

January 12, 2024

Dear Councilmembers:

As a Montgomery County resident and supporter of the wonderful and visionary Agricultural Reserve, I am writing in regard to the proposed Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) 23-09, Farming - Incidental Outdoor Stays. I live in Gaithersburg, but I previously lived just outside of Poolesville. I still attend a church in Poolesville and therefore drive regularly through the Agricultural Reserve. I find ZTA 23-09 a wrong-headed idea and I support the agricultural groups, community associations, and other stakeholders who have stated their clear and firm opposition to ZTA 23-09.

I do not oppose farm camping (incidental outdoor stays), as it qualifies as an agritourism activity. However, it is wrong to change the definition of agriculture in the County's zoning code to include commercial lodging and declaring the structures as accessory to agriculture. Such overnight facilities are not related to agricultural production. The proposed ZTA does not meet any of the fundamental purposes of the Ag Reserve to preserve working farms, open space and water resources. For these reasons, it should be rejected.

This ZTA will not enhance the prospects of farmers in the Ag Reserve and it will bring unwelcome and destructive changes.

Please work to withdraw this ZTA.

Sincerely,

Carol G. Baxter