

**NOVEMBER PROGRAM:**  
AN AGRICULTURAL LIFESTYLE IS  
NOT JUST RESERVED FOR RURAL  
AREAS ANYMORE | **P. 3**



**DLC Meeting** | Department of Liquor Control staff meet with reps of the MoCo Taxpayers League | **P. 5**

**Vision Zero** | Part 2 of the story on the County's ambitious plan to eliminate traffic deaths | **P. 8**

**Synturf Journalism** | Walt Whitman High School's student

newspaper investigation slams the door on synthetic 'news' | **P. 11**

**Beltway Resolution** | A resolution on I-495 expansion | **P. 12**

**Taxes to Rise** | State and County income tax increases predicted for almost a third of Montgomery County residents | **P. 14**

**Commentary** | False Equivalencies and Fake News | **P. 15**

**Civic Fed Tonight!** | MCCF Executive Committee members are available to speak at your CA/HOA meetings | **P. 16**

**TO PRINT, USE PRINT VERSION**

## of note

### Next MCCF Meeting

November 12, 2018, 7:45 p.m. @ the Cafeteria at Richard Montgomery High School in Rockville. "Agricultural Alternatives: Urban Rooftop Gardening and Suburban Agrihoods"

★ **NOTE CHANGE IN VENUE!** ★  
[Social Hour/Snacks @ 7:00 p.m.]

**AGENDA, P. 2 • PROGRAM, P. 3**

### Meeting Minutes

October 8 Meeting *Unavailable*  
October 18 Exec. Cmte. *Unavailable*

*Get involved. MCCF needs a secretary or two co-secretaries to take minutes.*

### Membership Application

Join or Renew Now **SEE FORM**

## Federation Meeting 899

Monday, November 12, 2018  
7:45 p.m.

**Cafeteria, Richard  
Montgomery High School**  
250 Richard Montgomery Drive  
Rockville, Maryland

### AGENDA

- 7:00 Social Time for Members
- 7:45 Call to Order/Introductions
- 7:50 Approval of Agenda
- 7:51 Announcements
- 7:56 Treasurer's Report
- 8:00 Program: *Agricultural Alternatives: Urban Rooftop Gardening and Suburban 'Agrihoods'* **P.3**
- 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.

**PLEASE NOTE THE CHANGE OF VENUE!** The November meeting will be held in the **Cafeteria at Richard Montgomery High School, Rockville, Maryland**, just a few blocks from the Executive Office Building where we have been meeting.

You can park in any available space in either of the school's two parking lots. ■

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY CIVIC  
FEDERATION, INC., WILL HOLD  
ITS 900TH MEETING  
ON MONDAY, DECEMBER 10.  
90 YEARS OF ADVOCACY!**

# 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 17**

## November Program: An Agricultural Lifestyle Is Not Just Reserved for Rural Areas

*By Jim Zepp, Immediate Past President*

Despite the popular notion that an agricultural lifestyle requires 25 acres or more of land, active farming is occurring in many different urban and suburban settings in the D.C. region. Enterprising groups are addressing sustainability and food equity concerns by growing substantial crop yields on high-rise buildings and small plots of land. This enables training of aspiring farmers and the development of sustainable practices in the middle of the city as well as suburban communities.

At MCCF's November 12th meeting, three speakers will present on three different approaches for bringing productive farming to nontraditional locations.

■ **Eco City Farms** has converted

previously vacant urban land into a highly productive farming enterprise that produces healthy vegetables, fruit, herbs, eggs, and honey. Their produce is Certified Naturally Grown by fellow farmers who establish an international grassroots alternative to the USDA Certified Organic Program. They employ environmentally sound, chemical-free, permaculture farming methods and support others to do the same.

Their 1.5-acre farm in Edmonston, Maryland, and 3.5-acre farm in Bladensburg are just the beginning of what they hope will be a network of new urban and rural farms in Prince George's County, growing food close to the communities that want and need it.

