



SUGARLOAF CITIZENS' ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER June 2010

“Protecting our rural legacy”

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Calleva's Neglect of Zoning

A Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) is a proposal requesting the Montgomery County Council to approve measures that are not automatically permitted under the zoning laws of the County. There are many ZTA proposals every year and it is easy to consider them simply short-term legal issues to be dealt with by politicians and their professional staff. In fact, many times a ZTA implies changes that can have a profound impact for years to come.

Calleva, the folks who brought the “Haunted Forest” and other large scale activities to the Agricultural Reserve, has submitted a ZTA proposing overnight camping on their property. **The present zoning laws do not allow the construction or operation of any facility offering overnight accommodation to the general public in the Reserve.**

Sugarloaf Citizens' Association (SCA) believes that opening the door for Calleva for overnight accommodation of a large number of visitors will invite other proposals for camp facilities, lodges, and even motel operations within the boundaries of the Agricultural Reserve. The zoning regulations banning overnight guest facilities have been designed to preserve the agricultural base. The planners knew that once land was set aside for agriculture the unique qualities of the landscape would attract tourists. We believe visitors should be welcome but they can find great accommodations in the many communities surrounding the Reserve.

SCA does not oppose the kind of activities offered by Calleva - on the contrary, it is important for young people to learn about farming and environmental issues. However, overnight accommodation for such activities is not permitted in the Agricultural Reserve unless a special exception is approved by the County. **The fact is that Calleva has not obtained any permits or special exceptions for what they are doing but have operated for some time outside the boundaries of the regulations for the Agricultural Reserve.**

Calleva now requests County permission to be the only organization allowed to break the rules protecting the Reserve. **We urge the County Council to turn down the requested amendment while we want the general public to understand why this denial is important even though the amendment is proposed by an organization many people admire.**