

**Baltimore's Environmental Community Candidate Questionnaire  
2016 Baltimore City Races**

This 2016 Candidate questionnaire is a joint project of the Maryland League of Conservation Voters, Clean Water Action, and Sierra Club-Maryland Chapter. These are environmental issues you will likely consider as an elected leader of Baltimore City. Thank you for taking time to answer these important questions. Your answers will be shared with all three organizations and will be key factor for each organization's endorsement decisions.

**Candidate's Name: \_Mary Pat Clarke District number: 14**

**Office Sought: Baltimore City Council Party Affiliation: Democrat Incumbent: Yes x**

**Home Address: 3911 Cloverhill Road Baltimore, Maryland 21218**

**Mobile: 443-676-6187 Email: marypat.clarke@baltimorecity.gov**

**Campaign Address: \_\_P.O. Box 16175 Baltimore, Maryland 21218**

**Campaign Phone: 443-827-2126 Email: marypatclarke@yahoo.com**

**Campaign Website: marypatclarke.com**

**Campaign Manager: Linda Eberhart Email: marypatclarke@yahoo.com**

**Candidate's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
Mary Pat Clarke signed hard copy is in the mail.  
Date: January 3, 2016**

## Good Government

1. Do you commit to communicating with advocates before introducing and supporting bills on issues that concerns them? What mechanisms will you use to provide transparency in your office?

**I would ask this sponsoring coalition to please provide the names and contact information of the major organizations which should receive advance notice on City Council bills on environmental issues. With that information, I will advise in advance of environmental legislation for which I plan to serve as the lead sponsor. Co-sponsorship generally occurs on the day a bill is introduced, with no time for individual advance notice, but I am available to meet and discuss all pending legislation in the course of the legislative process. When I serve as lead sponsor or have a special interest, I issue media notices and explanations; send group emails to interested parties; and, post advance hearing notices in my weekly eblasts called Weekend Happenings. Upon request to my City Hall email address, I will be happy to add coalition contacts to that eblast list. Contact: [marypat.clarke@baltimorecity.gov](mailto:marypat.clarke@baltimorecity.gov)**

## Water Quality

2. In 2012 the state legislature passed the Watershed Protection and Restoration Act. This requires jurisdictions like Baltimore City create and implement a stormwater fee and program. In 2013 Baltimore with lots of citizen and business input designed a program that requires property owners who cause the most polluted runoff to pay the highest fees. Do you support Baltimore City's current program? If not, what is your alternative proposal?

**I serve on the City Council's Judiciary & Legislative Investigations Committee to which local stormwater legislation was referred, and I actively participated in hearings and the amendment process. I agree that the property owners causing the most polluted runoff should pay the highest fees. In general, I support Baltimore City's current program. I urged that properties owned by non-profit organizations and faith communities receive lower rates than proposed, but such amendments failed in committee. Many of us had questions about some of the budget items that drove the fee structure, and some adjustments were made by the committee. Ongoing oversight of that budget is important to preserve the supplemental (special purpose) nature of the fees. These fees should not supplant the funding of traditional City services previously supported by the general fund.**

3. Under an Executive Order of the Environmental Protection Agency, Baltimore is required to treat 20% of its impervious surface area. This is difficult as most city-owned property will not allow for installation of green infrastructure like trees, rain gardens, and bioswales. Several municipalities around the country have implemented market-based solutions that allow private property owners and businesses with room on their properties to install green infrastructure projects on their property allowing them to reduce their stormwater fees and generate credits they then sell to the municipality, industrial permit holders, or developers. What policies would you support or prioritize to improve public participation and investment in stormwater systems?

**Baltimore City must first demonstrate by example by taking on the challenge and capital costs of reducing and treating the impervious surface areas on its own City-owned properties, which are considerable --- and urging the Baltimore City Public Schools to do likewise as a goal of its 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools construction campaign. Likewise, the Planning Commission should set open space development as a goal for INSPIRE, its program to invest capital funds in neighborhoods within a one-mile radius of schools slated for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools construction. Non-profits and faith**

**communities would be my own first choice for generating treatments in addition to those required for their own properties, in exchange for reduced fee schedules.**

#### **Neighborhood Quality of Life**

4. How did you plan to promote and attract environmentally-oriented economic development, concentrating on jobs in green industries and technologies?