■ **Rooftop Roots** is a nonprofit organization creating working farms

on the roofs of commercial and residential buildings in D.C. Their vision is a business model that allows all community members to access fresh and affordable produce, gain economic security through job opportunities in their neighborhoods, and live in a healthy environment.

Through their garden design, installation, and maintenance services, Rooftop Roots strives to address the three pillars of sustainability—economic, social, and environmental—by providing green-collar jobs, fresh produce for underserved communities, and green spaces for all.

■ The growing national **agrihood** trend is a solution that addresses concerns about farmland being lost to suburban developments. Agrihoods are residential communities

**MORE**

## November Program, cont.

that are purposely built around working farms. This allows residents exposure to an agricultural lifestyle, but recognizes the demand for housing and the viability of farming without consuming vast acres of land.

**Willowsford**, in Loudoun County, Va., is a local example of **agrihoods** or **agriburbs** that are suburban developments built around working farms. This allows residents to indulge in agricultural lifestyles, while living in a suburban community. Willowsford, a planned community in Ashburn, has earned national attention for its farm-to-table lifestyle. The community, designed around 300 acres of agricultural land, has 2,000 acres of open space. Ninety percent of its homes back to parkland.

Each neighborhood within the Willowsford development has different amenities and different home styles. Each section has its own character, which fits with the current fad among urban planners for placemaking.

There are four villages at Willowsford, each with miles of walking trails, parks, sledding hills, and dog parks. Among the amenities are a farmer's produce stand, educational events at the farm, and cooking classes. The Willowsford Kitchen has classes for kids and adults, cooking demonstrations, and pop-up restaurants in the community.

A lifestyle coordinator works with residents to organize activities such as a wine club, concerts, movie nights, block parties, and neighborhood gatherings. Community swimming pools and a fitness center include classes and a swim team.

Residents can canoe and fish on Willow Lake or enjoy the yoga lawn, bocce courts, or a zipline.

The **Urban Land Institute** is an international research and education nonprofit organization with offices in Washington, D.C., Hong Kong, London, and Frankfurt. Its stated mission is "to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide." Several ULI researchers have documented the agrihood trend. A ULI research fellow who has been studying agrihoods has been invited to talk about a soon to be released national study on this topic.

In light of these approaches for agricultural lifestyles, Montgomery County may want to reassess its related policies—that were developed in the 1970s—as it moves into a new century. ■

## Updated Look at the Department of Liquor Control Meeting with the Taxpayers League

*By Gordon Brenne, Vice President,  
Mont. Co. Taxpayers League*

The Montgomery County Taxpayers League (MCTL) met with Robert Dorfman, the Director of the Department of Liquor Control (DLC), and his staff on October 17, 2018. He provided an overview of the DLC's position on privatization and a video produced at no expense to the taxpayers that introduced DLC's operations. Dorfman believes a number of key staffing changes in marketing, warehouse operations, and retail are already making a difference in DLC's performance. DLC's verbal and written responses to MCTL member questions follows, together with MCTL analyses.

### 1. Privatization Arguments.

Mr. Dorfman cited the State of Washington as an example where

retail outlets ballooned from 300 to 1,600 overnight, creating enforcement and control issues. He notes that, under the 3-tier systems in our State, distributors and retailers really don't control prices as much as they do for other products, and that distributors don't compete for business. He believes DLC has made important changes to be more responsive to its customers and doesn't feel that private distributors or retailers would do any better.

The MCTL favors privatization because liquor distribution and retail is not an inherently local government function (we are last large county in the state and nation to continue this practice). MCTL believes competition would improve service, selection, convenience, and sales volumes, with two or more pri-

vate distributors competing within the County for the business of hundreds of more conveniently located retailers. MCTL is concerned about growing legacy and investment costs of the DLC operation and DLC's inability to achieve sales volumes that would stabilize its business. MCTL projections last done in 2014 showed annual county revenues for possible new distributor franchise fee agreements and sales forecasts could be \$60M, higher than currently transferred to the general fund, and a one-time revenue boost of \$50M would be realized from winding down DLC operations and selling assets, after providing for a generous severance payment to employees. This doesn't include additional state sales taxes from increased sales or

MORE

## DLC/MCTL Meeting, cont.

increased local property tax increases from increased investments.

