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Testimony April 21, 2009 before the Montgomery County, Maryland County Council on the Planning Board's recommendation on the Zoning Text Amendment for the Sandy Spring/Ashton Rural Overlay Zone (Land Uses section).

Good Evening. My name is Elizabeth Thornton and I have been a resident of the Sandy Spring, Maryland area since 1976. I live with my husband on a small family farm where we have raised sheep, vegetables, and chickens not to mention a couple children and numerous pets. As of today we have added cattle to the list of crops. The land has been in our family since 1953 and was farm land before that for many generations.

For the past 18 years I have worked at Sandy Spring Friends School, which was founded in 1961 by a visionary and multi-talented local Quaker, Brook Moore. He always said that Sandy Spring was not just a place, but a state of mind. He also sensed, as many have, that there is a certain spirit at work in this area, that inspires people to be creative, involved, and thoughtful; living out the best of Quaker values. Among the ten signature elements of our school are commitment to community and stewardship of our world. These concerns extend beyond the boundaries of the campus. I see this spirit at work every day, both at school in our children and faculty, and in the wider Sandy Spring among friends and neighbors.

I am proud to be part of such an exceptional community with a rich and varied history that is treasured. The citizen groups that have worked together to make progress and development in our area conform to the Master Plan and leave us with a place where we can continue that history and community are very impressive. They have not been exclusionary or obstructionist, but have tried to bring people together to solve problems (both past and future) and maintain a look and feel that is worth keeping. We are in it for the long haul. We want to continue to work to preserve and enhance the rural village that would be a pedestrian and family friendly place with commercial enterprises that would benefit everyday needs. We have the beginnings of that with a post office, two markets, a bakery, a museum, a bank, restaurants and many other concerns. We at last have a traffic light so we can cross the road safely and some newly improved sidewalks. Personally, I would like to see bike paths built throughout the area and additional green areas.

I support the planning staff's recommendation of acceptance with modifications of the zoning text amendment. I feel it moves us in the right direction as we continue to grow and develop our unique and beloved home.