**As chair of City Council's Education & Youth Committee, I plan to continue working with the Baltimore City Public Schools, the Mayor's Office of Economic Development (MOED), and non-profit training programs which prepare our citizens, especially our students, for jobs in green industries and technologies. A trained and available workforce is a major magnet for attracting green industry jobs and businesses to Baltimore City --- and an incentive for current businesses to expand.**

5. The Open Space District in the Baltimore Zoning Code is to enhance the quality of life for city residents and improve its business climate. What would you do to permanently preserve and expand public and private lands as an important public asset and critical environmental infrastructure?

**I spend much of my time and energy opposing over-development of private residential property in high-investment areas of the 14<sup>th</sup> District. Ground zero for this over-building is Hampden, in which developers regularly seek zoning variances to build new houses on the side-and-rear yards of existing homes, thus eliminating green spaces from otherwise environmentally balanced blockfaces. Another environmentally harmful trend is to demolish existing structures to overbuild new multifamily properties which squeeze the "green" out of traditional neighborhoods. A major problem is that the City's missions of increasing the tax base and the population affect public decisions on such development proposals, posing an ongoing challenge to environmental balance in neighborhoods targeted for profit by developers.**

**I was recently lead sponsor, partnering with Councilman Nick Mosby, in the landmarking of the Olmsted median strips extending from Clifton Park in the east, across 33<sup>rd</sup> Street and Gwynns Falls Parkway, to Leakin Park in the west. Such landmarking gives the Commission of Historical & Architectural Preservation (CHAP) authority to have a say in proposed alterations to this green "crown of jewels" connecting east and west. The landmark designation was controversial in that it adds CHAP review to permits for traffic-related alterations to these medians.**

**I will continue such efforts to preserve Baltimore's green spaces as a vital balance to often competing priorities.**

6. How will you advocate that economically disadvantaged neighborhoods and communities of color receive enhanced protection when additional sources of pollution are proposed?

**The best "enhanced protection" is avoidance or scale-back in the first place of additional sources of pollution and disruption. In recent months, I have worked with the Darley Park and South Clifton Park neighborhoods when the Baltimore City Department of Transportation was approved to move into the abandoned Laurence Paquin School at 2200 Sinclair Lane, a building located on City parkland. BCDOT's plan is to use that facility as headquarters for its maintenance division.**

**I advised the neighborhoods of these plans and organized community meetings with DOT officials to hear their plans so we could begin scaling back the plans to avoid a negative impact on the adjacent**

neighborhoods and parkland. The neighborhoods then entered into negotiations and arrived at a memorandum of understanding with BCDOT whereby -MORE-

- a) no trucks or utility vehicles will be parked or stored at the facility as originally planned;
- b) personnel were reduced by half of the original plan;
- c) a new asphalt parking lot planned for Clifton Park greenspace was scrapped; and,
- d) much of the school's first floor will be open and available for ongoing community resource activities during DOT working hours.

In addition, DOT did the heavy work of clearing a block-long lot along the 2300 block of Harford Road in preparation for grant-funded landscaping and public amenities; and, installed a wooden neighborhood sign for that prominent location.

**Neighborhoods know best, once informed, advised, and provided with the opportunity to mediate in their own best interests. Setting that scene is the crucial first step. Next is to honor a neighborhood's informed decision to support, to oppose, or to negotiate compromises.**

- 7. Toxic diesel pollution has a devastating impact on public health including numerous adverse effects such as lung cancer, asthma, heart attacks, stroke, and premature death. If elected, would you support a policy that requires clean diesel technology on construction equipment used on public construction projects and other large construction projects supported with city funds? What are your ideas for protecting residents of overburdened Baltimore neighborhoods from additional suffering due to increased sources of pollution?

**Yes. I would support a policy that requires clean diesel technology on construction equipment used on public construction projects and other large construction projects supported with City funds. The eradication of lead paint in City housing is a compelling priority for reducing the "pollution" which destroys lives and the City's hopes for a positive future.**

- 8. Crude oil trains are running from southeast Baltimore winding their way through the City. They move dangerously through our communities and businesses, with no diversion route to protect communities from disaster. How would you work to ensure Baltimore residents are protected from a derailment and explosion?

