



**Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations Rewrite**  
**Prince George's County Soil Conservation District – May 8, 2015**

This meeting is an opportunity to discuss the agricultural and open space proposals presented in the Clarion Associates Evaluation and Recommendations Report and general agriculture zoning issues.

**General Comments**

- The Prince George's County Farm Bureau is the best way to vet the Evaluation and Recommendations Report for agriculture concerns.
- The Evaluation and Recommendations Report does not include a representative for the Agriculture industry.
- There is a need for an Agricultural Resource Advisory Committee. Such committees are required in the 'Right to Farm' bill and are intended as a mediation group. This committee is not currently established in Prince George's County.
- The Clarion Evaluation and Recommendations Report was a very good beginning, and Clarion did a great job. However, it would have been nice to see a firm on the team listing agricultural experience.
- Some discussion was held on the County's Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Task Force, and how any recommendations may be incorporated or relate to the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations rewrite. The TDR Task Force should probably continue its work while the rewrite team focuses on uses, lot sizes, Conservation Subdivision, and compatibility regulations.
- Show photos of farm operations in Prince George's County, not elsewhere.
- On page IV-7 of the Evaluation and Recommendations Report, it is important to add/consider the importance of both soils and requiring the retention/renovation of existing farm structures. Don't make people take down the remaining barns and other farm structures of the County's agricultural heritage.

**Agricultural and Zoning Concerns**

**Equine Farms**

- Residents want to see attention given to the zones that allow equine uses, with possible restrictions on the number of horses that can be allowed on small acreage lots. Currently there are small acreage lots (5 to 10 acre lots) that have too many horses. A 5-10 acre lot can accommodate 1-2 horses; however there are properties in the County of this size that house more. A high population of horses on a small acreage lot can cause significant environmental impacts like increased soil erosion, loss of natural resources, and decreased water quality.



- It will be helpful for staff to review how other jurisdictions (e.g. Anne Arundel and Montgomery) address overstocking of horses to understand how they handle small acreage lots for equine uses.
- Presently, overstocking is primarily a horse issue. Not aware are there other types of livestock where this is a concern in the County. The University of Maryland may be a resource on stocking rates.
- Do not wish to restrict horses. Types of development such as five-acre lots with horses are a significant driver of the agriculture economy. However, three horses on the same five-acre lot are probably too many.
- A minimum lot size for two or more horses could be 80,000 sq. ft. A 20,000 sq. ft. lot with a dwelling is seen as too small for horses, but this is allowed currently. Topography and the land itself can make a huge difference.

### **Agritourism**

- There is a need for more flexibility in new agriculture and agriculture related activities, specifically Agritourism (including uses such as wineries, farms, alpaca farms, and wedding venues). The 'Right to Farm' bill allows for some of these activities.
- Need to review recent agriculture legislation to confirm which zones are included and impacted. The efforts over the last 10 years to expand agricultural and ag-tourism uses have been very successful. A farmer able to own the value-add of the farming process from start to finish leads to successful agricultural areas.
- The recent laws should continue to apply for zones ranging from the O-S (Open Space) Zone to the R-R (Rural Residential) Zone in terms of appropriate densities and lot sizes.

### **Production of Crops and "Industrial" Uses on Farmland**

- Some concern with industrial aspects of farming (sawmills, lumberyards, mulching, composting). Probably the major complaint from adjacent property owners is noise. Dust and smells may be concerns with uses such as composting.
- Uses such as composting and mulching may be desirable because they provide water quality benefits (by shipping manure and other potential pollutants to composting locations and removing them from the local water tables), but these uses may need to be on larger-sized properties.
- There is some conflict with agricultural zones not being zoned for certain commercial uses. Landscapers and nurseries are often unable to sell produce at the farm itself because the land is not in a commercial zone.
- A suggestion was made to create a "Limited Use" category, where the zone could permit agricultural production uses by-right. However, if on a particular property certain



permitted uses may conflict with adjacent land uses or does not meet certain criteria a conditional use permit would be required.

### **Conservation Subdivision**

- There is a need for strong setback and buffer standards and it would be ideal to have a 100-foot buffer between new residential developments and agricultural land. Two fences would also be helpful: one at the rear yard line of the residential areas and the other at the farm side, to ensure the buffer is protected.
- Conservation subdivisions should be required for even minor subdivisions and not just an option for major subdivisions.
- Establish a new condition of subdivision requiring an adequacy of public facilities test for farm protection in case of incompatibility. This can help protect farms prior to development. It was noted that revisions in the “Right to Farm” legislation requires signatures at the time of home purchases to acknowledge adjacency to farms.
- Research conservation subdivision and agricultural/residential buffers in Chicago, Anne Arundel County, and Montgomery County.
- Perhaps a menu of options can be developed and the burden can be placed on developers to prove they won’t adversely affect existing farm and agriculture operations. Perhaps Clarion is aware of model ordinances or can create one.

### **Gravel Pits**

- Gravel Pits are an important economic driver in Prince George’s County. In some cases the land can be reclaimed as farmland. However, we need to think more aggressively in terms of requiring reclamation plans. Every gravel pit that could one day be dedicated to agriculture, forestry, solar farming, or other uses should be prepared for this end-state. Currently, many reclaimed lands have no benefits to the community.

### **Urban Agriculture**

- There were some requests for additional agricultural uses in more urban environments, perhaps to include alpacas and chickens.
- Are there any things that traditional farms need to be concerned with as we look at potentially expanding urban agriculture? Not really, these are different types of operations at different scales.
- Consideration may be given to providing for agricultural uses on vacant, industrial, and commercial properties. There are tax incentives in Baltimore for this concept.

### **Agriculture Zone**

- Are we looking at a true large lot agriculture zone? *Yes, we’ve heard this request.*