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**TO PRINT, USE PRINT VERSION**

## of note

### Next MCFE Meeting

Monday, May 8, 2017, 7:45 p.m. @ the Executive Office Building in Rockville. "Transparency and Open Government" **AGENDA, P. 2 • PROGRAM, P. 3**

### March's Community Heroes

They are Valarie Barr and Charlotte Coffield of Silver Spring. *(Note: This presentation was postponed from March due to weather conditions.)* **P. 4**

### Meeting Minutes

April General Meeting #884 **P. 19**  
Executive Committee Meeting **P. 22**

### Membership Application

Join or Renew Now **SEE FORM**

## Federation Meeting 885

Monday, May 8, 2017

7:45 p.m.

Lobby Level Auditorium  
Executive Office Building  
101 Monroe Street, Rockville

### AGENDA

- 7:45 Call to Order/Introductions
- 7:50 Approval of Agenda
- 7:51 Announcements
- 7:55 Approval of Minutes, April 17 meeting **P.19**
- 7:56 Treasurer's Report
- 7:57 Community Heroes: Valarie Barr/Charlotte Coffield **P.4**
- 8:00 Program: Transparency and Open Government
- 9:25 Committee Reports
- 9:35 Old and New Business
- 9:45 Adjournment

## About MCCF Meetings

*All monthly MCCF meetings are open to the public.* They are held on the second Monday of each month, September through June, at 7:45 p.m.

The May meeting will be held in the **Lobby Level Auditorium of the Executive Office Building at 101 Monroe Street, Rockville, Maryland.**

Walkers can enter by buzzing security at the door. You can park for free either in the lot at E. Jefferson and Monroe Streets or in the lowest level of the EOB. Drive onto the ramp in the front of the building (ignore “permit parking only” sign), turn left at the second, lower level; use the intercom at the gate to the parking garage and at the door to the elevators to inform security you’re attending the MCCF Meeting. ■

# mccf

The **Montgomery County Civic Federation, Inc.**, is a county-wide nonprofit educational and advocacy organization founded in 1925 to serve the public interest. Monthly MCCF meetings are open to the public (agenda and details at left).

The *Civic Federation News* is published monthly except July and August. It is emailed to delegates, associate members, news media, and local, state, and federal officials. **Recipients are encouraged to forward the *Civic Federation News* to all association members, friends, and neighbors.** Permission is granted to reproduce any article, provided that proper credit is given to the “*Civic Federation News* of the Montgomery County (Md.) Civic Federation.”

### Civic Federation News

civicednews AT montgomerycivic.org

TO SUBMIT AN ARTICLE, SEE **PAGE 23**

## May 8 Program: Transparency and Open Government (Postponed from March)

By Paula Bienenfeld

The Civic Fed is a strong proponent of transparency and open government. Our May 8 program—originally to be held during “Sunshine Week” but postponed from March 13 due to weather conditions—is an informative one in celebration of our right to know. We plan to focus on two Maryland laws: the Maryland Public Information Act (MPIA) request and the Maryland Open Meetings Act. Guests include **Ron Ely** (a Community Hero in May 2015), who has filed MPIAs in the past, to discuss his experience with the process, and **Noel Isama**, a Policy Analyst from the Sunlight Foundation. This is an open discussion, with review of what our state laws are and how you can get the documents you want from sometimes recalcitrant county gov-



ernment officials and public information officers.

The Maryland Open Meetings Act is a statute that requires many state and local bodies to hold their meetings in public, to give the public adequate notice of those meetings, and to allow the public to inspect meetings minutes. The State offers an online training class about the law and there is an Open Meetings Act Compliance Board which handles requests. If you know of “off-the-record” retreats,

meetings, or secretive meetings that do not meet our State laws for open meetings, you can file a complaint with the Compliance Board.

The Maryland Public Information Act, according to the Attorney General, “grants the people of this State a broad right of access to public records while protecting legitimate governmental interests and the privacy rights of individual citizens.” The MPIA means that, if the County or State government holds records, you as a resident of the State have a right to access for those records. You can obtain the records by sending or emailing a short letter to the agency, which has 30 days to respond to your request.

Never written a Maryland Public Information Act request? This is a great week to begin. The letters are

MORE

## May 8 Program, cont.

easy to write and can be submitted online. Our Maryland Attorney General has an easy template to follow in Appendix A of the [OAG website](#).

Filed but having trouble getting the information you requested? Come to the meeting so we can discuss what's been filed, and what is required by the government agency so you can get the documents for which you asked.

Heard about a meeting but can't find any mention of it on a government agenda, or can't find minutes that are required by the Open Meetings Act? Come to our Civic Federation meeting to learn how to file a complaint with the Open Meetings Compliance Board.

