



## AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

November 27, 2020

Council President Sidney Katz  
Montgomery County Council  
100 Maryland Avenue  
Rockville, MD. 20850

Dear Council President Katz: AAC Recommendation on the Composting ZTA  
20-04- Farming Defined – Accessory Mulching and  
Composting

On behalf of the Montgomery County Agricultural Advisory Committee-AAC, please accept this letter as our position regarding the Composting Zoning Text Amendment 20-04.

In 1998, the County first created opportunities for the production of compost and mulch as an accessory use to farming. In 2014, the County expanded these opportunities by permitting up to 20% of materials used in production of compost and mulch to be sourced from off-site. In 2016, the County Government adopted Bill 28-16 Strategic Plan To Advance Composting, Compost Use and Food Waste Diversion.

[https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/COUNCIL/Resources/Files/bill/2016/Packets/20160628\\_4B.pdf](https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/COUNCIL/Resources/Files/bill/2016/Packets/20160628_4B.pdf)

In 2020, this proposed ZTA will now permit up to 50% of the composting materials to be sourced from off-site. **Over this 22-year period, the County has seen very few composting operations.** The facts outlined above demonstrate the County's slow and cautious approach to composting that should be taken into consideration as we discuss the merits of the next phase of composting in the County.

The investment costs to install an economically viable composting operation have proven to be challenging until just recently with the Compost Crew opening on One Acre Farm in Dickerson. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=69S0-xDu2zc>

The Office of Agriculture believes there are adequate provisions in place at both the state and county level that will govern composting operations. The County will begin to see more small scale composting operations like the Compost Crew which encompass up to 5,000 square feet meeting the Maryland Department of the Environment-MDE on-farm composting threshold that does not require a state permit. Composting operations that exceed 5,000 square feet will require an MDE composting facility permit that regulates the size of composting pad including the feed stocks of organic materials that are used as part of the decomposition process. Additionally, the County Zoning Code requires a conditional use approval for Agricultural Processing involving

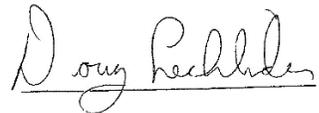


all composting operations that exceed the magnitude of accessory use to farming. The state and county regulations stated above represent a good policy framework that needs to be considered as we discuss the merits of the next phase of composting in the County.

The Agricultural Advisory Committee is cautious of an environment where the County Government relies solely on the Agricultural Reserve as the only area for processing all waste generated by County residents.

The AAC thanks you for this opportunity to express our views regarding the Composting ZTA 20-04. Please let us know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Doug Lechliden". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a thin horizontal line.

Doug Lechliden, Chairman

Cc: Marc Elrich, County Executive