



Climate Action Coffee Questions for Takoma Park 2022 Candidates for Mayor and City Council

Terry Seamens: Candidate for City Council, Ward 4

These questions have been prepared by Takoma Park Climate Action Coffee (CAC)¹ with assistance from its working groups (Pollinators, Takoma Stormwater Solutions, and Community Food Forest). CAC is a part of the Takoma Park Mobilization (TPM) and began meeting weekly starting in October 2019.

We are providing these questions to all candidates. When responses are received, they will be shared with our members and other Takoma Park organizations who may be interested, likely including TPM's email list of ca. 2,500.

We ask candidates to provide succinct answers addressing these questions.

Your Background and Experience; What Will You Bring?

B1. Can you describe the skills, training, and background you feel qualify you for the position you seek? Do you have budget experience? Project management? Do you have any background related to the environmental issues we will increasingly experience due to climate change, like heat, drought, fires, more severe storms and flooding, economic impacts on lower income communities, etc.? What practical experience do you bring to the table?

The property where I grew up was half woods and half agricultural, so I developed a great love of nature. Observing our world today, I've developed a deep fear for the future. Much of what I saw in abundance

¹ <https://tpmobilization.org/climate-action-coffee>

in my youth has dwindled away, such as pollinators and butterflies. Thankfully, my 21 years on the Takoma Park Council has afforded me the opportunity to respond to my concerns in positive ways.

I knew little about budgeting before I joined the Council in 1999, but I have learned much since then. Fortunately, my project management experience in my career spanning over 40 years, including management of a team of software consultants has been very helpful. Although I provided software consulting support to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for about 15 years, that focused on the Clean Water Act and nothing on the environmental issues listed in this question.

Climate

Keeping in mind that Takoma Park has residents, businesses, and organizations with incredible talents and resources who are very informed on these topics and who are eager to be engaged:

C1. What will you do to lead the community to rapidly reduce Takoma Park's climate impact, both to reduce the City's carbon footprint, and to increase carbon drawdown and sequestration? How will you effectively coordinate climate and environmental adaptation and mitigation strategies across all City Departments?

The Council passed a Sustainability and Climate Action Plan in 2019 that schedules the steps the city must take to reduce the city's greenhouse gas emissions 100% by the year 2035. I will continue to work to fully fund that plan so we can stay on schedule.

C2. What will you do to lead our community's resilience for the impacts already upon us – such as increased rainfall, increased heat, food insecurity – and affecting especially those in our community with limited access to resources?

This year the Council allocated some of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding from the Federal Government to assist our residents impacted by COVID-19 who have limited resources. On the next Council I will continue to prioritize helping our less fortunate residents to mitigate hardships that are beyond their control.

C3. How would you actively involve concerned residents and experts who live and/or work in the City? What policy priorities and strategies will you recommend to encourage greater civic engagement and partnership with the City? Would you be willing to designate one or more staff person(s) with specific responsibility to help coordinate and work with community and resident-led adaptation and mitigation partnerships?

As you highlight in this question, Takoma Park is fortunate to be the home of so many talented, well-educated and experienced people. Official city committees and community organized groups are important to the Council for researching topics and providing the Council with recommendations for policies. The official City's Sustainable Maryland Committee addresses a segment of environmental issues, as does the City's Sustainability Manager. Still, the broad range of environmental issues we are facing creates room for a community organized group to work on other important issues. I would be happy to assist with the formation of such a group and willing work with the group on how best to advocate for staff assistance when the time is right. I don't foresee the Council adding another official committee or providing staff support until the goals are defined and a plan is written.

C4. Many jurisdictions consider Climate Action Plans to be, of necessity, living documents that continually must be revised to reflect changing outlooks and conditions. What will you do to bring Takoma Park's plan up to date?

Takoma Park's Sustainability Manager, who recently accepted a job in another jurisdiction, worked fulltime developing, administrating and updating the city's Sustainability and Climate Action Plan. We plan to hire a replacement for the departing manager. A community organized environmental group could certainly advocate for additional work if they feel it is needed.

Stormwater

Residents are experiencing the impacts of the growing amounts and intensity of rainfall during storms.

S1. Are you in favor of City funding for architectural & engineering studies for environmental services collaboration on private property?

I am in favor of the Council looking into ways for assisting private property owners in mitigating stormwater runoff issues. I will need to learn about best practices of other jurisdictions, any possible legal limitations, budgetary estimates and other aspects of the concept. The impact of stormwater runoff that runs through private property is a growing problem and now is the time to develop a plan to assist the community. By the way, Montgomery County does provide some assistance, but not in Takoma Park, since we impose our own stormwater fee.

