density across the suburban and urban landscape? We need to grow but it should be proportionate with Jobs, amenities, infrastructure and services. Today we have dysfunctional public leadership relationship between the Executive branch and the Legislative branch of government which has manifested in more crime, less services and loss of economic competitiveness and the inability for public participation in decision making. IMHO In the long term I believe these dynamics will exponentially increase and harm our future economic environment potentially beyond the Counties ability alone to repair.

4. In recent months, Silver Spring has experienced a dramatic increase in violent crime, which threatens our economy, our business owners, and our residents. The expansion of our "nighttime economy" has been accompanied by some unintended consequences. Two recent surveys show that the top concern of most residents is crime and safety.
 - Will you support bringing either a police substation or creating a new district police station in downtown Silver Spring? Why or why not?

Yes, however this may not address our problem in and of itself. While I give Chief Jones significant respect for adapting to the dysfunction of the County Council and support his Crime suppression efforts to his credit and his

new program Multi-stakeholder crime approach which to some degree is similar to the age old reliable weed and seed program, we need more. The Police should not be forced to adapt because of lack of resources, move police around the County to provide safety knowingly without good response times because of a lack in personnel. We need to look at the algorithms of county reported and responded to incidents and increase our compliment of police officers in proportional levels. We also have been experiencing a disproportionate number of resignations and attrition of older more experienced officers (in the past year, 54 Police chose to retire and between 60-70 officers resigned, out of a compliment of 1,271 Police officers). We are behind the proverbial 8 ball and need to catch up. Unfortunately with over 700 people recruited this past year we only had less than 30 make it through the cadet training academy. Our County Council has had yearly reports for several years with similar facts and data and basically ignored them to pander to special interest groups and fund their proposals. It is time to work for the greater public interests and diligently give support to Chief Jones, find the necessary resources and we as a community, Business, Residents and Elected Leadership must stop demonizing police but instead learn to appreciate all their efforts moving forward in these difficult circumstances with fewer resources. Our County today has a Police Advisory Board and IMHO should benefit with their collaboration. We know why things are the way they are and we have the ability to turn things around, we just need to stop elected leadership from demonizing anything and everything that helps them pander to special interests. In the progressive community it is the Police, in the tenant community it is the landlord. This is wrong and not statistically supported. IMHO!

https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/council/Resources/Files/agenda/cm/2021/20210225/20210225_PS2.pdf

- Would you support legislation that requires a set closing time for restaurants operating as bars and nightclubs as well as hookah bars (as is done in Prince George's County and D.C.)? Why or why not?

I am not sure this will have significant impact given the facts I wrote about on earlier questions. I would support a potential temporary experiment of closing at a reasonable time for a period of time to see if this has benefit. I think ideas such as these merit attempts at trying, however the systemic problems I highlighted above with the compliment of officers, the attrition rates, the resignations and the inability to recruit new officers primarily because of low wages are more systemic in nature and need to be addressed.

5. GSSCC believes that a thriving business community brings prosperity for all of our citizens by increasing the number of good private sector jobs and expanding the tax base to support necessary public services.

- Please list all the initiatives/legislation you have supported/or would support to foster the growth of existing businesses and encourage new business creation.

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My life's experience is in business as an electrical contractor and Civic Activism. I worked with Ike Leggett for 3 years to automate our Permit and license application system, I hoped by reducing workload on staff we could promote emphasis on unlicensed contractors who cost residents in bad work and the County revenue but this has not happened. As a Civic Activist we look at waste fraud and abuse such as the Peter Bang theft of 7 million dollars from the office of economic development and the hundreds of millions of dollars lost to negligence in the Silver Spring Transit Center lack of management and metrics to prevent future similar problems. We look for ways to streamline government which makes costs go down and performance go up. Though the Years I have

worked to foster too many initiatives to count where the County has benefited by civic activism. One such measure was opposing increased transfer and increased recordation fees for the purchase of new real estate. Thrive 2050 is another which, with its new complete communities WILL damage the business plan and good will to existing shopping centers. Today I believe we need an overarching Economic Master Plan as a functional Master Plan within the perimeter of the General Plan, defining where new commercial buildings should go and the structural details such as amenities infrastructure all of which WILL allow for new businesses to locate here quicker and less costly as the community will have bought into the plan which they have contributed to in the planning process. I also am prepared to work with business to provide negotiated packages to entice and encourage new businesses to our county to build the necessary base for economic growth in commercial activity centers.

