

I write to add my opposition to this proposed amendment. I have lived in Montgomery County for 23 years, visiting the Agricultural Reserve on a weekly basis before moving to the Reserve in 2017. This is truly a special place and reflects the visionary leadership of previous Councils.

Along with many other interested citizens, I attended the recent forum at which Council member Fani-Gonzalez explained the amendment. As someone who has worked in public policy for more than 2 decades, I was shocked by the lack of due diligence, consultation, and basic economic analysis that you would normally expect to see behind this type of fundamental policy proposal. This proposal risks the future of the Agricultural Reserve and, as far as we were told, the justification is that some other Counties, without an Agricultural Reserve, are doing something similar, and a number (1, 2, 5, more?) of landowners have said it is a good idea in 1 on 1 meetings with Council Member Fani-Gonzales. Without any ability to explain the rationale for this proposal, the problem it is supposed to address, or even what success looks like, Council Member Fani-Gonzales was unable to answer the many questions that were raised by the audience.

I believe we have the right to expect more from our elected Council Members. The Agricultural Reserve faces major challenges – pressure from developers, the aging population of current farmers and barriers to the entry of new younger farmers, such as the price of land, cost of equipment, price of inputs, limits on the price of produce due to the buying power of large supermarket chains etc. These are the existential threats to the future of the Agricultural Reserve, these are the issues that Council Members should be working on, these are the issues which if tackled will provide your legacy and add your names to the list of visionaries in Montgomery County history.

Changing the definition of agriculture to include activities that are patently nothing to do with it is a superficial cheap shot with no clear benefit and will set in place a slippery slope threatening the very future of this Reserve that we are all so rightfully proud of.

There is no need for tourists to stay in the Agricultural Reserve. This Amendment will change the face of the Reserve forever with no clear justification. I ask you to discard ZTA 23-09.

Glenn Miles