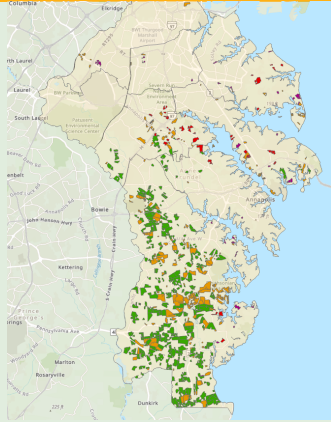




Growth Action Network

of Anne Arundel County, Inc.

P.O. Box 748 • Arnold, MD 21012



Ag Tourism Bills have potentially broad impact.

September 29, 2020

Ag Tourism bills apply to more than 650 properties

Bills 68-20 and 69-20 should be given special attention by citizens living in rural areas.

Bill No. 68-20, “Farm Alcohol Production” and **Bill No. 69-20 – “Farm or Agricultural Heritage Site Stays and Special Events”** will be heard on Oct 5. These Bills are a result of recommendations of the AACo Agricultural, Farming and Agritourism Commission.

Agriculture is in continuing decline in AACo. The decreasing number of farms and farm revenue threatens the continued viability of much of south county’s treasured rural character. Significant non-agricultural commercial uses are being considered. For example, Bill 69-20 proposes event venues for large groups up to 30 times a year and temporary lodging facilities for groups up to 50 persons on agricultural RA, RLD, and R1 properties as small as 10 acres or Historic properties as small as 5 acres. Bill 68-20 reduces restrictions on farm alcohol production and tasting on similar RA, RLD, and R1 properties. Text of the bills may be viewed at [this link](#).

A [GIS map of affected properties](#) shows that there are more than 650 properties subject to the bills. The scope of the bills is large. Agricultural land in all parts of the county is intermingled with residential properties, and as many as 55,000 residences lie within 1 mile of a proposed Ag Tourism property. However, the proposed bills do little to assure that the new agritourism activities will not adversely affect the ambiance and quality of life of local neighborhoods. It also seems likely that these bills will be little more than a band-aid on a bleeding farm economy.

These legislative proposals do not appear to be based on an analysis that links them to industry trends or forecasts their effect on individual businesses, the

industry as a whole or the interests and needs of the communities within the County. Absent such analysis, there is no reason to expect these proposals to alter the long-term industry decline of agriculture. We all want farms to remain viable and sustainable, but the risks of unforeseen consequences seem to far outweigh the benefits of the bills.

GAN recommends that the Council vote against the two bills and requests that the County initiate studies that will lead to more innovative and effective approaches to combating agricultural decline in Anne Arundel County and preservation of agricultural lands.

GAN encourages all members to express their opposition to the bills by contacting Council members and the Administration and submitting testimony to the October 5 Council meeting. [Click here](#) to spend only two minutes sending a preformatted email to the County Council and [click here](#) to submit preformatted testimony to the Council meeting.

Bill 67-20 will impact many homeowner associations, and should be carefully studied by HOA members.

Bill No. 67-20, "Stormwater Management" will be heard on Oct 5. It requires developers to be responsible for repair or restoration of BMPs to be owned or maintained by HOA's for at least two years after approval of the as-built plans. This bill is not perfect, but seems to be a good step in the right direction. HOA's need to review the bill and be sure they understand their responsibilities.

New newsletter feature: Meet Our Members

One of the great benefits of being part of GAN is the opportunity to engage with other communities and learn how they are approaching development issues impacting their communities. To help build this type of sharing and collaboration, GAN will profile one of our members in each of our biweekly newsletters. Please let us know if you would like to participate. In 250 words, email us the following information

- Name of Community and Size
- Location
- Challenges your community has had to overcome managing growth and development (3-4 sentences)
- Benefits for your community from engaging with GAN
- Contact information

Schedule for the new GDP

The tentative schedule for the next steps of the Plan2040 process are:

- Late September, Complete draft plan posted online for 30-45 day comment period
- Mid November, Draft revision completed and 2nd draft presented to Planning Advisory Board
- Early December, 3rd draft presented to County Executive
- Mid December, Final draft delivered to County Council
- Early January 2021, First public County Council hearing

GAN members and guests are encouraged to carefully review and comment upon each draft as it is released.

Coming meetings and events

- Oct 5, 6 pm, County Council meeting (virtual)
 - Oct 24, GAN Board meeting (virtual)
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