**I support the proposed moratorium on the issuance of Baltimore City permits (including use & occupancy permits) for any facility that handles crude oil transported by rail through Baltimore City until the effects of transporting crude oil within Baltimore City by rail have been subject to a City health-impacts assessment and a City-approved emergency management safety study and plan.**

**I support the creation of the proposed mitigation fund for clean-up and response in case of derailment or adverse health or safety impacts.**

**I support the proposed public outreach program to disseminate the results of the assessment study and the details of the emergency study and plan.**

**I also support the City's outreach to State leaders and agencies to conduct and share the State's own information and assessments and to the U.S. Department of Transportation to revise and strengthen federal tank car design and operation regulations for petroleum product shipments and aggressively phase-out older-model tank cars that are not retrofitted to meet new federal requirements.**

9. Trees in urban areas help with stormwater management, air quality, and energy conservation while demonstrably improving property values and community pride, yet tree cover in Baltimore has declined significantly in the last several decades. If elected, what would you do to increase the number and health of trees in our communities?

**I applaud the management, spirit, and gains through the leadership of City Forester Erik Dihle and the TreeBaltimore program, including the non-profit partnerships which lend it a breadth of visible and grassroots achievement. I am especially interested in efforts to target lower-income neighborhoods whose high heat islands require tree canopy relief. I plan to make such efforts a priority in my district.**

10. Community gardens provide fresh healthy produce for city residents that can address existing food deserts, green public space, and serve to reduce stormwater runoff. How would you encourage and protect these community assets?

**Years ago, I worked with Miriam Avins, an Adopt-A-Lot constituent, to determine how to secure and sustain abandoned lots for community gardens and green space activities. Although abandoned, the lots are generally still in the name of private owners and sometimes subject to claims from the past. The City would not foreclose and take title at that time, and the volunteer gardeners and their neighborhood associations could not afford the liability or cost of private ownership. Thanks to Ms. Avins' perseverance and the Housing Department's cooperation, Baltimore Greenspace was established and now serves as the non-profit land trust for such community gardens, lending stability and management oversight to community garden sites throughout the City. I continue to promote Adopt-A-Lot agreements and community garden sites, now more confident that our volunteer managers have the private and public support and mechanisms to sustain their efforts.**

11. Under a consent order, the City is spending more than \$1 billion to repair and replace the crumbling sewer system, but unfortunately Baltimore's harbor is still impaired from bacteria and trash. What specific remedies would you take to help accelerate the reduction of this bacteria and trash pollution?

**Oversight of the City's Integrated Project Framework (IPF) should become an important resource for tracking to ensure the priority status of capital projects which reduce bacteria and pollution affecting the harbor and bay. Along with essential government investments are the invaluable non-profit and neighborhood efforts to clean and preserve the watersheds feeding into our harbor. The coalition sponsoring this questionnaire, including Blue Water Baltimore and "Friends" committees (such as Friends of Herring Run Park), are crucial to such efforts.**

**This period of leadership transition is timely for City Council to meet with these activist groups to seek a grassroots assessment of how City government can best assist in accelerating the pace of positive outcomes. That's the advice we need before proposing remedies, and I will gladly sponsor a resolution, leading to a public hearing, to conduct such an oversight review and dialogue.**

**Meanwhile, some good news for the Chesapeake Bay. Thanks to efforts of the 14<sup>th</sup> District's Katzenberg brothers, the Department of Public Works has agreed to establish two recycling locations for used oyster shells, at Sisson Street and Bowleys Lane, to promote the expansion of Maryland's oyster population.**

12. Plastics and polystyrene contribute markedly to the poor health of the Chesapeake Bay, our neighborhoods and waterways. There are also safe and inexpensive comparable types of containers as replacements. What programs would you support or propose to reduce this waste from our streets and waterways? This might include a ban on polystyrene or on plastic bags, source reduction policies decreasing the volume of frequently littered items, increased funding for litter removal initiatives like the Water Wheel, and/or city-wide recycling in restaurants, bars and businesses. How would you finance these programs and address the needs of low-income and elderly Baltimore City residents?

