



AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

April 19 2016

Connie Latham
Special Assistant to the County Executive
101 Monroe Street
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Ms. Latham:

Policy for Members Serving on the County Boards
and Committees

On behalf of the Montgomery County Agricultural Advisory Committee-AAC and the Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board-APAB, we want to bring to your attention to the challenges that are impacting farmer members serving on the County Boards and Committees.

We are finding it increasingly difficult to recruit qualified farmers to serve on the various County Boards and Committees. This includes the Agricultural Advisory Committee-AAC, Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board-APAB, Rustic Roads Advisory Committee-RRAC, Forest Conservation Advisory Committee-FCAC, and Water Quality Advisory Committee-WQAC. To further emphasize our predicament I requested a waiver to serve a third term on the AAC.

The eligibility criteria for farmers “owner-operators of commercial farm land earning 50% or more of their income from farming,” represents one challenge and finding farmers willing to serve on these Boards and Committee is another. We find the pool of available farmers that meet the income criteria and willing to serve is very limited. This environment creates the challenge for farmer members serving on the County Boards and Committees.

In light of these challenges the Staff from the Planning Board proposed the following criteria for farmers applying to the Rustic Roads Advisory Committee-RRAC:

- (1) 3 members who are owner-operators of [[commercial]] agriculturally-assessed farmland earning [[50 percent]] \$10,000 annually (in 2015 dollars) or more of their gross income from farming, one of whom is a representative of the Agricultural Advisory Committee;

The AAC and the APAB conducted a joint meeting on March 15, 2016, and they discussed the proposed criteria and both groups could not support it because they believe the amended language could result in almost anyone being considered a farmer. The proposed

criteria could have unintended consequences of allowing someone to serve representing the interest of the agricultural community that would have little to no knowledge about farming. The groups felt the proposed criteria was a slippery slope that could impact other agricultural committees like AAC and APAB and further diminish a sound farmers' voice at the table of government.

After further discussion both groups asked if the County would change the Policy for farmer members serving on County Boards and Committees. If the policy prohibits a farmer from serving on more than one County Executive appointed board or committee, then perhaps what is needed is a change in the policy that would allow farmers to serve on more than one board or committee. Both groups supported this recommendation and they asked that we request it further for consideration.

The AAC and APAB appreciate you considering this request and the views of our groups. Please let us know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David Weitzer". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above a solid horizontal line.

David Weitzer, Chairman