

I am writing to urge the Council to defer action on the Zoning Text Amendment 18-30 in order to ensure that certain problematic issues are addressed and that the policies it represents are carefully considered in a broader context than seems to be the case as it is currently written. It seems to have been thrown together without thinking through a number of important specific items that really need to be addressed for it to be reasonable, fair, and consistent with the intentions of the Agricultural Reserve and agricultural uses and community generally.

We are an active farming operation in Montgomery County on 123 acres, with livestock and commodity crops. We are located next door to a currently active restaurant and wedding event operation and also located a couple of miles from the Sugarloaf Mountain Vineyard winery. We are pleased that they extend access to the beauty and agricultural heritage of the Reserve to visitors. We are also very familiar the effects of their regular activities as well as events at these facilities, even on a relatively small scale.

We support the continued agricultural uses and activities in the Agricultural Reserve, and invite visitors to be patient with, and even educated about agricultural activities going on when they visit – including large agricultural machinery on the roads that may require them to slow their travel speed and/or experience hay, straw, corn husks, and even manure from time to time etc. blowing around them as they travel our roads, as well as livestock or horse trailers, etc.

Agritourism can be an important economic as well as regional community-building activity, but we are very sensitive to the potential for jumping onto this bandwagon without thoroughly thinking through what does and does not make sense. Let's not undermine the very intention of preserving a functioning agricultural landscape by assuming that what looks like open space out here is available for new businesses that do not actually engage in agriculture related to their products.

We should be carefully considering and articulating our Agri-tourism goals, objectives, and plans consistent with the intent and values of the Reserve AND with a process that involves and considers the range of stakeholders. This needs to be done in advance of piecemeal zoning changes to accommodate specific activities to benefit few with insufficient consideration of the consequences – both short and longterm. We are better than that.

Key issues of concern to us are:

- Distilleries and breweries should actually be value-added types of activities on working farms that produce a meaningful percentage of the agricultural inputs into their products. This has been the case for wineries – and should be the case for these activities as well.
- Events at any of these facilities (or any Agricultural property in the Reserve) should have a clear limit on the number of people who participate, and the the hours of operation and noise they can impose. The reasons are obvious – capacity and congestion on our (intentionally small) country roads, noise, abuse of roadsides (serious littering always accompanies high volumes of visitors) and general diminishment of the nature of the Reserve for others who are visiting or living here.
- Water usage and wastewater issues are always a concern and must be examined carefully – consistent with the intent of the Agricultural Reserve and responsible use of our water resources.

We understand that he Planning Department is doing a study to better understand impacts of various agri-tourism activities and strongly urge that no action be taken on ZTA 18-03 until their study is completed and their recommendations issued. Let's continue the common sense, forward thinking, well though-out planning that resulted in our Agricultural Reserve and continue to show that we can shepherd this gem of an Agricultural zone in a responsible manner.

Thank you for your attention, consideration – it is what we expect and value from our local officials.

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