We look forward to seeing you at the meeting to celebrate Sunshine Week, even if it's two months late! ■

## Barr and Coffield are This Month's Community Heroes

*By Alan Bowser, First Vice President*

Due to the cancellation of the MCCF meeting in March, the Montgomery County Civic Federation recognizes Valarie Barr and Charlotte Coffield of Silver Spring as Montgomery County Community Heroes for the month of May.

As Presidents of the Lyttons-

ville Community Civic Association and the Rosemary Hills Neighbors' Association, respectively, Charlotte Coffield and Valarie Barr have taken leading roles in guiding their west Silver Spring neighborhoods through a long process of planning and land use in their neighborhoods and, specifically, the recent deliberations surrounding the Greater Lyttonsville Sector Plan recently approved by the Montgomery County Council.

Valarie Barr and Charlotte Coffield have long been active in community planning and civic engagement efforts in the greater Silver Spring area. Too, they have been influential members of the Presidents' Council of Silver Spring Civic Associations (PREZCO). See more of their story on page 4 in [March's newsletter online](#). ■



VALARIE BARR AND  
CHARLOTTE COFFIELD

## Update on Legislation for Fossil Fuel Divestment for Retired Mont. County Retirees

*By Jeffrey Weisner, Steering Committee President, 350MoCo*

In October, Council President Berliner introduced County Bill 44-16, which sought to divest the Montgomery County Employees Retirement Programs (MCERP) and Consolidated Retiree Health Benefits Trust (CRHBT) of their direct holdings in the 200 most carbon-intensive fossil fuel companies. The two funds hold approximately \$70 million dollars in direct investments in these companies.

The bill, long sought by local grassroots climate group 350MoCo and others, would be one of the most far-reaching divestment bill in the country. Bill 44-16 was opposed by the Boards of Investment Trustees (BITs) of the two funds, along with the Montgomery County Retired

Employees Association (MCREA) and, to various degrees, by members and leadership of the affected unions—MCGEO and the police and firefighters' unions.

MCGEO's situation was particularly complex since the Executive Board of the union had voted unanimously in favor of divestment in 2015; however, some in MCGEO did not feel that Bill 44-16 was the proper vehicle for accomplishing that divestment. Other opponents objected to the bill as interference in the Boards' powers to make investment choices, and some believed that the bill could lead to a "slippery slope" of further divestments. (The Council has passed divestment bills for the MCERP twice before in its history, once for investments in South Africa in 1986 and once for

investments in Sudan in 2009.)

### **FALSE ARGUMENTS ON FUND PERFORMANCE**

Unfortunately, quite a few of Bill 44-16's opponents were taken in by completely false arguments regarding fund performance. Many claimed that divestment would hurt the financial returns of the fund. This claim is baseless; multiple highly regarded studies have shown that fossil fuel divestment does not affect long-term returns from a well-managed and diversified fund.

On the contrary, we see growing evidence globally that investors are failing to accurately factor in the considerable financial risks posed to the global economy by climate change impacts. Fossil fuel compa-

## Fossil Fuel Divestment, cont.

nies, in particular, are at risk from a “carbon bubble” that could pop as the world transitions away from fossil fuels, rendering their reserves less valuable. Citigroup estimated in a landmark 2015 report that the total value of stranded assets from a carbon bubble could top \$100 trillion. Getting out of fossil fuels is probably the financially smart thing to do.

As a result of discussions between Councilmembers, the unions, and local activists, a resolution requesting fossil fuel divestment using existing ESG [Environmental, Social, and Governance] investment policies will be proposed in lieu of a full Council vote on Bill 44-16. While 350MoCo and other local groups remain in favor of divestment via legislation, there is reason for some optimism for divestment advocates.

We have evidence just a few miles away that pension divestment can be accomplished via the use of ESG policies. The DC Retirement Board was able to eliminate its direct investments in the 200 most harmful fossil fuel companies only two years after a similar divestment resolution was enacted there. The resolution will ask the Boards to report biannually on progress on fossil fuel divestment.

## 350MOCO ACTIONS

350MoCo has obtained commitments from MCGEO President Gino Renne, Councilmembers Berliner and Hucker, and others that they will pay close attention to the BIT’s progress toward divestment under the proposed resolution, and will “hold their feet to the fire” if they seem to be lagging in their efforts. You can be sure that fossil fuel di-

vestment advocates will be watching even more closely and, if they don’t see the County making real effort to sell these assets, they will be calling County officials to account.

As we watch the Trump Administration attempting to gut climate regulations and destroy the EPA and other agencies, local action on climate issues is more important than ever. County residents will not appreciate getting a nonbinding resolution that simply continues the status quo, a status quo that has left the County heavily invested in the companies fighting against the very climate policies that the County claims to espouse.