There are always limitations and no guarantee of complete success however with political will combined with community and business and public sector involvement we have a much better opportunity for success.

- Please describe your plan for increasing the tax base – rather than tax rates – in the County.

LOL sorry, however with Thrive promoting a doubling of density with 32 complete communities the smallest of which costs 827 million dollars and a 6.5 billion dollar bicycle network and over 10 billion dollars potentially in new BRT and a County workforce which may need significant increases. Surely you kid about not increasing taxes. Given the fact Housing has significant costs associated with it. Commercial development is what increases the tax base and for the last decade residential growth has outpaced commercial growth 3-1. I do not see how the constant yield tax rate cannot go up and so will assessments as this new paradigm of growth is “by right” which carry with them additional development rights which will create the necessary comparable basis which is used in property tax assessments which will increase housing assessments in all neighborhoods where developers buy at a premium prices to build “by right” Multiplex housing. The OMB could not provide a realistic cost analysis on Thrive 2050, it claimed Thrive was too vague to provide a comprehensive analysis however they submitted that it will have many billions of dollars needed just to promote the attributes within Thrive Montgomery 2050.

Unless our County Council moves quickly to increase economic growth, reconsider the “by-right” attributes to multiplex housing making them overlay zones and reconsiders complete communities and its expansive list of attributes we are destined to see significant growth in assessments as well as the constant yield rate IMHO.

- What is your plan for making Montgomery County more attractive to businesses looking to expand or relocate (i.e. increased tax incentives, subsidies, streamlining the development approval process)?

I spoke of Top down Planning and developing packages to entice new anchor business to our County. If Thrive Montgomery 2050 is left to the next Council. I will try to convince other Council members to make serious changes to protect the viability of our local shopping centers. I will also try to get a lower Fiscal Impact cost with a more tempered Thrive 2050 and its associated complete community’s costs. And hopefully create a new Community Land Trust floating zone which will create affordable housing where multiplex housing may also be used in overlay zones with some market rate to make CLT’s viable so we create affordable housing in perpetuity. This will provide for future opportunities for first time homebuyers which make up the future workforce. There

are many similar things we may do which will have the effect of reducing impact on property taxes, protect small business and potentially allow for the possibility of creating tax incentives for more businesses IMHO. Economic growth must be looked at in its totality with proportionate housing. Thrive 2050 as currently proposed with the Attainable Housing initiative is problematic for economic sustainability IMHO. It is important to note, today our pipeline of approved residential housing units many in the permit stage and others soon to follow is 43,800 units approved with another potential 85,000 potential lots which planning staff has identified. The current pipeline is sufficient for approx. 130,000 new residents. COG has projected our County will need housing for 200,000 residents in the next 30 years of which 75% will be in need of affordable housing.

6. Many of our small- and medium-sized business members feel that the policies adopted by County government reflect a lack of appreciation for the contributions they make to our community. Please describe your understanding of the difference between the challenges faced by large multinational companies and small locally owned/operated businesses. (For example, the County requires small business owners to pay a recordation tax when they use their personal home as collateral for a business loan that is more than \$3 million. Yet large business owners don't have to personally guarantee anything, let alone put their personal property at risk for access to capital.) Please provide three specific examples of how you will support small businesses and ensure opportunities for them to grow and expand.

In today's environment of bidding for the large growth industries to locate in our community, we will always see disproportionate appreciation for small and large businesses. We have two distinct and competing responsibilities toward business. First we must entice large corporate entities with tax abatement as well as incentives towards land or building costs and sometimes infrastructure, so these large employers come and help promote the viability of smaller businesses in our county. The second responsibility is to create a level and fair playing field for smaller businesses. By giving them a seat at the table to discuss potential obstacles which hurt their potential viability we may be able to divert these problems. We finally should seek to make our county government competitive with tax and legislative requirements compatible with other jurisdictions surrounding ours. I suspect we need to hire Jacob Sesker or some other equally capable and qualified impartial contractor to analyze and help develop a competitive business impact analysis of the DMV to see where we may make the necessary changes if they are needed. Some criticize research as paralysis by analysis however data trumps guessing IMHO.

