



MARYLAND LEAGUE
OF CONSERVATION VOTERS

Anne Arundel
County
Elected Officials
2020 Mid-Term
Report Card

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Environmental report cards are a signature endeavor of Maryland League of Conservation Voters. This Report Card covers the period starting with the swearing in of the new county council and county executive in December 2018 through October 2020. In it, we grade the environmental performance of all seven members of the Anne Arundel county council and the performance of the county executive.

In grading members of the county council and the county executive, we followed an approach similar to that used in the past. Grades were based on the following factors:

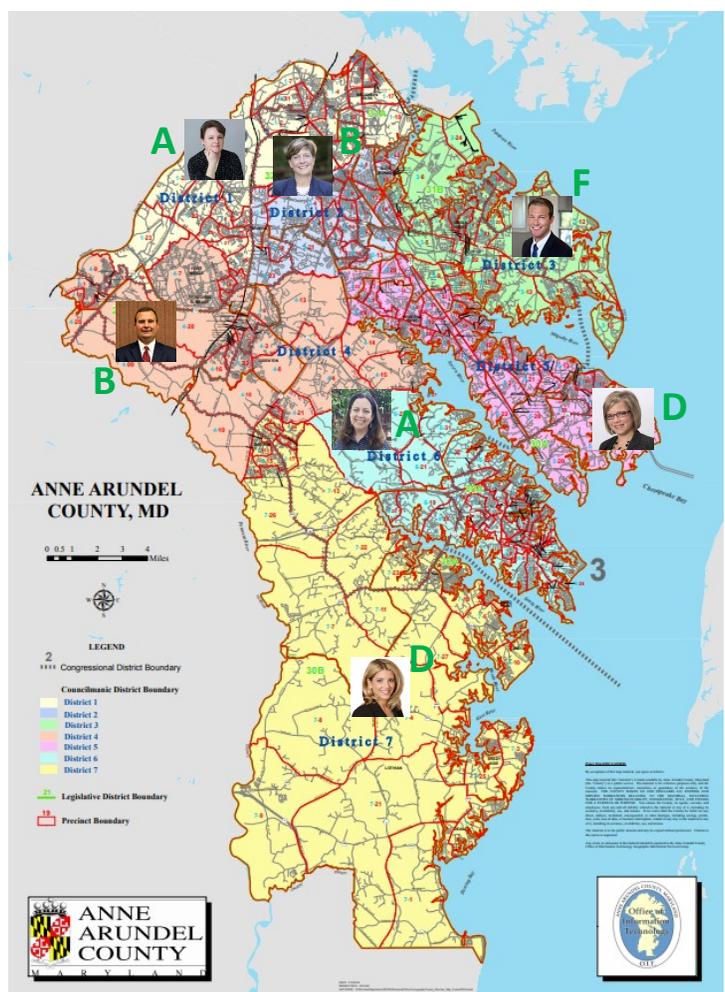
- Votes of each council member on bills and amendments relating to conservation issues
- Sponsoring, supporting bills, and building support for conservation initiatives, whether or not those initiatives resulted in bills or enacted legislation
- Public comments on conservation issues and their responsiveness to the concerns of the environmental community
- Views of environmental leaders and organizations in the county

Each member of the county council and the county executive was provided an opportunity to speak with us to discuss the grading process and issues of concern to him or her. **Councilman Volke** failed to respond to our invitation.

County Council Overall Grades

In assigning overall grades we used a scale of A to F. We did not adhere to a mathematical formula averaging grades on each issue. We gave increased weight to votes on the forest conservation amendments and we considered leadership and public support for conservation issues.

District 1	Sarah Lacey	A
District 2	Alison Pickard	B
District 3	Nathan Volke	F
District 4	Andrew Pruski	B
District 5	Amanda Fiedler	D
District 6	Lisa Rodvien	A
District 7	Jessica Haire	D



The Context

The members of the newly elected county council and county executive represent a major change in environmental direction for the county.

Democrat **Steuart Pittman** won the county executive's office by a large margin over the Republican incumbent. The environment, and particularly land use, was a major focus of Pittman's campaign.

The county council went from a four Republican majority to a four Democratic majority. The gender make-up of the county council went from all male to five female and two male. The new county executive and six of the seven members of the new county council had never run for office before.

The county executive and five of the seven members of the council were endorsed by

Maryland LCV.

The 2018 elections brought us the strongest conservation minded Anne Arundel County government we have had in recent memory.

The new county executive and county council hit the ground running. The county council considered a number of environmental bills, supported by the county executive in its 2019 term. Additionally, the county executive advanced conservation through a number of administrative actions. Then the Covid 19 pandemic struck. Public meetings were cancelled and it took weeks to set up virtual meetings. Work on important bills and other projects slowed.

Below are the bills, amendments and actions that serve as the basis for the overall grades for each of the council members and county executive.