**2. Montgomery County Sales.** Mr. Dorfman and his staff suggested that the County was dead last in the State for liquor and beer per capita sales last year partly because our high incomes and demographics are associated with lower consumption. An MCTL comparison of State-published sales for FY2107 show that two comparable jurisdictions in population and incomes (Baltimore County and Anne Arundel County) had double our distilled spirit sales, per capita. Dorfman said the DLC is improving the marketing and attractiveness of its retail locations, but acknowledges it has fewer retail locations down-county than in the rapidly growing up-county.

Surveys of customers in DLC

stores indicate a high level of satisfaction, but this does not include residents who buy liquor elsewhere. Further, while DLC notes its prices are competitive, MCTL notes that other factors are equally important in drawing more customers to DLC retail sites, including service, convenience, and product selection.

### 3. Restaurant Business

**Service** has improved for delivery and special orders, according to Mr. Dorfman. He said that restaurants account for only 4% of DLC sales, and questioned if older complaints by restaurants are still valid. MCTL asked if perceived conflicts of interest between DLC's enforcement

and sales activities could contribute restaurant issues, or have a chilling effect on the level of complaints? Mr. Dorfman and other DLC representatives present didn't think so, and noted that DLC's enforcement program is a model followed by other Counties in the State.

**4. Truck Fleet and Warehouse Investments.** Mr. Dorfman couldn't quantify productivity improvements or savings attributable to these recent investments. He indicated that no staffing reductions occurred as a result of these investments. 22 new trucks have replaced older trucks that had been in service for 20 years and have reduced maintenance, temporary lease, and service interruption costs. Warehouse improvements have included new methods and procedures and a new automated "Invoice Picking" system

MORE



© Creative Commons Zero (CC0)



## DLC/MCTL Meeting, cont.

to improve inventory controls and flows.

### 5. Inventory Losses and Financial Performance Drivers.

Mr. Dorfman said that, last year, losses were \$363,762. That was 1.8% of total inventory compared to an industry average of 2.5%. Better controls over special orders with “flow racks” were noted as one reason.

Four years ago, MCTL compared DLC’s financial performance to nearby control states of Virginia and Pennsylvania, which have much larger operations. These indicators have not changed, probably due to economies of scale available to higher-volume State-level operations. An updated comparison of costs of goods sold as a percentage of sales is still 73%, much higher than Virginia or Pennsylvania (57% and 69%).

Net book value of depreciable assets (\$45M) also shows DLC is high in comparison to Virginia (\$35M) and Pennsylvania (\$8) relative to their much higher sales volumes. Slower write-offs of impaired assets and slower depreciation schedules may also account for this and would boost reported profits (the County’s auditors did not express an opinion on DLCs financial controls for their FY’2107 financial statements).

DLC sales grew only 1% in FY2017 to \$296M, while Virginia sales grew 4% to \$2,012M and Pennsylvania sales grew 4% to \$785M. DLC’s stagnant growth—combined with excessive costs of goods sold—will continue to put pressure on profits and cash flow.

**6. General Fund Transfers** dropped last year to \$18M from an average annual target of \$30M to pay for the investments noted above.

Mr. Dorfman indicated that he believes DLC will make its forecast this year for transfers. DLC also collects State sales tax, but doesn’t collect any local sales tax.

MCTL has determined that working capital requirements of the business are a factor that limits investments, as do county capital project allocations. DLC’s audited financial statements are included with [Montgomery County’s audited financial reports](#) (see pages 36–39, first column).

**7. Excessive Alcohol Abuse by Teens.** DLC investigated the source of illegally purchased alcohol by a teenager who died last summer following a party in Bethesda, and found DLC stores were not the source. DLC representatives said enforcement and licensing programs are designed to quickly react to and resolve retailing problems. ■

## Vision Zero—The County’s Ambitious Plan to Eliminate Traffic Deaths (Part 2)

*By Karen Cordry, Second Vice President, MCCF, and Kristy Daphnis, Chair, PBTSAC*

In [Part 1 of this article](#) last month, we reported on the County’s Vision Zero program, which is an ambitious program for addressing the causes of deaths and serious injuries from traffic-related causes with the ultimate goal of reducing them to zero. The program began in Sweden in 1997 and came to the United States in 2000. While a number of cities have adopted it since then, Montgomery County was the first suburban jurisdiction to adopt this approach, when it approved its implementation in 2016. The County’s [website describes the program here](#).

