

Sharon Taylor

From: Morgan Butler <mbutler@selcva.org>
Sent: Monday, July 10, 2017 2:00 PM
To: Planning Commission
Cc: Bill Fritz
Subject: Proposed ZTA: Farmers' Markets as by-right use

Dear Planning Commission Members:

We wanted to offer a few thoughts on the proposed zoning text amendment you'll be considering tomorrow night to change farmers' markets from a special use to a by-right use in the Rural Area and Village Residential zoning districts.

We appreciate the County's efforts to support local agriculture, and holding appropriately scaled farmers' markets in the County's Rural Areas is a good opportunity to help ensure that it continues to thrive.

We also understand that the few special use permit applications the County has received for farmers' markets in the Rural Areas over the past several years have been for small markets proposing few changes to the site.

However, once they reach a certain size and scale, farmers' markets can significantly impact the surrounding area. Take, for example, Charlottesville's City Market and its impacts to surrounding blocks on any given Saturday morning—and that's even without any type of permanent structure devoted to the use.

As a result, we understand the benefits that would accompany allowing smaller-scale farmers' markets to be a by-right use, but we also think the special use permit process provides an important review opportunity and approval checkpoint for larger and more impactful proposals that may come forward in the future—particularly considering that the County Code places no limit on the size of a structure that may be built for a farmers' market. (This means that if farmers' markets become a by-right use, structures of any size may be built in the Rural Area for farmers' markets without Planning Commission and Board review or approval.)

With that in mind, we urge you not to recommend approval of the current proposal to change farmers' markets to a by-right use in the Rural Areas and Village Residential zoning districts. We encourage you instead to think about potential size and scale thresholds below which it may make sense to allow farmers' markets to be by-right, but above which a special use permit would continue to be required. Just as a general idea, perhaps one threshold could be the total square footage of all structures to be used, and another threshold could be an overall area requirement for all activities (parking, vendor stalls, etc.).

In short, promoting and facilitating local agriculture through farmers' markets is a worthwhile effort, but like the many other rural commercial uses that have come up in recent years, this too must be carefully balanced with the County's many other Rural Area goals and values.

Unfortunately, scheduling conflicts will keep us from attending your meeting tomorrow night, but we appreciate your consideration of our input. Please let me know if you have any questions in the meantime.

Sincerely,
Morgan Butler

Morgan Butler
Senior Attorney
Southern Environmental Law Center
201 West Main Street, Suite 14

Sharon Taylor

From: Neil Williamson <neil@freeenterpriseforum.org>
Sent: Monday, July 10, 2017 4:08 PM
To: Planning Commission
Subject: Farmer's Markets

Greetings.

I regret that I will not be able to join you on Tuesday night to hear your discussion of Farmer's Markets as I will be out on business travel.

The Free Enterprise Forum believes both the 'sketch plan' and by right Farmer's Markets are worthy of consideration. Specifically, we believe these ideas directly support Comprehensive Plan "Strategy 1d: Continue to assist Rural Area property owners to diversify agricultural activities, including helping to connect local farms with local consumers"

I wrote about this issue on the blog this afternoon. <https://freeenterpriseforum.wordpress.com/2017/07/10/albemarle-may-cut-rural-regulatory-red-tape/>

I apologize for the scheduling conflict and I thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Neil

Neil Williamson
President
Free Enterprise Forum
550 Hillsdale Drive
Charlottesville, VA 22901
(o) 434-817-2380
(cell) 434-962-0847
www.freeenterpriseforum.org