

SCA Newsletter
January 2010

Cold winds and snows in January make it difficult for all of us to remember days of outdoor public events in the Agriculture Reserve. As a farmer member of the SCA board recently reminded me, spring is not that far away and we should be planning for it right now. The SCA Board did just that in our January meeting. We discussed the Performance Benefits Permits that are issued by the county government for all festivals, sporting events and other activities that would not normally be allowed in the Reserve.

Council members Phil Andrews and Marc Elrich joined our examination of the Permits to hear our concerns and to seek common ground on how to invite the public to the Reserve for events but not create hardships for residents, especially the farmers. We all left the meeting feeling we had achieved common ground and more sensible policies and procedures that will allow some public events in the Reserve but with special rules.

We started with an examination of why the Agriculture Reserve was created in the first place. Clearly, county planners almost three decades ago wanted to preserve some land in Montgomery County for agriculture. It was a simple concept. Someday we will want the ability to feed ourselves. As development claims more land and open spaces in other areas of the county, more pressure is put on the Reserve to hold large public events that tax the rural roads, create roadblocks for farm machinery, contribute to noise and light pollution and disrupt the daily lives residents.

The Agriculture Reserve is a treasure for all residents and visitors who enjoy the special beauty of Montgomery County. We believe people will want to protect the food production capacities and the scenic vistas of the Reserve if they spend time here. Our goal is to work with county officials to make these visits safe, respectful, and enjoyable for everyone.

SCA along with other civic organizations will be seeking restrictions and transparent procedures for the Performance Benefits permits for the coming outdoor events. We invite everyone to share ideas and concerns to write us at the Linden Farm address or e-mail me at gvalen4@earthlink.net .

We also invite you to set aside Saturday, May 8, 2010 for the second annual SCA Seed and Plant Swap at Linden Farm. When you start seeds in a few weeks, plant some extras to swap with your gardening neighbors. Think Spring!