



SUGARLOAF CITIZENS' ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER June 2011

“Protecting our rural legacy”

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Landscaping Businesses in the AgReserve?

The original Montgomery County Master Plan did not allow landscaping businesses in the AgReserve. However, in recent years a Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) has been passed which permits landscaping businesses as a special exception. The special exception process is intended to protect the surrounding neighborhood from the adverse effects of commercial businesses such as noise, dust, mulch pollution, and truck traffic.

As you may be aware, the residential community surrounding Melody Butler's landscaping business at 21020 Peach Tree Road spent over four years and many thousands of dollars to close down this landscaping firm which was operating without a special exception and thus illegally. The two acres involved are narrow and long, thus preventing any kind of buffer or privacy between the landscaping operation and the neighboring properties.

Now, Steve A. Silverman of the Montgomery County Department of Economic Development is proposing a ZTA which would allow landscaping businesses in the AgReserve “**by right**”. If approved, this means that a landscaping business could operate legally in the AgReserve without having to apply for a special exception and, therefore, without regard to the adverse effects on neighboring properties. Passage of this ZTA would allow Melody Butler to reopen her illegal landscaping business on two narrow acres on Peach Tree Road.

Not only does Sugarloaf Citizens' Association oppose any ZTA which would allow landscaping businesses in the AgReserve “**by right**,” but SCA would like to see the special exception standards for landscaping businesses tightened to require an adequate buffer between the operation of the business and the neighboring residential properties.

There are many illegal landscaping businesses operating in Montgomery County's AgReserve right now because of poor enforcement of the existing County Code. **Poor enforcement remains a huge problem due to under-funding and consequent under-staffing within the Department of Permitting Services.**

SCA will be monitoring the progress of this proposed ZTA to protect the interests of the AgReserve and its residents. To find out more, be sure to visit our website, www.sugarloafcitizens.org.