For more details on 350MoCo’s upcoming meetings and actions on climate issues in the County, visit [350MoCo.org](http://350MoCo.org), check them out on Facebook and Twitter, or shoot them an email at [350MoCo@gmail.com](mailto:350MoCo@gmail.com). ■

HELP THE NATIONAL PARK IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY'S BACKYARD

## Support a Proposed Resolution to Rewater the C&O Canal and Repair the Towpath

*By Sandy Vogelgesang, MCCF  
Member, Former ExCom Member*

Want water restored to the C&O Canal and dangerous pot-holes filled in the Towpath? You and your neighbors in Montgomery County can help by supporting two grant proposals that the C&O Canal National Historical Park (NHP) plans to submit by mid-May to the Maryland Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP).

One grant for \$6,230,000 will help finance “A Rewatered Canal.” The goal is to rewater the Canal in Montgomery County, fully restoring the Canal to its historical appearance from Lock 5 to Lock 22 (almost the entire length of the Canal in Montgomery County). That project will both improve the Canal’s ap-

pearance for park users and increase opportunities for boating and kayaking. TAP funding will match other funding requested by the C&O Canal NHP.

The other grant—for \$5,000,000—will help achieve “A Safe Towpath.” This is a five-year program to address the worst portions of the Canal Towpath (much of it in Montgomery County) so that it can become a world-class riding and hiking surface for Park visitors. TAP funding will match other funding that the C&O Canal NHP will request for this program.

These projects will provide direct benefit to the State of Maryland and to Montgomery County in particular. Montgomery County was the point of entry for almost

two million visitors—mostly local users—this last year. The Canal’s success is a success for Maryland, including Montgomery County. More than \$90 million was spent locally by visitors to the Canal.

TAP funders for these two projects have made clear that strong community support must be demonstrated in order for the Park’s proposals to succeed. For that reason, Park leadership has reached out to the communities along the Canal for help. Specifically, the Park Superintendent has requested letters of support which he can include in the Park’s grant proposals due mid-May. Those letters should be addressed to Kevin D. Brandt, Superintendent, Ches-

## Rewater the Canal, cont.

peake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park, 1850 Dual Highway, Suite 100, Hagerstown MD 21740. The letters can be emailed to Ben Helwig at [ben\\_helwig@nps.gov](mailto:ben_helwig@nps.gov). All letters must be received in the mail or electronically by COB May 12, 2017.

The Park Superintendent is a strong advocate of community engagement in the C&O Canal NHP and, to that end, has addressed the Civic Federation in the past. His request for support appears consistent with the goals of the Federation. The MCCF Executive Committee has decided that his request merits submission to the membership at the next general meeting on May 8. To that end, the following resolution is submitted for Federa-

tion delegates' consideration.

### **DRAFT RESOLUTION**

*Whereas the C&O Canal National Historical Park is submitting two grants to the Maryland Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) for rewatering the Canal (almost the entire length in Montgomery County) and repairing the Towpath used by many bikers and hikers in Montgomery County and*

*Whereas the Maryland TAP has stressed the need for strong community support in order to approve these two grant requests,*

*Therefore, the Montgomery County Civic Federation agrees to support dispatch of a letter of support to the Park Superintendent and to encourage its members to express support as well by May 12, 2017. ■*

## **All About Bicycling**

*By Peggy Dennis, Past President and Transportation Cmte. Member*

### **BICYCLE EDUCATION**

Never bicycled, but willing to learn? Haven't biked in years, but feel apprehensive about biking in our urban areas? The Washington Area Bicycling Association will be holding adult bicycling classes in Montgomery County. [Learn more.](#)

### **RECREATIONAL BICYCLING OP**

Spring is here and muscle-powered modes of transportation are in full gear. If you haven't ridden a bike in donkeys years, stop by the C&O Canal's Old Tavern at Great Falls and take out a "Bike Loaner Program" bike at absolutely no cost. This is a great way to test drive different varieties of bicycles and see

## All About Bicycling, cont.

what works best for you. Breezing along the Canal towpath on a bike is a safe, quiet and wonderful way to reconnect with nature and our very own National Park.

### BICYCLE MASTER PLAN

For those interested in following the re-write of the County's Bicycle Master Plan, [visit the website](#). There you will find the Framework Report, the Bicycle "Stress Map," information on the White Flint Separated Bike Lane Network, the Life Sciences Separated Bike Lane Network, the Downtown Silver Spring Bicycle Network, Bicycle Parking Guidelines, and How to Find a Bike Rack. You can also access specific area plans and see how your neighborhood may be made safer and more inviting for future bicycling.

Representing the MCCF on the Bicycle Master Plan Advisory Group has been an interesting challenge. The project has been crafted by the Transportation Planning staff and Toole Design Group. They put together recommendations and we critique and make suggestions. I have asked that they put high priority on safety measures for cyclists on all roads crossing the Beltway, the ICC and I-270. These roads are "choke points" for cyclists because the entry and exit ramps are designed only to move vehicles on and off the roadway quickly. Cyclists and pedestrians are challenged to move along the road without being slaughtered by speeding autos.

