

Suzanne Oshinsky
Candidate for County Council, District B

1. What improvements are needed for your district?

We need to carefully manage changes in our use of rural areas, in order to protect our food supply and way of life. Development needs to be mindful of the community not the developers, in line with the established HarfordNEXT Plan. Creating a sense of community is a priority rather than throwing down a long strip of residential and business developments along the Route 1 corridor. By the same token, green spaces and parks need to be distributed more evenly, and in particular, our denser areas should be given priority in developing outdoor recreational opportunities. I would also like to see an increase in the walkability of our neighborhoods, and greater access by public transit from residential to commercial areas. In general, county government needs to do a better job of being transparent and alerting citizens, so that the public can have input at each step of the approval process.

2. What legislation do you plan to introduce for your district? For the County? If you are an incumbent, what legislation have you introduced?

Transparency and accountability laws are a priority. The public has a right to easily accessible information and opportunities for input at each stage of the approval process.

3. How would you include or engage more people to provide input to the Council's decisions?

This is something that I have been thinking about, as I personally feel that there is a lack of communication between our local government and the people they work for. I would like to institute regular meet and greets between council members and their constituents that take place in locations that are in our community, such as libraries and community centers. Council members need to clearly explain the benefits of any legislation they vote on and give constituents a chance to have input before final decisions are made.

4. Would you be willing to explain your voting decisions on the dais for each bill you vote upon?

Yes, I want my council members to explain voting decisions on the dais and in regular communications on the county website and newsletters sent out to constituents. We need an open discussion of the pros and cons on any voting decision.

5. Would you support better ways to provide the public with user-friendly notification of decisions by DAC and the Zoning Board of Appeals? If so, how?

Yes, the county website should be regularly updated and notification sent out to all those subscribed to the website as well as other public and social media. This information should be easily accessible and updated in a timely matter and allow for plenty of opportunities for public input and discussion.

6. Would you vote in favor of term limits for County Council members? Explain.

If my constituents bring this up as a concern, I would be favorable to term limits. I think there is value to having both new and fresh ideas introduced into our council, by the introduction of new members, as well as having those with experience and knowledge. I do believe that we need to change the old-boys network and nepotism that is so common in local government.

7. How do you propose to solve the County's traffic problems in your district?

While driving around our county, I rarely see a bus on these same roads. I grew up and spent my college years without a car, because I lived within easy walking distance to great public transit options. Young people, as well as those with disabilities that prohibit them from driving, and even those of us who don't like to be forced to get in a car to go anywhere, would benefit from expanding our public transit. I'd like to see a bus loop around Tollgate from I95 up to the Harford Mall area, through downtown Bel Air and then to 924 as well reaching the Wegmans and Box Hill areas. Make areas further north accessible by public transport and increase the number of bike paths and sidewalks.

8. What parts of the zoning code do you feel need to be changed?

Rather than changing our zoning code ad hoc whenever a developer makes a request, I would like to see the code reflect the needs of the people that live there. Plans should be made to ensure our communities develop in a sustainable manner and to ensure we can maintain quality of life for our residents.

9. Do you feel it's time for noise and lighting legislation in Harford County?

Yes, noise and light pollution affect people's quality of life and also harm wildlife. I would also like to add that some of our children with special needs are especially bothered by bright lights and loud noises and it would be wonderful for our communities to show sensitivity to their needs as well.

10. Do you approve of General Industrial (GI) zoning adjacent to residential communities or within a Village District? If your answer is 'No', how do you reconcile your disapproval with HarfordNEXT and recent Comprehensive Zoning Review decisions?

I do not approve of General Industrial zoning adjacent to residential communities or within a village district. There is a discrepancy between the larger vision of sustainable development contained in HarfordNEXT and the specific zoning decisions allowing GI next to residential areas.

11. Do you agree with the reduction in the number of County inspections on construction sites when only 34 percent of contractors are in compliance with the Erosion and Sedimentation Control Ordinance?

No, oversight and enforcement of our ordinances requires a sufficient number of inspections to ensure that our county is protecting our water sources and the health of the Chesapeake Bay.