**I support a ban on plastic bags and am a co-sponsor of Councilman Bill Henry's pending CCBill 15-0469 Plastic Bag Reduction. After years of active and unsuccessful co-sponsorship of similar legislation, from bans to surcharges, I am currently hopeful that General Assembly initiatives will succeed in this upcoming session to ban plastic bags statewide, hopefully overcoming the argument that a local ban places Baltimore markets and food establishments at a competitive disadvantage with its surrounding subdivisions. (Special thanks to Delegate Brooke Lierman for her Statewide leadership on this issue.)**

**Source reduction makes sense. A well-documented consensus is required from a Baltimore City coalition of recognized environmental organizations on the main ban-able products polluting our harbor and waterways --- and legislation proposed which sets reduction goals related to quantifiable reduction goals for the harbor. When we seek to ban products one-by-one, the debate devolves into what other products are even more harmful than the product at issue. Let's go after them all in the same legislative package, with health for the harbor the focus.**

**As part of this overall effort, Baltimore City must promote apartment complex recycling and jump-start expansion of weekly household recycling in low-participating neighborhoods. The trash can program is coming online and should help reduce broken bags and spilled debris, but Recycling's bright yellow containers inspire peer-to-peer buy-in along any given alley. Let's get them out there, backed-up by community meetings to demonstrate what products belong in the yellow containers and how they generate income for sanitation efforts, like alley sweeping.**

## **Transportation**

13. A great city needs a great transportation system, including rail, bus, bike lanes and improved pedestrian safety. What is your vision of a great transit system in Baltimore and what will you do to help make this vision a reality. How can you make Baltimore safer for pedestrians and bicyclists?

**"Complete Streets" was my City Council legislation and remains my vision for transportation in Baltimore City. City Council is still working with the Baltimore City Department of Transportation (BCDOT) to prioritize safety, moderate traffic speeds, and achieve balanced road sharing among the many users incorporated in the Complete Streets formula, including bicyclists and pedestrians.**

**Despite growing cooperation in these areas, we still find ourselves addressing the issues on a case-by-case basis as opposed to relying on a standard Complete Streets traffic policy in which traffic calming installations, for example, are given.**

**The Baltimore vision for an integrated mass transit program is on hold in Annapolis and in flux with the MTA. We've been robbed and need to regroup around the red line. MTA's Baltimore Link has hundreds**

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**of patrons concerned that key crucial routes are disappearing into a network of fewer and more distant stops, with delayed transfer connections and no practical efficiencies to show for the disruption. In the 14<sup>th</sup> District, we are forming ongoing patron workgroups to negotiate with MTA on restoring key routes and rejecting systemic transfer requirements.**

**Baltimore City's most urgent priorities include expanding job opportunities for our unemployed and underemployed residents. Integrated transportation systems are an essential means to that end. In this time of flux, however, we must work to "fix" the negative aspects of Baltimore Link and "go local" by accelerating our efforts to attract new and expanding jobs to the City itself, so our residents can get there --- on bikes, in carpools, on direct MTA bus routes, and even by walking. In the now-term, for job opportunities beyond the beltway, the City must pursue private/public partnerships for affordable and reliable van pool services connecting City workers with regional job centers.**

#### **bicycles**

**I have worked with the bicycle community for years, including the introduction and enactment of legislation which, along with Complete Streets, included a Bicycle Bill of Rights, required police training in the rights and regulations pertaining to bikers, required onsite bike parking by employers and in the development of new business and residential complexes, and required installation of perpendicular storm water grates as part of all street reconstructions.**

**Many of the parking space requirements have been rolled over into the proposed new Baltimore zoning code with the input of Baltimore bike organizations. I will continue to follow-up to ensure fair accommodations, ongoing police orientations, and the development of ever-safer bike lane configurations.**

**Most importantly, I will continue to urge Baltimore to campaign publicly to educate the public on bicyclists' importance to the local transportation mix and our economy, their key role in our Complete Street mix, and their rights on the road.**

