

February 29, 2024

Dear Councilmembers:

I have lived in my house on Pershing Drive since 1982. I've seen many great improvements in this area of Montgomery County and appreciate the investment that has been made to keep this area vibrant, lively and interesting. However, I have several concerns to raise with you and some suggestions on how to maintain order.

First, I am perplexed by the ultra-late operating hours of some of the businesses located in downtown Silver Spring. Last night I attended a Zoom briefing by the District 3 police and learned that closing these businesses earlier would help curb crime and could possibly deter some of the other activity that crops up on our streets in the early morning hours. Much of the activity is illegal, some of it is violent, and while the police are doing an admirable job, sometimes there is little they can do when they are significantly outnumbered. There is no level of police staffing that could prevent illegal activity 100% of the time so **not** creating an environment where it is more likely to happen is one of the few solutions left to us. Therefore, I write in support of changing the operating hours for businesses in our area that are currently allowed to remain open all night. I understand that you are considering having them close at 2 am on weeknights and 3 am on weekends. That still is wrong. All that would do is move the trouble to an earlier part of the evening. A midnight closing time seems most reasonable and I urge you to adopt it.

I also hope there are other measures you will consider. Perhaps the budget for the Silver Spring Police District needs to be double or triple the size of other Districts' budgets. The additional resources could be used to have more officers on duty at all times since crime occurs throughout the day and night, provide more and different training for the unique challenges the County Council has created in our area of the County with the laws it has passed, offer a different mix of "traditional" police and officers that are focused on societal ills (homelessness, mental problems, drug use, etc.).

You also need to strengthen the County's noise ordinances/public nuisance ordinances. There are groups that set up microphones and amplifiers in downtown Silver Spring and amplify their voices and music so much that no one can have a conversation or conduct in the vicinity, and trying to sit and relax at the outdoor spaces is a joke when this is happening. I have been told that the amplification is so bad that customers and vendors are being driven from the Farmers' Market at Veteran's Plaza/Ellsworth Drive. Downtown Silver Spring already has a lot of turnover in its businesses and I worry about

the day that no business will want to come here due to concerns about the safety and comfort of its employees and customers.

I anxiously await your action to support this part of Montgomery County.

Kristen Conte

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