I have also asked that the new plan show existing off-road bike/pedestrian paths in residential neighborhoods (yes, there are some!) and paths that may be built someday

along our public utility corridors like that owned by Pepco for their electrical power lines. Most important, I have asked that every library, recreation center, and public school be accessible by several bike routes. In the case of the schools, this ties in with the Montgomery County DOT's "Safe Routes to School" program.

In this one area, I am in conflict with other members of the Advisory Group. They are advocating that routes to schools have "side paths," eight- to 10-foot-wide paved paths set well back from the edge of the road. My experience growing up bicycling to and from school on conventional sidewalks from the time I was in third grade tells me that sidewalks in residential neighborhoods are perfectly safe for children for walking and bicycling.

I also know that even having

## All About Bicycling, cont.

sidewalks added to neighborhood streets is a highly contentious issue. Many homeowners prefer having their entire front yard grassed and landscaped and do not want the responsibility of shoveling snow off the sidewalk, even if it is a public benefit in the public right-of-way. Having a “side path” for five or six blocks along residential streets leading to schools would require many homeowners to sacrifice a large portion of their front yards and mature trees for what would amount to a second, albeit smaller, road running by their front doors. This approach, I believe, is far too costly and contentious. It would generate intense community opposition to both specific projects and bicycle safety improvements in general. So I say, let overkill not kill the reasonable

and attainable improvement.

The preliminary bikeway recommendations will be made available to the public through a series of public programs taking place in June. All homeowners should attend as all neighborhoods will be effected. While I trust that many of the recommendations, when eventually implemented, will benefit communities, it is our civic responsibility to be informed about the proposals and to let both planners and elected officials know if you support or oppose specific measures.

The public meetings will each have an “open house” from 4:00 to

7:15 p.m. and a formal presentation from 7:15 to 8:15 p.m. The dates and venues are as follows:

**June 6, 2017:** Montgomery County Planning Department, 8787 Georgia Ave, Silver Spring, Maryland

**June 8, 2017:** Bethesda Chevy Chase Regional Services Center, 4805 Edgemoor Lane, Bethesda.

**June 12, 2017:** Olney Library, 3500 Olney Laytonsville Rd, Olney.

**June 14, 2017:** UpCounty Regional Services Center, 12900 Middlebrook Road, Germantown.

**June 22, 2017:** Marilyn J. Praisner Library, 14910 Old Columbia Pike, Burtonsville. ■



THE  
BICYCLE  
MASTER PLAN

## Wayne Goldstein: A Personal Remembrance

*By Alan Bowser, 1st Vice President*

A little over eight years ago, Wayne Goldstein of Kensington passed away.

For those of us who worked with him, his death was a tremendous loss to civic activism in Montgomery County and throughout the region. His passing left a tear in the fabric of our community that has not yet been mended, and likely will never be mended.

Many people remember him for his passion for historic preservation in the County. Some remember him for his deep knowledge of the County's land use and planning laws and regulations. Others remember him for his advocacy for neighborhoods and rental communities. Many knew him from his interest in horticulture.

I knew him in many capacities,

but principally as a strong, vocal advocate of the County's civic associations and homeowners associations. He was a champion of community engagement and dialogue. He was not afraid to speak truth to power.



WAYNE GOLDSTEIN

He was a very effective leader of the Montgomery County Civic Federation, serving as its President. In that capacity, he would often join our meetings at the Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board's Neighborhood Committee, which I chaired, and engaged in extended useful conversations about sustainable development, affordable housing, transit and transportation issues, public finance, economic development, and the environment. At his death, Wayne had also served as president of Montgomery Preservation and the Kensington Heights Citizens Association. He was a columnist for The Sentinel weekly newspaper.

I recall his obituary by The Washington Post's Miranda Spivack when she wrote, "His death brought

MORE

## Wayne Goldsten, cont.

an outpouring of warm sentiment for the Kensington resident, whose trademark ponytail and affinity for offbeat hats made him stand out in almost any crowd.”

Wayne played a key role in many community efforts across the county, including the preservation of a Cesar Pelli-designed Comsat office building near Clarksburg. In 2007, he was credited with helping persuade the developer and County Council members that the Comsat building was among the few architecturally significant structures in Montgomery County. Pelli, a former dean of Yale University’s architecture school, designed the North Terminal at Reagan National Airport and Petronas Twin Towers in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. I was proud to join him in that successful effort.

I recall also the great efforts that Wayne took attempting to stop the demolition of the historic Silver Spring Armory on Wayne Avenue, as the County moved forward with its urban redevelopment plans for the area. His was a strong voice for protecting and preserving unique and historic architectural structures. While, ultimately, the Armory was not saved, his work strengthened and invigorated the efforts of our Silver Spring neighbors who prevailed with their vision for a safe, walkable, entertaining, and modern “town center.”

