

Good evening Commissioners,

I am Russ Shlagel 12850 Shlagel Rd, Waldorf Md.  
I with my wife and three sons own and operate  
Shlagel Farms. I am here to express my  
opposition to ZTA 24-182

I don't understand what PGM is trying to fix or  
accomplish with this amendment, other than to  
stifle the possibility of a vibrant ag community  
within our county. As a farmer with visitors  
coming to my farm I was not consulted about my  
viewpoint. I don't believe EDC was consulted. I  
know that the Charles County Farm Bureau was  
not consulted.

In 2019 I was a member of the rural zoning task  
force. We presented 16 recommendations for the  
betterment of our ag and rural communities.  
Only one was acted upon.

In May, when Secretary Atticks; Secretary of Agriculture for the State of Maryland, visited farms in Charles county with our Commissioners and the Southern Md Delegation and top staff of PGM, this matter was never discussed or even mentioned. At the last stop at Chip Bowling's, where every facet of agriculture in our county was represented, Commissioner Bowling asked PGM if they had any matter that they would like to discuss with us. They had nothing to say. Yet, two weeks later the planning commission was briefed on this issue. The entire process lacks transparency.

YES, I will be affected by this. It will create a financial burden. Quite frankly, I don't know if I will do it. At any point in the month of May, I could have more than 50 cars on my farm. I will be operating 7 days a week to harvest my crop of strawberries. I fail to understand the thought process of requiring a paved parking lot creating

impervious surfaces where none exist, causing more runoff and further harming the Zekiah watershed. How's that for an unintended consequence?

Since covid I have learned how many food insecure people live in Charles County. We do a lot with the food insecure. It brings me a lot of joy to do this work. I don't need attaboys or fanfare. To do it is enough. Part of the reason we can do this work, is because of the high value crops we raise. One of them is strawberries which I love to grow. Certain crops like strawberries bring customers from all over the DMV to our farm. They enjoy the beauty of open land and a working farm. If you take away my ability to bring these customers to my farm with over reaching and stifling government regulations, you destroy my ability to provide for the food insecure in Charles County. Another unintended consequence.

I hope we can all agree that agricultural education is important for our supply chain and future generations. Agriculture should be accessible to all, but it will stop being accessible if family farms continue to face over regulation and arbitrary thresholds. Farming has played a critical role in Charles County history and should continue to do so. It is absolutely a changing landscape, but establishing a regulatory framework for farming and tourism must be comprehensive instead of a convenient patch job.