

Good Morning.

For the record, my name is Michelle Layton. Along with Ms. Donna Selden, I co-chair the Sandy Spring Ashton Rural Preservation Consortium.

As our name implies, the SSARPC's mission is to support development in Ashton and Sandy Spring that conforms to the 1998 Ashton/Sandy Spring Master Plan, in order to preserve the historic rural villages of Sandy Spring and Ashton. We are, in fact, Pro-Master Plan, not anti development.

The SSARPC is made up of community volunteers who are energetically dedicated to ensuring that future development within the 1998 Sandy Spring/Ashton Master Plan boundaries recognizes the community's desire to remain rural and conforms to that Plan. This is not intended to discourage appropriate business and commercial expansion. The proposed Zoning Text Amendment will contribute to the process by clarifying what uses are permitted in the Sandy Spring/Ashton Rural Village Overlay Zone and set the tone for future development in these rural towns.

The purpose clause of the Rural Village Overlay Zone for Sandy Spring and Ashton reads:

(a) Preserve and enhance the rural village character of the Sandy Spring and Ashton Village centers by ensuring an attractive and traditional pattern of houses, commercial establishments, open spaces and their relationship to the roadways.

and

(b) Encourage a compatible relationship between new or expanded houses or businesses and traditional neighboring structures that reflect the best of local village character particularly in term of scale, siting, design features and orientation of the site.

The SSARPC believes that the Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) proposed by Councilman Mark Elrich, on behalf of the late Don Praisner, is the right direction to go if the vision of the Sandy Spring/Ashton Master Plan and Rural Village Overlay Zone is to be respected.

We believe that this updated list of prohibited uses is consistent with the ones already approved by the Planning Board and County Council. It also serves to "preserve and enhance the rural village character," as described in the Rural Overlay Zone's purpose clause. The SSARPC is appreciative that the Planning Board and, next, the County Council will have an opportunity to ensure that the Ashton/Sandy Spring area retains the rural atmosphere that the Master Plan so specifically describes, by limiting uses in the Overlay Zone that are not appropriate to a rural village.

The communities of Sandy Spring and Ashton had the foresight years ago to develop a Master Plan to protect it's unique historical roots that go back 250 years. They hoped to ensure that development did not destroy the sense of community and history that has continuously existed all those years. Over the last 5 years, it has been shown that this is a talented community committed to whatever it takes to ensure that development adheres to our Master Plan. We need the proposed Zoning Text Amendment to help us with our struggle to ensure that the Master Plan is respected.

By approving the ZTA before you, the Board assures the Sandy Spring/Ashton community that you have heard the pleas of those who chose to live here because of its history and rural nature and it gives those new to the area confidence that what they see and feel today will remain true to the intent of the Sandy Spring/Ashton Master Plan and Rural Village Overlay Zone to keep this area rural forever.

Thank you.