

October 2009 Newsletter

The Frederick County Planning Commissioners denied the application of the Global Mission Church to construct a 138,000 sq. ft. facility on agriculture land just north of the Montgomery and Frederick County line where Highway 109 crosses Interstate 270. The basis of the denial was that the large footprint of the facilities and future expansion plans did not match the code restricted septic system of 4,999 gallons of discharge per day.

The opposition to the proposed facility galvanized a strong coalition of organizations and individuals that in the end presented a wide ranging set of issues to the Commissioners at their hearing on October 14. Global Mission Church may appeal the decision although we hope they will find a more suitable location to fulfill their dreams for a large institution to support their mission for their parishioners. It is clear they need a site that has available city water and sewer systems.

The debate about the location of this large facility raised significant issues for the future of the Agriculture Reserve in Montgomery County and the adjoining agriculture land in Frederick County. How can we protect the remaining agriculture land from the constant threat from development? What steps should we take to protect the sole source aquifer that supplies water to our region? How can we respect the fragile nature of our “rustic roads” in light of expanded traffic pressures? What should we do to preserve an environment that provides open spaces, forested areas and streams that are so crucial to preserving our well-being from the ravishes of global warming and water shortages. How can we focus our development to areas that do not require increased use of motor vehicles for people to obtain essential services?

All of these issues and many more emerged as residents, civic organizations and even some governmental agencies wrestled with the plan to place such a large building on designated agriculture land. It is clear that we all must answer these questions in ways that inform future developers that agricultural land is not just empty land ready for human alteration. These spaces already play a crucial role in our community.

SCA thanks all of the people and organizations who contributed to the successful effort to protect agriculture land from the massive proposed development. We look forward to the same spirit of cooperation and interaction as other plans threaten the sanctity of the Agriculture Reserve. We also pledge our support for all efforts to establish a similar Reserve in Frederick County.