Wayne Goldsten was, without a doubt, one of the smartest, most hardworking, and most dedicated of a long line of exemplary citizen activists in Montgomery County. He inspired us and lifted us up, and we will continue to miss him and his passion for our work every day. ■

## Planning and Land Use Report

*By Harriet Quinn, Chair, Planning and Land Use Committee*

### INTERVIEWS FOR PLANNING BOARD VACANCY

On May 11, beginning at 9:30 a.m., the County Council will interview the following candidates for the vacancy on the Planning Board: *Peter Myo Khin*, Silver Spring; *Tina Patterson*, Germantown; *Dan Reed*, Silver Spring; and *Bruce Romer*, Bethesda. Interviews are open to the public, and will be streamed live and broadcast on the County Council’s Cable Channel. Comments to Councilmembers ([County.Council@montgomery-countymd.gov](mailto:County.Council@montgomery-countymd.gov)) may be made at any point prior to the June 13 appointment.

## PLU Report, cont.

### NEW INSPECTOR GENERAL POSITION FOR M-NCPPC

We are pleased to report that state Delegate Ben Kramer's Bill ([HB 321](#)), creating an Office of Inspector General for the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC), passed the General Assembly unanimously, and was signed into law by the Governor on April 18. Prior to passage of this legislation, none of our bicounty agencies had an Inspector General.

The Montgomery County Office of Inspector General does not have jurisdiction over the bicounty agencies such as M-NCPPC and WSSC. MCCF testified in Annapolis along with other groups in favor of an Inspector General for both M-NCPPC and WSSC. We appreciate the time

and work Delegate Kramer put into the passage of this important legislation. We hope to see legislation creating an Inspector General for WSSC during the next legislative session.

### HEARING SCHEDULED FOR ZTA 16-03, SHORT-TERM RENTALS IN RESIDENTIAL ZONES

The Planning Board will hold a hearing on May 11 at 1:30 p.m. regarding the Planning Department's [Zoning Text Amendment 16-03](#) which modifies the ZTA that was first introduced on February 2, 2016. This ZTA would change the zoning in residential zones to allow by right, short-term rentals (nightly or less than 30 days) in residential zones. Currently, short-term rentals are allowed in residential zones if the property is a licensed "Bed and Breakfast." "Bed and Break-

fast" would remain a separate use category in the Zoning Code. The ZTA creates a new category of accessory use in all residential zones called "short-term residential rental." The proposed legislation would allow for administrative approval of short-term rentals if the property meets certain criteria. Since most Homeowners and Condominium Associations already have regulations restricting and prohibiting short-term rentals, this legislation primarily affects neighborhoods that are not "common ownership" communities that have HOA or condominium documentation.

The ZTA requires notice to confronting and abutting neighbors, does not require that the owner be present during the rental, and allows up to 6 guests at a time for a maximum of 90 days per year.

## PLU Report, cont.

Although the property would be required to be licensed, there is no indication of how this would be enforced, since the companion licensing legislation is not available at this time. Civic Associations are encouraged to monitor this legislation as it gets reviewed by the Planning Board and moves to the County Council. You can [sign up to testify at the Planning Board hearing on May 11 here](#).

## UPCOMING SMALL CELL TELECOMMUNICATIONS TOWERS COMMUNITY MEETINGS

The open house and community meeting to discuss proposed legislation to place small cell towers in the right-of-way in residential streets, that was originally scheduled for April 28, has been rescheduled for

June 8. The Open House to show equipment will begin at 6:00 p.m. and the community meeting will begin at 7:00 p.m. The location is the Executive Office Building Cafeteria, 101 Monroe Street in Rockville.

The MCCF program for our June 12 meeting will also discuss the legislation with guest speakers. Additional information will be provided in our June newsletter.

## MASTER/SECTOR PLAN UPDATES

Check the [Planning Department website](#) for updates

On Tuesday, April 25, the full Council voted 8-1 in “straw votes” to move a revised [Bethesda Downtown Plan](#) towards final resolution. Councilmember Elrich opposed primarily because of the lack of infrastructure based staging in the plan.

The [White Flint 2 Sector Plan](#) will discuss the design guidelines during its 7th worksession with the Planning Board on May 4.

Proposed Changes to the Local Area Transportation Review (LATR) Guidelines will be discussed by the Planning Board on May 4th

The [Grosvenor-Strathmore Metro Area Minor Master Plan](#) will be discussed by the Planning Board with preliminary staff recommendations on May 4th.

The [Rock Spring Master Plan](#) has been transmitted to the County Council. A public hearing is not yet been scheduled.

