

Subject: Zoning Text Amendment 23-09 – Farming Incidental Outdoor Stays

I would like to take the opportunity to respectfully express my objections to the Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) 23-09 and urge you to vote to reject this damaging change to the rules of the Agricultural Reserve Zone. I have read some of the mail that my neighbors and friends have already sent to Council Members and I attended the informational meeting with Council member Natali Fani-Gonzalez. I agree with their well argued points about how this change would be devastating to our beautiful Ag Reserve, so I will try not to repeat the same arguments you have already heard and read. Instead, I would like to present a more personal viewpoint.

My family has farmed at 19415 Peach Tree Rd for five generations. During the Depression my Great Grandfather diversified his dairy operation and started to grow peaches in an attempt to recover from the difficult economic times. My brother, Gene Kingsbury, has greatly expanded the orchard into a popular and thriving business. We have been instrumental in establishing and supporting the Agricultural Reserve and work hard to maintain agriculture in Montgomery County. I am especially proud that during the slower winter months, Gene Kingsbury visits Poolesville High School to talk with Global Ecology students about farming, global climate changes, stewardship of the land, then in the Spring these students come to the orchard on a field trip to tour the farm with Gene. We have deep roots in this community. I taught at Poolesville High School for 25 years and we all graduated from this school, including my mother, brother and grandfather!

So the Agricultural Reserve is very personal to us. During the fruit season I talk with hundreds of customers and they tell me how much they enjoy their trip to our orchard every week. They come from all over Maryland, Virginia and DC. Some drive all the way from other states. They can't believe how beautiful the countryside is after they leave Germantown, Gaithersburg, etc. I hand them a Plenty magazine and explain to them about the Ag Reserve.

They thank us daily for growing delicious fruit – they realize how hard we work to do that.

These fine people don't come to the Ag Reserve to see a whiskey distillery and more buildings – the proposed cabins. They drive here to see fields, orchards, farms, crops, and animals grazing in the fields. That's what the Ag Reserve is all about.

The issue in my mind really boils down to this – Why can one wealthy and influential person buy a farm, knowing it is protected in the Ag Reserve, get the zoning rules changed for his benefit when hundreds of neighbors and landowners oppose this change, hundreds of residents who love the Ag Reserve and love living here and work so hard to keep this area agricultural. No one else benefits from this proposal – only the one landowner who shows total disrespect for the Ag Reserve and his neighbors.

Please do the right thing to protect our unique treasure – the Ag Reserve – and vote NO to ZTA 23-09.

Respectfully,

Sue Kingsbury Ketron

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