S2. How would you address flooding in the most vulnerable neighborhoods/watersheds like Maple Avenue and Circle Woods?

We have a current project in the Circle Woods neighborhood to improve stormwater management. Although we have heard concerns about that project, nobody has raised concern about long-term stormwater concerns in Circle Woods or on lower Maple Avenue. This is an example of one issue that a community organized group could address by collecting information, providing evidence of their claims and advocating for the need for attention and maybe even making recommendations.

S3. What would you do to address flooding that could be exacerbated by City projects?

Other than the resident raised issue surrounding the current Circle Woods project, I am unaware of an example described in the question. Again, if information is brought forward, supported by credible evidence, I'm sure the Council will want Public Works to look into it so that we (the City) don't make things worse.

S4. What are your thoughts regarding concerns that the Library is sited in a floodplain likely to experience increasingly severe flooding events as climate change accelerates?

I advocated for relocating the municipal center, including the library to the much higher old Washington Adventist Hospital property, when we first began consideration of expanding the library. I did not spark any interest, either from the Council or community. Having now approved a design on the current library

site, which I did support with my vote, I feel confident that the engineers involved in the design have planned for the anticipated increase in flood water and have designed a building that will stay high and dry.

S5. Would you support a Citizens task force on stormwater to help the City prepare a strategic plan for stormwater management? Have you read our Takoma Stormwater Solutions' PROPOSED PLAN FOR DEVELOPING A STORMWATER RESILIENCE STRATEGIC PLAN IN TAKOMA PARK?² Can you comment on it?

I would absolutely support such a task force.

No I have not read your Stormwater Solutions report. I'm sorry if I overlooked the report in my inbox. I did a quick scan and did not find it in my city email account or the personal emails.

S6. What is the City's role and responsibility to educate and incentivize residents to mitigate stormwater on their property?

As with many issues, the City should certainly use education as a way of addressing and correcting problems. We see it with Emergency Preparedness and many other issues. I feel a community organized group could be far more effective in this approach, since they can provide more people hours to the work. This is not to diminish the City's responsibility. It is just a matter of many hands make for lighter work.

Wildlife Corridor & Native Plants

Many of you have heard of Doug Tallamy's Homegrown National Park movement³ and most likely the Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club's effort to create and map a wildlife corridor of native plants from the Appalachian Mountains to the Chesapeake Bay. This corridor of native plants would provide a safe haven for insects, butterflies, and other creatures to ensure their survival and protect biodiversity because they are badly threatened by climate change.

W1. As a candidate do you believe that the City of Takoma Park should endorse this project as one of its climate change initiatives as other communities in Montgomery and Prince George's County have?

Yes.

W3. Will you advocate for an updated Open Space Management Plan that gives priority to assessing and restoring public green spaces and parks with native trees and plants?

I'll wait to see the final Open Space Management Plan, but your proposal sounds good and I do want to know that we considered it. If it is not included, I need to understand why not.

W4. Are you open to the idea of using Dorothy's Woods as an educational and demonstration area for sustainable urban habitat and watershed management.

² TSS Proposed Plan ... - https://drive.google.com/file/d/1N6AE--z-2BpiLQkK-8xNkluPuekpN95_/view

³ <https://homegrownnationalpark.org/>

Yes.

W5. What else would you do to encourage the proliferation of native plants on public and private space in the City of Takoma Park?

Again, I will support an educational program for property owners. I would also be interested in hearing ideas for a community organized group, such as how they could provide technical advice to property owners.

Food Forests

FF1. Food Forests and/or Foragers Gardens (see local example in Bowie, MD - <https://www.forested.us/>) are a way to address multiple issues: 1) they improve food security and increase food sovereignty, especially for low income families; 2) they increase biodiversity; 3) they help tackle stormwater problems; and 4) they both build resilience to and mitigate the climate crisis, especially with respect to cooling. Are you willing to advocate for the City to explore what it could do to support more food forests throughout the City, both on public property, as well as to provide education and assistance to private property owners who may like to establish food forests?

Yes, this is especially important to my constituents. In fact, we have several small garden boxes on Maple Avenue for low-income neighborhood residents to grow food. They are very popular and well-used. I will support a project that meets the goals your question describes.

As with many of the suggestions you have made in your list of questions, the difficulty comes in prioritizing the use of our limited City resources. That is why I have suggested community organized groups so many times. Although you and I may see the effects of climate as a top priority, they are not getting top priority in the government. It will take more than a few suggestions to change the priorities. Let's work together to realign priorities.

Instructions

Please enter your replies to each question in this document and send the completed document to pbogdonoff@gmail.com . Thank you!

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3 <https://homegrownnationalpark.org/>