



**TOWN OF BARNESVILLE
COMMISSIONERS
Montgomery County**

**County Council
Montgomery County**

The Town of Barnesville passed its Resolution 18-02 on September 17, 2018 to reflect its opposition to the proposed ZTA 18-03 that would affect development in the Agricultural Reserve. The Town of Barnesville is a small incorporated municipality in the middle of the Agricultural Reserve. The town has less than 200 residents in approximately 65 homes and just a handful of small businesses. There are several farms within the town limits and many more just outside our border.

The Town opposes the above-referenced zoning text amendment that is under consideration by the County Council for the following reasons:

1. Preservation of Our Rural Lifestyle - Due to our small size, our rural, small town lifestyle is impacted severely by the activities on the farms that surround us. Farming is not an easy way of life, but we applaud the efforts of the farmers in the vicinity of the town as they adapt to new ways of growing food, raising animals and marketing their products. Bringing urban and suburban visitors to these farms to experience our way of life is enjoyable for all concerned. The zoning that controls the Agricultural Reserve requires farms to produce a significant portion of the products that they sell to visitors. The idea of waiving this requirement for alcohol producers is unfair to the many farmers who have worked to create their businesses in keeping with the environment. And it will put all of the agricultural lifestyle we have created at risk.

2. Traffic Considerations - As we understand it, ZTA 18-03 would also give preferential treatment to potential breweries as to the number of events that they can hold on their properties. The town of Barnesville, despite its size, is at the crossroads of two arterial roads leading traffic into and out of the Agricultural Reserve. The town spends an inordinate amount of our time, and a significant portion of our annual budget, trying to mitigate the growing traffic on our narrow country roads. Virtually all of the roads in our town are arterial roads that carry increasing rush hour traffic as drivers avoid traffic jams on I-270. Many of our houses were built in the 19th century or earlier and are very close to the roads. Since the county police have no resources to patrol our area, Barnesville has spent over 10% of its annual budget recently hiring off-duty police officers to write speeding tickets. We also have two speed cameras in town. Over 7,000 tickets have been issued by these methods over the past 18 months (with very little revenue from these sources coming back to the town). The roads here were not built to carry the volume of traffic they carry on weekdays. After a year of hiring the off-duty police primarily during rush-hour time periods, this summer we instituted some weekend afternoon policing shifts. Much to our surprise, they wrote many tickets, and at much higher rates of speed, on weekends. If the proposed alcohol producers have events on the weekends that bring more traffic, and “buzzed driving” to our narrow roads, we will be creating a serious safety issue. On the weekends our roads are heavily used by bicyclists, who already face the hazards of sharing the narrow roads with cars and trucks. Adding alcohol and festival-type events to the weekend traffic issues out here would be a bad idea.

3. Peaceful Enjoyment of the Outdoors – Our residents trade the convenience of suburban living for the outdoor lifestyle that the Agricultural Reserve offers. Our lifestyle here takes full advantage of the quiet enjoyment of our properties. Evenings and weekends are times for gardening, barbecues or watching the sun set with our neighbors. Bicycling, walking our dogs and walking to visit neighbors are activities that we can undertake with caution for the traffic on the roads. But we can still move around the area on foot. Any increase to the weekend and evening traffic will destroy those opportunities and diminish our lifestyle. We would also oppose any increase in events in our area due to noise and exterior lighting at night.

4. Procedural Issues – We see no reason to rush to a vote on ZTA 18-03 before further study is undertaken to measure its impact on our communities. We understand that a study is being prepared with regard to Agro-Tourism in the Agricultural Reserve. We believe that study is due to be completed in February 2019.

In conclusion, as mayor of the town of Barnesville, I believe that there are many other areas within Montgomery County with land suitable for development of breweries and event spaces. The Agricultural Reserve is not suitable for this land use. Its zoning was crafted decades ago and has been successful in preserving an agricultural way of life within our county. We implore the County Council to work with us to preserve the rural environmental in this small corner of the County.

Sincerely,

**Mildred Callear
Mayor
Barnesville, Maryland**