7. The Route 29 Corridor in Eastern Montgomery County has suffered from a lack of commercial and other development for many years. Few, if any new employment opportunities have been created to provide jobs that would address complaints about traffic congestion (that is taking employees to Silver Spring or D.C.) or bring economic prosperity to this area. What are you going to do to ensure economic development that brings new businesses and jobs to the East County/Rt. 29 Corridor?

We need a continuum of economic growth and redevelopment in the Eastern County, Burtonsville appears to be settling in with grant funding from the State delegation to help redevelop the Burtonsville Crossing and have announced new tenants and the introduction of a new grocery store which should help Burtonsville, although some residents state, road improvements may be needed to provide safety from cut through traffic from 29 through Burtonsville Crossing to 198. Once elected I will speak to Greg Slater to see what the SHA thinks about this. The White Oak shopping Center Sears holds a 99 year lease and they claim to wish to redevelop and sublet this space. They also claim to have potential tenants in consideration, we need to allow them the opportunity to present their plan, however this will be redevelopment which may not require Site Plan Approval, time will tell. This leaves smaller centers in Hillandale and Four Corners which I

support improvements with DHCD involvement to improve these smaller town centers to become green walkable town center linkages for community interaction. Then there is the 500 pound gorilla words used endearingly lol Viva white Oak. I support the Planned 5,500 housing units with the 6.5 million square feet of commercial space. Some in the Community have issues with the proposed location of two schools and Montgomery College within the site. I would like to see a vocational training center as part of Montgomery College potentially on parcel k. The Developer apparently engaged the Leggett administration to acquire some County Owned properties and the Federal Government (GSA) owns parcel K. There is the new proposal by the developer to move these two schools, a middle school and an elementary school site to the Federal Government owned property (Parcel K) which the community seems to object to. There are currently 40 million dollars in reserve for Infrastructure costs associated with the Viva project and an additional 32 million in Tax abatements. It would appear more seed money will be needed to make Viva White oak a reality in the shorter term which still could be 5-7 years away. Once Elected I will attempt to convene meetings with the Montgomery County delegation and developer to see if our General Assembly may be of assistance to make this project move forward with some sort of economic development grant. This one project could be a major State economic boom. I will also work with the business community to invite interest from large national and potentially international businesses to locate here. These will be major efforts which will require significant support from the County, Business community and Residents and will require some diplomatic work to make happen. A copy of the Labquest proposal which is a group of residents whom support the Viva White Oak development may be downloaded from my website. Carylamari.net... There are still potential ROW issues which are problematic for dedicated BRT lanes though the Four Corners Area. This will be a major obstacle for dedicated bus lanes however should not hamper development in the Eastern County IMHO. This is a preliminary evaluation from my research and discussions with members of the Community.

8. The Chamber supports a balanced approach to transportation policies that takes into account the needs of our member businesses, their employees, their customers, and their vendors. That balance must accommodate those who use public transit, drive on our roads, travel by bicycle and on foot, and need sufficient parking options at their destination.
 - Please describe your approach to finding the right balance of transit, roads, parking, and other transportation options.

I agree, on a good year bus ridership is at 5%, less than 2% as a result of the pandemic and over 77% still rely on the Automobile. We have a moral obligation to reduce our carbon footprint which IMO requires significant investment in buses, bicycles and pedestrian opportunities and we should create incentives for the public to use these buses, today our County uses a stick to force people out of their cars and to date this has not worked. I support the Houston Approach County wide of re-imagining buses. It is cheaper and seems to have had good results in Houston Texas. This new imagining is simply a review of existing routes, making necessary changes so we have stops where the population who benefit from buses live and increase scheduling making buses more reliable and convenient. We could also build solar canopies along these bus stop associated sidewalks and benefit by solar collection and cover for riders of buses. We also need to make sure these buses are beneficial to clients for their destinations which will require DOT to do necessary studies and further make buses free. Today the fare box brings in approximately 20 million dollars, and buses run at approx. 10% capacity. By making buses free we increase ridership, reduce carbon emissions and congestion on our roads and potential save on maintenance costs.

