

Dear Council Members

I am writing to express my opposition to ZTA 23-09: Incidental Outdoor Stays in the Agricultural Reserve.

I purchased a farm on Bucklodge Road, Boyds MD over 10 years ago. We were attracted to the Agricultural Reserve because land is set aside for farming, land conservation and open space and zoned to prevent developments that can impact these core values.

Offering overnight stays as proposed in ZTA 23-09 allows for accommodations to be constructed on valuable farmland and would also lead to additional use of limited resources in the Agricultural Reserve. For example, additional use of groundwater (our only water supply) can stress aquifers which in turn will have negative impacts on agricultural production, rivers and streams, plants, animals and impact the core values and reasons why people visit, enjoy, work and live in the Agricultural Reserve.

To learn more about the ZTA 23-09, I attended a public forum hosted by the Sugarland Citizens Association and Montgomery Countryside Alliance on December 6th 2023, where Council member Fani-González, the sponsor of the ZTA, presented information and background to the ZTA. The main reason outlined by Council member Fani-González to proposing the ZTA was to boost agritourism and encourage economic growth in the Agricultural Reserve. However, research, background studies nor data analysis were presented that substantiated economic benefits of the proposed ZTA. The economic evaluation, social and environmental impacts on the Agricultural Reserve have not been presented as part of the ZTA 23-90.

In its' current form and level of detail, the ZTA 23-09 is poorly justified. It requires evaluation and analysis of the social, economic and environmental impacts on the Agricultural Reserve. Until this evaluation has been undertaken, I believe it should be withdrawn from further consideration.

Going forward, it may be beneficial for the Council and County Executive to support studies and public dialogue for the future direction of Agritourism in the Agricultural Reserve.

Yours sincerely



Shelley Heron
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