

Dear Councilmembers:

I am writing to express my concern regarding ZTA 23-09, "Outdoor Incidental Use in the Ag Reserve," which is being quickly considered by the Council. The Ag Reserve was conceived 40 years ago as a forward-looking initiative to protect Montgomery County from urban sprawl and preserve an area in perpetuity for farmers and recreation.

Countless County citizens enjoy the myriad results of the Ag Reserve vision, and now many small farms are beginning to gain a foothold on producing table crops. To change the uses of the Ag Reserve by encouraging yurts and cabins for short-term rental are not farming activities, will only burden farmers. Supporting "agritourism" sounds benign enough but belies the damage that would be done to the Ag Reserve if ZTA 23-09 were to be enacted.

The impact of this legislation on the Ag Reserve has not been fully considered. There has been no cost/benefit analysis or data provided to support claims of the ZTA's alleged economic benefit. Changes to the Ag Reserve would be permanent and could not be undone. The Council should move very cautiously before making the radical changes proposed in ZTA 23-09.

This ZTA legislation needs to be carefully considered, and if after careful study, positive data cannot be provided, rejected by the Council.

Thank you for your consideration.

Robin Salomon