

I am writing today with serious concerns regarding the new ZTA proposed by Councilmember Natali Fani-González and co-sponsored by Councilmembers Glass and Friedson allowing accessory structures for overnight accommodations in the Agricultural Reserve.

The Agricultural Reserve is a treasure that thankfully some forward-thinking individuals sought to preserve for the future of our county. Many are envious of what Montgomery County has accomplished and would love to be able to implement this in their county.

I am a member of Montgomery Countryside Alliance Board and attended a meeting sponsored by MCA and Sugarloaf Citizens Association at Linden Farm on January 6. Natali Fani-González was there to discuss the ZTA and convince people that accessory structures were good for the Agricultural Reserve. She did not quote any studies to back up her insistence that this would in fact be a good thing for the Agricultural Reserve. The Agricultural Reserve is for AGRICULTURE first and foremost and Agribusiness is not Agriculture. Many attendees spoke out against the ZTA.

This seems to be getting pushed through very quickly without any input to date from those of us who live in the Agricultural Reserve. The meeting being held on January 16 to discuss this is already full and I am on a wait list, although I signed up as soon as I heard about it. I guess those advocating for this do not care if everyone gets to have a voice. It seems like Down County Council members who are not invested in the Agricultural Reserve are pushing this through without input from those of us who live here, particularly the farmers who are going to be most affected.

Should accessory structures be allowed, wells and septic systems will be needed. It is critical that the report "The Effects of Climate Change on Maryland's Water Supplies" be released before any plans are made to continue. Any effects on our aquifers need to be defined and acknowledged before we put a greater demand on them. Has anyone from the County Council met with the DPS to get input regarding the feasibility of many additional septic systems in the Agricultural Reserve?

There are many Rustic Roads in the Agricultural Reserve. These roads are often hilly and winding. Traffic has increased on these roads. More and more large trucks that exceed the posted weight limits on the roads and bridges are seen many times a day. The speed limits are generally not observed and there is little if

any policing. Adding more construction traffic and more visitors will take a toll on roads that are already significantly damaged.

Questions that need to be answered:

- What size will the proposed accessory structures be?
- How many will be allowed on each farm?
- Will the number of accessory structures depend on the size of the farm?
- How will easements affect the ability to build these accessory structures?
- Without kitchens in the accessory structures, where will renters eat?
- Are these not just hotel rooms? And why not have people stay in the many hotels already in the area outside the Agricultural Reserve?
- Might these structures become havens for college students looking to party? Could drinking become a problem?
- Will there be additional police assigned to the Agricultural Reserve?
- Who will determine if accessory structures will impact the views along the Rustic Roads?
- Who will study the increase in traffic and the impact on the danger on these roads?

The cost for farmland is already very high. Efforts to add more agricultural producers is a high priority to provide food for the community and particularly for the underserved. Has the County Council studied the effect that accessory structures might have in a higher cost of farmland? Is Agribusiness more important than the livelihood of our farmers and feeding our neighbors?

The impact of executing this proposal will likely involve substantial financial cost to the county for road improvement. It may also put Montgomery County on the slippery slope that may destroy the unique benefits of the Agricultural Reserve to this county.

Thank you in advance for your advocacy for the residents of the Agricultural Reserve.

Sincerely,

Karen Ryan