



November 2, 2021

To,
The Montgomery County Executive
101 Monroe Street, 2nd Floor
Rockville MD 20850

Re: Vacancy for Dir. Position at Department of Environmental Protection

Dear County Executive Elrich:

On behalf of the 6,000 members of the Sierra Club Montgomery County Group, we are writing to you regarding the upcoming vacancy at the helm of the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) due to the impending departure of Administrator Adam Ortiz.

The Recycling and Resource Management Division's programs comprise 80 percent of the DEP's budget. The RRMD manages the waste of Maryland's largest jurisdiction: more than 1.2 million tons annually, 600,000 tons of which are incinerated within the county. Because you have made closing the trash incinerator a high priority, we believe that the person selected to head up the Department must share your goal. To meet our greenhouse gas reduction targets, closing the incinerator should be top of mind for the DEP administrator. That person must have significant experience in implementing alternatives to waste incineration, including zero waste and other innovative waste reduction programs in a mid-size or larger city or county. They should have significant training and background in the principles of zero waste which recognize the Zero Waste Hierarchy, which prioritizes: rethink/redesign, followed by reduce, reuse, recycle/compost, material recovery, and finally residuals management, (biological treatment and stabilized landfilling), while making waste incineration and "waste-to-energy" schemes unacceptable.

Making this zero-waste hierarchy central, the new DEP director must be able to follow through with creative solutions in a range of programs that incorporate best practices around the country and worldwide, including:

- Composting food waste and other organics as envisioned in the "Strategic Plan to Advance Composting, Compost Use, and Food Scraps Diversion in Montgomery County, Maryland," published in April 2018, including launching residential curbside, multi-family, and commercial compost collection programs; and expanding on-farm, community, on-site, and backyard composting.
- Establishing and implementing an organics recycling/composting facility within the county that includes composting of yard waste and food scraps.
- Using compost to benefit the county in areas such as stormwater management, building soil health for landscaping and food production, and carbon sequestration.



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- Expanding recycling programs and developing a new Materials Recovery Facility to ensure that the county can continue to manage its own recycling.
- Consolidating Subdistricts, A and B to cover the whole county and make trash collection more efficient and to reduce truck traffic and air pollution.
- Converting from property tax-based solid waste disposal charges to a unit-based, or “Save-as-You-Throw” payment structure for residences to further incentivize waste reduction.
- Developing a Resource Recovery Park to tackle hard-to-recycle materials such as electronics, textiles, mattresses, and carpeting.
- Reducing single-use plastic containers and packaging through extended producer responsibility initiatives.

Ideally, the candidate selected should have experience working with all these zero waste programs. Furthermore, the candidate should analyze the recommendations of the report, *Beyond Incineration*, as prepared by Zero Waste Montgomery experts, which advances many of these ideas and questions the conclusions of the county’s consultants that favor incineration over landfilling.

We look forward to working with you to find the best fit for the head of this important agency.

Sincerely,

Shruti Bhatnagar
Chair
Sierra Club Montgomery County
Shruti.bhatnagar@mdsierra.org

Amy Maron
Zero Waste Lead
Sierra Club Montgomery County
amy.maron@mdsierra.org

Susan Eisendrath
Composting Lead