

(Attachment E.)



AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

June 8, 2012

The Honorable Roger Berliner
Montgomery County Council President
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Council President Berliner: Bill 16-12 Trees-Utility Vegetation Management

The Montgomery County Agricultural Advisory Committee-AAC met on May 15, 2012 and they voted unanimously to oppose the Bill 16-12 because the Bill proposes a new review and approval process requiring all utility companies to obtain Utility Vegetation Management approval from the County Chief of Tree Maintenance in advance of any work being done. This new requirement will add an additional unneeded level of bureaucracy resulting in further delays for Utility Vegetation Management. This environment will not be helpful.

The need for trimming and removing trees represents an on-going problem in Montgomery County that the AAC has gone on record for many years. The AAC has expressed concerns and frustrations surrounding the County's lack of tree trimming practices along County roads including clearing and grubbing. In the rural areas these concerns started with the adoption of the Rural and Rustic Roads program and the problem has continued to grow worse over the years.

The AAC would like to ask how many more severe weather events we need to go through before our elected officials truly acknowledge that vegetation and trees should not be allowed in close proximity to power lines and road ways. I have been a County resident for over 65 years and I have personally witnessed an atmosphere where residents and elected officials embrace vegetation and trees in the areas mentioned above up until the power goes out. Once the power goes out, the atmosphere of embracing vegetation and trees turns into frustration and anger by everyone. Last year there were several neighborhoods in the County without electrical service for extended periods of time. We understand that some of these neighborhoods are located in areas with extensive vegetation and trees that needed to be removed before the utility companies could begin the process to restore the power.

The AAC strongly opposes Bill 16-12 and we encourage the County Council to work with and not against the utility companies to help them maintain the electric power that all residents and businesses rely on in Montgomery County. Bill 16-12 represents the wrong direction for Montgomery County Government; we should stay out of the way of the utility companies and let them do their job in maintaining the electric service we all depend on. Other jurisdictions in the

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region do not seem to experience the same environment as we do in Montgomery County where neighborhoods are without power for extended periods of time after severe weather events. Since Pepco has embarked upon an extensive tree and vegetation trimming last year the electrical outages have been practically zero.

The AAC would like to thank the County Council for this opportunity to present our views on Bill 16-12 and please let us know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

David Weitzer David Weitzer, Chairman