Forest Conservation (Bill 68-19)

District 1	Sarah Lacey	A
District 2	Alison Pickard	A
District 3	Nathan Volke	F
District 4	Andrew Pruski	A
District 5	Amanda Fiedler	F
District 6	Lisa Rodvien	A
District 7	Jessica Haire	F

With the strong support of **County Executive Pittman**, county council member **Lisa Rodvien** sponsored strong improvements to the county's forest conservation law. The proposal was a major improvement on existing law.

There was a great deal of opposition to the bill including efforts to advance amendments to weaken the bill. In a major disappointment, most of the county council members endorsed by Maryland LCV voted for one or more amendments to weaken the bill.

In response, the **Pittman** administration made substantial changes to the bill and, with the support of Maryland LCV and other environmental groups, presented a revised proposal. With several additional amendments, the revised bill passed seven to zero. However, the final vote hides the real story of who truly worked to protect Anne Arundel county forests.

In the first round of amendments, several of

Maryland LCV's endorsed council members made a poor showing. Six negative or weakening amendments were offered and passed. The amendments related to grandfathering, protection of greenways, size of forests protected, protection threshold, protecting specimen trees and exemption of impervious surfaces.

Rodvien and **Lacey** opposed five of the six weakening amendments. **Haire** opposed one. **Pruski, Pickard, Fiedler** and **Volke** supported all of the weakening amendments.

Four strengthening amendments also were offered. They related to increasing fees-in-lieu, increasing penalties, requiring no net loss of forests, and eliminating reforestation credits. **Rodvien** voted for all of them and **Lacey** for two. **Pruski, Pickard, Fiedler, Haire** and **Volke** voted for none.

After a revised bill was presented, there was another round of amendments. Three of them were of particular importance. An amendment broadening protection of specimen trees passed four to three. **Rodvien, Lacey, Pruski** and **Pickard** voted in favor. **Fiedler, Haire** and **Volke** voted against.

Another amendment would save other provisions of the bill if one provision was voided. All but **Volke** voted in favor. An amendment increasing penalties for violations passed six to one with only **Volke** voting against.

Styrofoam Bill (Bill 5-19)

District 1	Sarah Lacey	A
District 2	Alison Pickard	A
District 3	Nathan Volke	F
District 4	Andrew Pruski	A
District 5	Amanda Fiedler	F
District 6	Lisa Rodvien	A
District 7	Jessica Haire	F

This bill prohibits the use and sale of expanded polystyrene products at food service facilities located in the county and requires an education and outreach program. **Rodvien, Lacey, Pruski and Pickard** supported the bill. **Fiedler, Haire and Volke** voted against it.

Environmental Protection & Stormwater Fees (Bills 39 –19) and 40-19)

District 1	Sarah Lacey	A
District 2	Alison Pickard	A
District 3	Nathan Volke	F
District 4	Andrew Pruski	A
District 5	Amanda Fiedler	F
District 6	Lisa Rodvien	A
District 7	Jessica Haire	F

Bill 39 - 19 increased the environmental protection fee for water and sewer service. Bill 40 - 19 increased the stormwater remediation fee. It had been several years since the fees were adjusted. Increases were necessary to maintain these essential programs. **Rodvien, Lacey, Pruski and Pickard** voted in favor. **Fiedler, Haire and Volke** voted against.

Limiting Density Increase in Conservation Areas (Bill 5-20)

District 1	Sarah Lacey	A
District 2	Alison Pickard	A
District 3	Nathan Volke	F
District 4	Andrew Pruski	A
District 5	Amanda Fiedler	A
District 6	Lisa Rodvien	A
District 7	Jessica Haire	F

Anne Arundel county resource conservation areas are among the most environmentally sensitive areas in the county. Prior law allowed variances from existing density limits to increase density in resource conservation areas. This bill eliminates such variances in the future. **Rodvien, Lacey, Pruski, Pickard and Fiedler** voted in favor. **Haire and Volke** voted against.

Other Issues

Rodvien and **Lacey** were leaders on the forest conservation bill. In the second round of amendments, **Pruski** and **Pickard** joined them in strengthening and supporting the revised bill.

Fiedler did not support conservation bills including the forest conservation bill, the styrofoam ban, and increases in the environmental protection and stormwater fees. She did support the elimination of density increase on resource conservation land.

Of the 18 most important conservation votes, **Haire** failed to support all but four. **Volke's** voted against all but two of the 18 conservation measures. **Fiedler** and **Haire** defended their votes on the ground that some of the bills would impose fees on polluters.

Rodvien and **Lacey** consistently voted for the environment. They each voted favorably on most of the forest amendments and all of the other conservation bills and provided strong leadership and support of environmental issues across the board. **Pruski** and **Pickard** stumbled in the first round of forest amendments but recovered nicely. We expect they will continue to be strong supporters of conservation measures.

