




Howard County
Agricultural Land Preservation Program

MEMORANDUM

Subject: Testimony for Amendments to Section 15.518(h) of the Howard County Code

To: Lonnie Robbins, Chief Administrative Officer, Department of Administration

From: Amy Gowan, Deputy Director, Department of Planning and Zoning 

Date: September 27, 2016

The Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ) supports Council Bill No. 68-2016. This bill amends Section 15.518(h) of the Howard County Code, which establishes the duties and responsibilities of the Agricultural Land Preservation Board (ALPB). Most of the proposed changes reflect the Board's current responsibilities and are "housekeeping" measures which reorganize text and remove duties no longer performed.

However, sub-sections (4) and (5) propose substantive amendments which would expand the role of the ALPB to provide policy guidance on both the ALPP Program and general agricultural issues. Item #4 codifies a duty the ALPB currently performs in practice. On occasion, the ALPB assists DPZ with policy creation and/or refinement regarding implementation of the Program. For example, the ALPB has created policies for siting forest conservation and wetland mitigation overlay easements on agricultural preservation properties. The input from the ALPB members, particularly those that actively farm, is instrumental in crafting best management practices on ALPP properties.

Item #5 expands the role of the ALPB to advise DPZ on agricultural issues and zoning related complaints that impact the farming community. The ALPB is uniquely positioned to provide guidance to DPZ given their personal and in depth knowledge of common farming practices. DPZ regularly works on issues that affect the agricultural community and the expertise of the Board would be beneficial to staff's evaluation.

This bill has no fiscal impact. DPZ appreciates Council's consideration of Council Bill No. 68-2016 and hopes that it is approved.

cc: Jennifer Sager, Legislative Coordinator, Department of Administration
Valdis Lazdins, Director, Planning and Zoning
Lisa O'Brien, Senior Assistant County Solicitor, Office of Law
Joy Levy, Agricultural Preservation Program Manager