

Statement by Scott Fosler on Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) 18-03, Farm Alcohol Production – Standards. Montgomery County Council, Public Hearing, May 15, 2018.

Councilmember.Riemer@montgomerycountymd.gov

Dear President Riemer and members of the County Council,

My name is Scott Fosler. I offer this statement in support of the position of the Montgomery Countryside Alliance (MCA), and its partners, with respect to their proposed amendments to Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) 18-03, Farm Alcohol Production - Standards as it pertains to the Agricultural Reserve.

I serve on the boards of MCA and the Friends of Ten Mile Creek and Little Seneca Reservoir (FOTMC), and also as board president of the Audubon Naturalist Society (ANS), although this statement is my own. I should also note that I was a sponsor of the legislation creating the Agricultural Reserve as a member of the County Council in 1981, and later served as vice chair of the Ad Hoc Agricultural Policy Working Group created by the Council in 2006 to assess the progress, pressures and potential of the Ag Reserve after 25 years of operation, and to examine specific challenges to the Reserve.

The notion of permitting breweries and related tasting facilities in the Agricultural Reserve is a promising one, similar to wineries and wine tasting facilities in offering another means of creating economic potential related to agriculture in a manner compatible with the overall character and purpose of the Ag Reserve. The key for breweries, as for wineries, is that the permitted uses establish a bona fide agricultural connection and be of a scale and nature compatible with the character and purpose of the Ag Reserve.

I believe that the amendments proposed by MCA and its partners will best achieve these ends. In particular, their proposals offer the best prospect of:

- ensuring compliance and consistency with the Master Plan for the Preservation of Agriculture & Rural Open Space (AROS);
- addressing and mitigating impact on and safety of environment, communities, and stakeholders; and
- ensuring that the Reserve remains economically viable, and indeed, allows expansion of diverse agricultural enterprises.

I believe these proposed amendments are fully compatible with the County Council's original vision for the Agricultural Reserve. They also address concerns considered by the Council's Ad Hoc Agricultural Policy Working Group when it did its 25 year checkup of the Reserve. In both instances, one of the key concerns was to assure that uses permitted in the Reserve did not stray from its core purposes, function and character. This kind of slow erosion to disconnected uses has always been one of the biggest threats

to the integrity of the Ag Reserve, and therefore to sustaining it as a genuine agricultural resource for the country.

Adoption of the proposed amendments offers the opportunity to add yet additional economic potential and development to the Reserve in keeping with its core character, and therefor support for sustaining this key county asset.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Scott Fosler