

Testimony on ZTA 26-01 Data Center Commercial Uses - Data Center

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To whom it may concern:

As an active farm worker in close proximity to proposed data sites, I am particularly concerned that without proper oversight and cost-benefit analysis, both of which appear absent in current plans, our already stressed and rapidly disappearing farms will experience a catastrophic stress in availability of clean water, safe and reliable electric, and proper living conditions for livestock.

Already with the burdens of expanded residential life in the agricultural reserve, my neighbors are experiencing wells running dry. The past years have also yielded severe droughts and other forms of severe weather that have made it nearly impossible to supply the amount of clean water our livestock need to thrive. We are already seeing an increasingly stressed market for hay, as the farms that make keeping livestock disappear and competition for resources becomes worse. A data center in the absence of these additional stressors could make farm life impossible, but we are forced to battle progressively extreme weather each year, on top of decreased protections for the reserve.

I personally work at a horse farm down the street from a proposed data center. Most of our clients are from down county or DC, as there are few places closer to home where their horses can live. The ecological strain that data centers will bring to the ag reserve mean the possibility that Montgomery County's most wonderful asset may disappear.

It is often the assumption of suburban county residents that there will always be farms, horses, cows, corn etc "out somewhere". However, as the county expands and commercial and residential interests take center stage, I have watched over the last decade as more and more farms are bulldozed.

I watched again with debates over “solar farms” as the ag reserve was once dismissed as some kind of dumping ground where no one lives. This cannot be farther from the truth.

Places like Dickerson, Poolesville, Comus, Boyds are a unique asset that many people have moved to for their small town culture and respite from over commercialized, urbanized spaces in the county. And it’s not just about aesthetics in order to maintain rural space we absolutely must protect our natural resources. Data centers, notoriously, do not do this.

I have been reading the news about the impact of data centers in places like Memphis Tennessee, areas of Texas, and the Midwest where the promise of jobs seldom yields results, and instead residents are forced to leave communities where families have had roots for generations because conditions are unlivable. Electric bills skyrocket, water is impossible to obtain, and cancer causing gases from super computers create significant health risks for residents who stay in their homes.

If you care about the county’s interests, you will focus on preserving what we have before chasing an imagined promise of profit.

Please include my comments in the hearing record.

Thank You,

Sophia Brown