I think this approach would be cheaper than an “all BRT” approach and would move our economic strategy forward and faster and finally cheaper. IMHO BRT does have its place on moving large numbers of people from further distances faster and should be part of the transportation program but increased Houston based Ride On could provide equal opportunities and allow for money to finance needed road improvements for both the Automobile and buses. We also should investigate increased MARC and Metro Redline improvements especially from Shady Grove to Clarksburg IMHO depending on future Federal and State assistance.

- What is your proposal to balance this equation -roads, trains, buses, roads, parking garages? Need all to get people to work?

As previously discussed in question 8, I agree. With respect to Parking Garages, I completely agree however this new progressive trend suggests reducing parking to accommodate missing middle housing which I think some may be appropriate but I am concerned like so many of these proposals it is like a Pendulum which goes all the way one way and then all the way to the other. This will require significant support from the Business community to temper using data and wisdom IMHO. Remember no one Council member will be able to set the agenda, especially with 11 Council members 4 of which are At-Large which may predominately be in the same quadrant of the County such as we have today IMO.

- What will you do to address the needs and concerns of businesses that expect to be harmed financially during the continued construction of The Purple Line?

This is a huge problem as the State has created this nightmare with the support and participation of a sector of the public and some elected officials. My opinion and what I will support is some sort of rent assistance until the Purple line problem is worked out and completed. I think these monies should come from the State primarily with County Participation. I will discuss this with the County Delegation to see what can be done. It is dysfunction such as this and the Silver Spring transit station which costs us to increase taxes and this lack of accountability and negligence should also be addressed for the long term progress of the County.

9. In 2019, the Council passed legislation to require an Economic Impact analysis to determine a proposed bill’s potential positive or negative effects, if any, on the County’s workforce, taxation policy, property values, incomes, operating costs to businesses and non-profits operating in the County, capital investment from the private sector, economic development, and the County’s competitiveness. The Chamber believes that this effort has not always focused sufficiently on impacts to existing businesses and the economy as a whole.

- Would you require that this analysis include interviews and discussions with actual business owners? Why or why not?

Metrics should be part of the process, especially if we are to use a Racial Equity, Social Justice Lens. More often than not it is this population of business owner which is hurt the most.

Further I believe in public participation which includes the business community for best practices.

- Would you require this analysis to include formal input from the Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation? Why or why not?

Yes however, I need more research on the MCEDC practices.

- Would you require this analysis to include formal input from the County Chamber of Commerce, and the individual area Chambers (rather than just the Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation? Why or why not?

As I said earlier, I believe in public participation, Lay experts provide invaluable knowledge and expertise at no expense to the public. The Chambers are experienced public as well as stakeholders IMO.

10. What is your vision for the future of greater Silver Spring and Montgomery County, and what is needed to accomplish this vision, over the next 5 years?

We have discussed the challenges and obstacles for Silver Spring and hopefully we may turn back some of the issues which have turned Silver Spring from a regional destination to a local commercial hub. Time and public criticism is a major factor. The residents and the local Council member play a major part in the future of Silver Spring and many want to increase the High Rise residential identity of Silver Spring which push for fewer roads and less parking and more complicated road networks. All factors in the future disposition of Silver Spring which are not in the control of the next County Council but that of today's as they are just now completing their CBD Master Plan.

To be honest there are too many pieces in play to accurately predict the future. As Jacob Sesker says, if we cannot predict tomorrow, how are we to predict next week. We need time to see how Thrive Montgomery 2050 plays out, time to see the impact of the pandemic and time to see who is elected and what their agendas are IMHO.

I do feel comfortable in saying, if things move forward as I have discussed with the participation of the residents, business community as well as elected officials I am hopeful.