For the [MARC Rail Communities Plan](#), the Planning Department has held several community meetings.

For the [Veirs Mill Corridor Master Plan](#), a community meeting will be held May 15 at Newport Middle School at 7 p.m. ■

## Reserve Your Tickets Now for Montgomery County Civic Federation's **2017 ANNUAL AWARDS CELEBRATION**

**THURSDAY, JUNE 8, 2017**

### **Reception**

6:30 to 9:00 p.m.

### **Awards Presentations**

7:15 to 8:15 p.m.

### **“THE ROOM” AT**

### **MCGINTY'S PUBLIC HOUSE**

911 Ellsworth Drive, Downtown  
Silver Spring, Maryland

*Reception includes substantial  
hors d'oeuvres, wine, soft drinks.  
Beer and cocktails at cash bar.*

**SPACE IS LIMITED**

**PLEASE RESERVE BY MAY 31ST**

Questions? Call Alan Bowser,  
301.523.6659

### **MCCF Annual Awards Celebration**

I/We will attend the Reception on Thursday, June 8, 2017:

**\$35 per person**       **\$60 per couple**

*(After May 31st or at the door: \$40 per person)*

**Name(s):**

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**Association or Organization (as applicable):**

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**Contact Information: Phone** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please print or cut off and fill in this form with check payable to:**

*Montgomery County Civic Federation, Inc., and mail to Montgomery County  
Civic Federation, Awards Celebration, P.O. Box 1123, Bethesda, MD 20827-1123*

PERSONAL OPINION

## The Death of Montgomery County Bill 44-16

*By Bailey Condrey, Second Vice President*

While the Montgomery County Council has now moved to create a divestment resolution for the county that will urge fund managers overseeing retirement, pension, and health plans for retired county workers to show progress toward divestment in the nation's 200 largest fossil fuel companies, county residents should not lose sight of the fact that the move was grounded in technicalities. As Jeffrey Weissner of 350 MoCo has pointed out ([see page 5](#)), the fund managers didn't want their options limited, and they didn't think that the county council has the authority to force this legislation upon them, even though precedence

for the move already exists.

These developments come on the heels of a weekend in which 18 more Americans have died in storms made worse by the vast amounts of energy that humans' addiction to carbon is trapping in the atmosphere. This number pales in comparison to the thousands of people worldwide now dead from climate-change-forced weather events. The world's collective scientific brain trust on climate change told us that we needed to curb emissions and keep atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> at 350 parts-per-million if we were to successfully keep global warming in the realm of a 20C rise. We have blown past that marker in short order and now sit somewhere in the realm of 405 ppm CO<sub>2</sub>.

With this level of carbon in the atmosphere, which we have overwhelmingly put there, things begin to change much more quickly than scientists predicted because it strengthens the feedback loops that drive climate change. James Balog of the Extreme Ice Survey pronounced at the March for Science rally in Washington, D.C., on Earth Day that we are now losing trillions of tons of ice annually around the globe. This ice loss has risen by an order of magnitude in less than a decade. This single fact should astound, alarm, and anger every parent of a child in this nation.

In a state and county that take pride in being "progressive," the leadership of Montgomery County

## Death of Bill 44-16, cont.

was unable to pass a divestment bill on fossil fuels. One might view this as practicing the highest collective degrees of denial, cognitive dissonance, and betrayal of future generations to the overwhelming scientific evidence that the destruction headed our way may end human civilization. The county and the state do make progress on issues related to climate change, but they will not be sufficient.

We have no moral, ethical, or theological ground upon which to stand as climate change and sea level rise (SLR) beat the hell out of and bake places in the United States and around the globe. As Kumi Naidoo, the former head of Greenpeace expressed to Democracy Now at the People's Climate March on April

30, "We think it's a terrible injustice that even though the people of Africa collectively contributed the least to emissions, we are the ones that are paying the first and most brutal price, where we've got climate refugees, land that's drying up, water sources that are disappearing and so on, which is already creating quite a catastrophic situation."

Indeed, the number of climate refugees grows each week in the United States, but in a country with vast resources we barely notice. How many of the climate refugees evicted from islands in the Chesapeake Bay that have disappeared under its waters asked for compensation from Maryland or the counties where they existed? How much has ExxonMobil paid to residents of Louisiana whose lands and homes have disappeared under the incom-

ing Gulf of Mexico?

No doubt the Atlantic Ocean is also coming for us. Maryland, Virginia, and Delaware share one of the richest marine resources that a species could ever have been given for sustainable economic use. But the asteroid that created it also left us with the geological issue of subsidence; the land is sinking. SLR and subsidence mean the sea's encroachment has accelerated. Skip Stiles of Wetlands Watch has informed leaders that "the chaotic disinvestment that will occur in coastal communities due to salt water incursion will leave coastal states a shell of their former selves." Coastal flooding has become so frequent and critical that a **crowd-sourcing phone app has been developed for reporting inundation events**. Every aspect of this worsening situation applies to the

## Death of Bill 44-16, cont.

bay and coastal hamlets and resort beaches of Maryland. Washington, D.C., is tidal.

