

My spouse and I have lived on our farm 50 years. When the county down zoned us from 5 acres to 25 acres in 1980 to create Montgomery County's Agricultural Reserve (AR), we were to be compensated for that enormous revenue loss through programs & easements such as AEP, TDR, BLT, MALPF, MET, RLP, LOS and other private land trusts. These of course, did not compensate us fully, but in addition the county also made promises: that there would be a critical mass of farmland preserved such that the farming culture, and needed farm related services would thrive.

Most of the AR land is now in one of the above programs. We landowners have made that substantial commitment and in so doing sacrificed land value to keep our acreage in farming for future generations. We have steadfastly upheld that promise to carry on because we believe farm land preservation is an essential contribution to the nations' economy and the region's quality of life.

MY point? THE COUNTY NEEDS TO UPHOLD ITS PART OF THE BARGAIN. Farming culture does not include trailer parks, campsites, or motel lodging units with the accompanying light and noise pollution, and depletion (and possible septic contamination) of our aquifer, not to mention the loss of farmland. It seems obvious that any of the above programs/easements would automatically prohibit such uses. Why are we even considering these ZTA's?

The proposed ZTA 24-02 lists quite a number of 'camping' restrictions but no reasons for doing this in the first place. When I ask, people talk about 'agri-tourism' which supposedly would offer farmers another revenue stream - and educate tourists about farming.

Here is a list of my concerns about the impacts of the proposed ZTA 24-02:

*What is the criteria for 'agri-tourism': Will ongoing educational programs be required or is the tourist supposed to just gaze at livestock/corn fields across the fence?

*How many cars will be allowed on these 'camp sites.' The concern here is air pollution and traffic congestion.

*Light pollution: Will the lighting from these 'campsites' steal the stars from us?

*Noise pollution - How will the noise from AC units, camper conversations, broadcasted music etc. be restricted.

*Septic pollution of our aquifer caused by the addition of septic systems to our Piedmont Sole Source Aquifer on which we all depend.

*Additional water usage depleting our aquifer during a draught (now)

*What is the definition of 'removable structure?' Are we talking about motel units? Yurts? Tiny Houses?

*What will the county do to ensure these campsites do not simply become venues for wild parties?

*Who exactly will monitor and enforce all the restrictions? Will the county add extra staff?

*Why is there only one impact study to be done by the Planning Department required? They should be done every year.

Submitted by
Bev & Dick Thoms
Tiewyan Farms
21700 Big Woods Road
Dickerson, MD 20842
301-461-1287