#### **pedestrians**

**A similar campaign is necessary to protect our pedestrians, especially children along school routes and at locations where they gather, like playgrounds; and, our elderly, especially at intersections near congregate senior citizen residences --- where I will continue to work for prolonged pedestrian walk cycles as a BCDOT requirement.**

**I will also continue to urge a campaign of public education to comply with the State law requiring a full stop for the pedestrian crossing of an unsignalized crosswalk. Drivers are obviously uneducated in this law, putting pedestrians at risk. Such a deficit of road rule knowledge is a threat and a symbol of how far we have to go in accommodating pedestrians as equal participants in the Complete Streets mix.**

14. The Charm City Circulator is a convenient and free service facilitating transportation for both residents and visitors. What is your vision for the Circulator, including routes and financial viability?

**The Circulator is a blessing to the Charles Village neighborhood where it has recently been extended. Even before it arrived in my district, I have been a strong advocate, and I support the use of our general funds to support its operations. The Circulator originated to serve the tourist population so important to our economy. But it has expanded to make much local job commuting efficient and cost-efficient, keeping many additional cars off the roads during peak times. I support further expansion to commercial and cultural centers as a boost to those centers as well and a convenience to center employees. For my senior citizens in congregate housing, my plan is the establishment of a circulating jitney service through a local non-profit provider which connects the seniors with Circulator routes to shopping, medical, and social service destinations.**

#### **Lead Paint, Toxics, and Pesticides**

15. Given the unhealthy state of Baltimore's older housing stock in low income communities, the City continues to be beset by high rates of lead poisoning and asthma. Both of these factors have dramatic impacts on a child's education. Lead Poisoning leads to serious reading disabilities and violent behavior and asthma is the number one reason kids miss school. What is your distinct plan to scale investments in healthy, lead-safe interventions to protect our children and create a healthier, more affordable housing stock?

**In the 1990's, when conditions became irreparably blighted, dysfunctional, and dangerous in the Housing Authority's family highrises, Baltimore Housing partnered with the federal Hope programs to demolish those highrises, replacing them with low-rise, mixed income housing developments. Residents were relocated during construction, many returning to live in these promising new surroundings. Once begun, this unimaginable transformation moved at an amazing pace to become the new reality from east to west.**

**The scope of that effort suggests the equally transformational potential of demolishing, rehabilitating, and building anew the blighted blocks of concentrated rental properties in which hundreds of our children have become and are still becoming lead-poisoned for life. Yes, it's different, because these rental properties are privately owned. But observe in our day how Baltimore's major medical institutions have leveled entire blocks of private property, with all the foreclosures and relocations entailed, to expand their institutions. How can we not do likewise to expand the potential of our City's future generations?**

**There is no scale to measure the major condemnations, negotiations, relocations, financial investments, private/public partnerships --- and sheer management --- such a transformation will require. But such an undertaking does finally meet the test of that significant break with past wrongs which, in saving hundreds of our families and children, can radically change our City itself for the better --- and ensure a future at all.**

**In the immediate, we need a child-centered approach to this lead poisoning disease, with all our children regularly tested, beginning as toddlers --- and immediately relocated with their families upon the first trace of lead-poisoning. No waiting for a tenant complaint or an inspection of the premises, with unregistered rental properties publicly posted as barred from family rental status until certified lead-safe and with testing equipment, data systems, inspectors and lead abatement personnel adequately funded and functional. We can do this.**

### **General**

16. What other ideas do you have for making Baltimore a greener and more sustainable city? What other environmental issues should we be working on to serve your neighborhood and the city?

**We need environmental advocates to join forces with preservation advocates and the general public to launch a campaign for citywide balance between compelling development goals and the need to value and save the City's diminishing greenspace. From residential side yards to parkland incursions, greenspace is victim to the "death by a thousand cuts" played out at official decision-making hearings where greenspace values lack the compelling consideration of development initiatives. These battles are almost always fought one-by-one, below the radar, at the most local of levels, by neighbors of targeted properties. Only unified citywide leadership can compel land use decision-makers to afford credence and consideration to so many isolated efforts to save the City's greenspace, yard by lot.**