Anne Arundel county has a strong county council that prioritizes protecting the environment. However, there are several council members, notably **Fiedler, Haire and Volke**, who need more encouragement from their constituents to protect Anne Arundel County's natural resources.

County Executive Overall Grade: A

Steuart Pittman never ran for elected office before 2018 yet he decisively defeated an experienced and well-funded incumbent. The incumbent was perceived by many voters to be insensitive to voters' concerns about over-development in all areas of the county. The incumbent had also alienated the environmental community by promising to support the county stormwater program and then vetoing it.

Pittman's campaign focused not only on runaway development but a range of conservation issues. The environment was a major part of his platform and he addressed conservation issues at each of his many campaign events. He was elected with the enthusiastic support of the environmental community including the Maryland LCV.

One might expect that, under these circumstances, Pittman's performance rating could be affected by a failure to meet unrealistic expectations. That has not been the case.

His outstanding record and his broad support in the environmental community lead us to score his performance A. Pittman's transition team aspired to a variety of environmental goals. Even before taking office, Pittman set out to address those goals through legislative proposals, executive actions, administrative initiatives and a major outreach effort both to citizen groups and to environmental organizations. We highlight those efforts in several broad categories.

Land Use & Related Subjects Grade: B

One of the most difficult tasks confronting the new administration is the completion of a new general development plan (GDP).

Pittman promptly reconstituted the Citizens Advisory Committee to balance the influence of interests and increase citizen participation. Completing the GDP was temporarily delayed due to the pandemic but it now appears to be on schedule.

He broadened the process for citizen participation under pandemic restrictions. He has set aside funding for a study of impact fees that will be considered in connection with the GDP.

He is also formulating policy to eliminate development in areas with sensitive environmental and cultural features.

County Executive Pittman's most ambitious legislative proposal relating to land use was an amendment of the forest conservation law discussed above. The administration poured enormous effort into shepherding the proposal through the county council and in the face of fierce opposition from developers.

Outside of the legislative context, he has strengthened rules for stormwater and sediment and erosion control. He has also enhanced inspections and enforcement of zoning and environmental laws.

Pittman has obtained authorization to expand Quiet Water Park and the Bacon Ridge Natural Area.

As noted, Pittman enjoys broad support in the environmental community for his accomplishments and his agenda.

That does not mean that there are no concerns.

Some had hoped for a stronger forest conservation bill. Others remain concerned about the pace of development north of route 50 and a perceived slowdown in developing public water access.

And there are concerns that the draft general development plan does not adequately address water quality issues.

Appointments & Reorganizations: Grade A

The administration's appointments and reorganizations relating to land use and the environment go well beyond anything we have seen in the county in decades.

Pittman started early by naming **Chris Trumbauer** as a Director of Policy and Communications and hiring **Matt Johnston** as Environmental Policy Director, a job that did not previously exist.

He created a Citizens Environmental

Commission. He has replaced the leaders of the Planning & Zoning and Inspections & Permits departments and improved the performance of those departments with a new emphasis on transparent interpretations of development rules, transparent processes, enhanced public education and enforcement.

Lastly, he restored the former Administrative Hearing Officer who reportedly had been fired by the previous county executive for refusing to decide cases based on politics.

Other Issues: Grade A

The Pittman administration has either initiated or provided major support for every environmental bill to come before the county council.

In addition to forest conservation those include the styrofoam ban, critical area rules, water and sewer connection charges, septic conversion to sewer, improved public notice of development projects, improved stormwater and erosion control and enhanced funding for environmental and stormwater remediation.

Pittman supported novel legislation in the General Assembly to authorize the establishment and financing of a resiliency authority with the City of Annapolis.

He upgraded the Bureau of Watershed Protection and Restoration in the Department of Public Works putting veteran environmentalist **Erik**

Michelson in charge.

He has provided strong support for environmental education programs at Arlington Echo and for the Watershed Stewards Academy.

He has founded the Replant Anne Arundel program to restore tree cover county-wide.

He has issued a request for proposals to establish a solar farm at a closed county landfill in Glen Burnie and instituted a trial program to recharge our diminished aquifers.

Under Pittman's direction, the county has also joined in a lawsuit against the U.S. EPA to require EPA to enforce the bay pollution diet.

Most recently, Pittman announced a program to replace most county-owned, fossil-fuel-powered vehicles with electric vehicles.

Leadership: Grade A

Unlike any of his predecessors, Pittman has made the environment a centerpiece of his agenda for the county.

That has been reflected not just in his campaign but in the everyday work of his administration from his appointments to legislation, administrative actions and other initiatives.

He has reached out to community and

environmental groups and built consensus on a broad scale. He has created a new sense of confidence that our environmental laws will now be enforced fairly across the board and without political favoritism.

And, he has achieved these accomplishments under the most difficult of circumstances caused by the pandemic.



For over 40 years, we have been on a mission to activate Marylanders to promote and pass equitable laws and policies for clean water, healthy air, and a resilient climate.