

## What's Coming in the Ag Reserve?

**Monday, March 12, 7:30 pm Linden Farm:** Steve Silverman speaking to community  
re: Horticultural Zoning Text Amendment (see below)

**Saturday, April 28, 9:30 am Linden Farm:** Craig Rice speaking at Sugarloaf Annual Meeting.

Montgomery County's Department of Economic Development hopes to promote more horticultural and agricultural jobs in the County by proposing what is called a Horticultural Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA). Sugarloaf applauds these goals and wants to achieve them while assuring the protection of the Ag Reserve's soil and water quality as well as quality of life for all stakeholders.

As indicated above, Steve Silverman, Director of the Office of Economic Development, who initiated this ZTA, has kindly agreed to make a presentation of the proposed amendments and field questions. Sugarloaf notes that the amendments will allow "by right" many changes in the areas of agricultural processing, landscape contracting, nursery operations, horticulture, and wood processing. Currently, most of these activities are monitored through the Special Exception Process which helps protect surrounding neighbors as well as water quality and soil conservation. The proposed ZTA itself is available on our website, [www.sugarloaforcitizens.org](http://www.sugarloaforcitizens.org).

The complexity of the challenges involved in the proposal is illustrated by the following. Last month, SCA received materials concerning a property on Whites Ferry Road. The writer provided the complaints and inspections of this property over several years because of stench, smoke and extremely loud noise before sunrise and throughout the day. Google Earth photos show a large-scale footprint of heavy commercial activities impacting neighbors as far away as Wasche Road who report that this has been going on for ten years. Although the Department of Permitting Services seems to have responded to these complaints, the illegal business is still operating. Click on "Whites Ferry Road Paper Trail" at [www.sugarloaforcitizens.org](http://www.sugarloaforcitizens.org) to read these documents.

This kind of violation has been going on under the current "Special Exception" process because of insufficient enforcement of existing zoning codes and insufficient consequences to the violator to deter abuse. **What protections will be in place if—under the proposed ZTA--this type of activity will take place "by right?"**