The U.S. Navy issued a clarion call six years ago that SLR posed a national security threat for the United States. Their warning went unheeded for the most part at the national level as we have experienced a profound dumbing-down campaign of our citizens and state and federal politicians over the last 20 years.

A group of climate scientists now publishes under the pseudonym Sam Carana at the Arctic News Blog. The information is sobering. For the last 50 years of my life, I have always dreamed of one day returning to Virginia Beach and my boyhood home where I could live out the rest of

my days surrounded by aquatic and marine environments in a neighborhood that is simply a paradise. The scientific theories posited by Sam Carana on the ANB brought me to the painful conclusion that it should be sold before the chaotic disinvestment begins. It was a heartbreaking decision.

Having been born, raised, and baptized a Methodist, I can see how some might imagine that climate change and sea level rise might represent the end times and the precursor to the “Rapture.” I suggest that God will not save us from a situation that we have created, nor will those that ignore the evidence clearly before them be granted absolution. We were given the best garden that any species in the universe could have been granted. Perhaps God or the Earth itself feel it’s time for another

species to rise to “dominion.”

The people of the United States have a profound opportunity to show the rest of the world that we actually give a damn about the lives of those whom now suffer immensely due to conditions that we were instrumental in creating. Politicians, activists, and citizens need to unite in a “Marshall Plan” style mobilization to confront a degrading global catastrophe.

Continued loyalty to the fossil fuel industry—which now controls our State Department, White House, EPA, Congress, and many state governments—will clearly send the wrong message to the world. It’s time for all of us to grow a spine, get off the couch, and engage. You can also send this opinion piece to 10 of your friends and visit the [Arctic News Blogspot](#). ■

## Minutes of the April 17, 2017, General Meeting #884, Held in Rockville

By Danila Sheveiko, Recording Secretary

**Call to Order:** First Vice President Alan Bowser called the 884th session to order at 7:45 p.m. [Note: *The March meeting would have been #884 had it not been cancelled.*] Introductions followed.

**Agenda:** It was moved and seconded to approve the agenda.

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

Environmental Task Force of the River Road Unitarian Universalist Congregation is hosting a strategy planning session to lobby Montgomery County's adoption of the 2012 International Green Construction Code on Sunday, May 7, 7:00 p.m., RRUUC, 6301 River Road, Bethesda

20817. As amended by the Department of Permitting Services, the Code could actually **weaken existing green building standards if adopted** as Executive Regulation 21-15 in June. The County Council has yet to schedule a public hearing for this bill.

! The Civic Federation's **Annual Awards Celebration will be on Thursday, June 8, at McGinty's Pub** in Downtown Silver Spring. Nominations are sought for the *Sentinel Award* for significant contributions to good government at the local level; the *Wayne Goldstein Award* for outstanding service to the people of Montgomery County; and the *Star Cup*, awarded to Federation delegate or committee for outstanding service on behalf of the County.

**Minutes:** It was moved and seconded to approve the **minutes of the February 13, 2017, general meeting as they appeared in the March 2017 newsletter**. The minutes were approved with one abstention.

**Treasurer's Report:** Treasurer Jerry Garson reported a bank balance of \$11,593.35 with net income for period of \$6.49. Copies of the Treasurer's report are available upon request.

### PROGRAM

The **April program** was dedicated to the recommended FY18 County Operating Budget with guest speakers Steve Farber, County Council Administrator, and Scott Coble, Office of Management and Budget.

## April 17 Minutes, cont.

At over 800 pages and \$5.4 billion, about half the County budget is for Montgomery County Public Schools, followed by public safety and debt service. Given the large increases in property and recordation taxes, County Executive Leggett chose not to increase taxes either this year or next.

Leggett's recommended budget continues to restore funds and services to public libraries that were drastically cut during the recession. Detailed information is available on [the OMB website](#) and handy interactive overviews are available from the [County's Open Budget website](#). Most of the money for the budget comes from property and income taxes and intergovernmental payments from the state and federal levels, as well as charges for services,

finances, the transfer and recordation tax, and other taxes.

Budget shortfalls (not to be confused with deficits) have been closed for 11 years by withholding general wage adjustments, increasing County employee contributions to retirement and health plans, reducing the number of employees by 10%—over 1,000 positions—and slowing the rate of growth in expenditures. About \$240 million or 5% of the tax-supported budget funds County employee retiree and health benefits.

Uncertainties in the federal budget are a big factor for the local economy; “there is no Plan B.” The County eliminated the Department of Economic Development in favor of a public-private partnership Economic Development Corporation, which is still 100% taxpayer funded. Councilmember Berliner is propos-

ing to use revenue from the recordation tax increase to fund school construction.

County reserves are at \$457 million, about 10% percent less than reserve target necessary to maintain a AAA bond rating. Montgomery County is the second longest AAA rating holder jurisdiction in the nation after Westchester County, N.Y. The target is 10% by 2020, with reserves currently at 8.9% of County Budget.

The unemployment rate is down to 3.4%, close to the 3.2% before the recession, but most of the growth has been in the service sector and low-wage jobs, so revenue growth is restricted despite the job increases. About 533,000 jobs are held by County residents.

Home sales are up 11% since 2014. The median home price is

## April 17 Minutes, cont.

\$410,000, compared to a high of \$440,000 back in 2007.

The County Council will be approving the FY18 Budget in June.

### COMMITTEE REPORTS

#### *Nominations*

■ **Nominations for MCCF officer and annual awards** will be accepted until end of April.

#### *Planning and Land Use*

■ **Draft Administrative Procedures for Subdivision Plan Review** made it through the Planning Board.

#### *Public Safety*

■ Pedestrian safety: Wear white at night! There is little coordination between MCPS and MCPD on pedestrian safety. Suggest expanding the use of reflective road striping and

informational radars. Any new road resurfacing contracts should come with a pavement warranty.

#### *Public Finance*

■ Councilmember **Berliner is proposing to use proceeds from the recordation tax increase for funding of new school construction.**

#### *Transportation*

■ **Route 29 Bus Rapid Transit Corridor** Advisory Committee meeting is tomorrow.

■ State Highway Administration consultant recommendation: I-270 is at capacity and I-495 is beyond capacity even on weekends.

■ Recommendations for the County **Bicycle Master Plan** are coming soon.

■ State Highway Administration construction activities are exempt from County Noise Control Ordinance.

nance.

#### *Public Utilities*

■ Street light repair appears to show a dramatic improvement: a broken light was reported to PEPCO-Exelon at 10:00 p.m. and was fixed by 2:00 p.m. the next day. A similar outage reported to the State Highway Administration took five days to resolve.

#### *Environment*

■ No word yet on the **Maryland Court of Special Appeals decision regarding the Wheaton Costco gas station.** Oral arguments were concluded on January 9th.

#### *Education*

■ More taxpayer money is about to be spend on **synthetic turf fields for County schools.**

## April 17 Minutes, cont.

### Legislation

■ House Bill 310 passed to expand Sunday deer hunting until 10:30 a.m. during the season. HB313 passed to reduce the bow-and-arrow deer hunting safety zone from inhabited buildings down to 50 yards.

■ Fracking ban passed.

■ Bill establishing an Inspector General for WSSC and Park and Planning passed, but in a nearly unrecognizable form.

### OLD BUSINESS

■ Reserve your tickets now for the 2017 Annual Awards Celebration: Thursday, June 8, 2017 at McGinty's Public House in Silver Spring.

[Download the reservation form.](#)

**Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 10:02 p.m. ■

## Minutes of the April Executive Committee Meeting

*By Alan Bowser, 1st Vice President*

The Executive Committee (Ex-Comm) convened on April 20, 2017, via teleconference.

**Call to Order:** Alan Bowser, 1st Vice President, called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. Present: Paula Bienenfeld, Jerry Garson, Harriet Quinn, and Jacque Bokow.

**Adoption of Meeting Agenda:** Alan Bowser called for and received unanimous approval of the proposed agenda.

**Approval of Minutes:** Alan called for and received unanimous approval of the minutes from the March 16, 2017, ExComm meeting.

**Treasurer's Report:** Jerry Garson's report from April 17, 2017, was accepted.

### ISSUES DISCUSSED

#### *Monthly Programs*

It was decided that the topics for the May and June MCCF meeting would be as follows:

■ **May 2017:** Transparency and Accountability. What You Need to Know About the Maryland Public Information Act and Open Meetings Act.

■ **June 2017:** Update on Cell Towers in Residential Zones. Mitsie Herrera and Sue Present, community activist.

■ **July 2017:** There is no planned General Meeting for July.

■ **August 2017:** It was suggested

## April ExComm Mtg., cont.

that there be a MCCF Executive Committee retreat/planning session in August.

### COMMITTEE REPORTS

#### *Awards and Nominations*

■ Paula Bienenfeld updated the Executive Committee about the status of committee deliberations regarding MCCF officer nominations and nominations for the 2017 MCCF service awards.

#### *Transportation*

■ Jerry Garson, Chair, reported on recent developments concerning I-270 and the County's Bus Rapid Transit project.

**Adjournment:** Alan called for and received unanimous approval for adjournment at 8:10 p.m. ■

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### Montgomery County Civic Federation

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