Despite this goal, the County remains a long way from achieving

that result. Between August 11 and August 24, 2018, three pedestrians were killed on Georgia Ave. in the Wheaton-Glenmont area: on August 11, at Viers Mill; on August 20 between Urbana Drive and Glenallan Ave.; and on August 24 at Reedie Drive. Those three were part of a larger pattern of pedestrian deaths since June 1. Two more occurred in Wheaton, two in Rockville, and one in Silver Spring. Since then, there was another fatal crash in Rockville in October, and a fluke “accident” where, after two cars collided on Georgia near Aspen Hill, one left the road and struck a student waiting for a school bus. In total, there have already been 12 pedestrian fatalities this year, matching the total for all of last year.

There are many reasons for these

fatalities, raising from distracted drivers and pedestrians, excessive speed, failure to use crosswalks, and the like. In a perfect world, drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians alike would always be alert, careful, and observant of all of the rules. The real world rarely follows those ideals, so the question becomes whether there are engineering solutions that can help us design around the all too imperfect human element (on all sides of the traffic equation).

Several of the presentations at the most recent meeting of the County’s Pedestrian, Bike, and Traffic Safety Advisory Committee (PBT SAC) addressed those issues. [One by the Toole Group](#) noted ways to redesign existing roadways. Many existing roads have 12- to 14-foot width

## Vision Zero, cont.

drive lanes and broad medians, with sidewalks on the edge of the roads. These layouts can be put on a “road diet” that narrows the lanes and the median to 10 feet, freeing up space to create separated bike lanes and more room for better lighting, while still leaving the same number of traffic lanes. Alternatively, a road diet can be used to create space for a median where none exists, providing a “safety island” for pedestrians crossing a major road.

An added benefit is that cars tend to drive somewhat more slowly in the narrow lanes (probably staying closer to the marked speed limits. That is critical since, not surprisingly, higher speeds are one of the most significant factors in causing severe injuries and death. In a 20-mph collision, the risk of severe injury or



death is about 18%; at 40 mph, that risk goes up to 77%.

Better lighting is—again, not surprisingly—a second major factor in reducing collisions. In a study in Detroit, for instance, the number of fatalities in dark areas dropped

from 48 to two when street lighting was improved and overall deaths dropped significantly as well. That report and others point out a number of other features that can be used to highlight the presence of pedestrians for drivers. Flashing beacons that can be activated by a pedestrian at an intersection are one example and can highlight to a driver that someone is crossing. That can be particularly important in a multilane road where a pedestrian crossing in front of a car waiting to turn left, for instance, might not be visible to a car driving in the through lane. Thankfully, his last few slides did indicate a few examples of good design that could be implemented by the County.

A second presentation by John Wetmore, head of Perils for Pedestrians, compiled pictures of a

number of examples of the existing

MORE

## Vision Zero, cont.

**hazards in this area.** These included problems such as non-existent or very narrow sidewalks directly adjacent to busy roads with no buffer area, non-existent crosswalk markings at busy intersections, or crosswalks that were apparently intended to indicate that pedestrians should walk around three sides of an intersection, rather than directly across (not!), or crosswalk markings that were so faint they were almost useless. The student killed by a car careening off the road in Aspen Hill might well have been affected by one of these sidewalks with no safety zones. Another trap for the unwary are sewer openings in the area where bikes are expected to ride with grates perfectly aligned to trap the wheels of a hapless cyclist.

A final presentation by repre-

sentatives from the State Highway Administration and the Montgomery County Department of Transportation **reported on the steps being taken to implement the Vision Zero process.** The most important parts of the report are the segments dealing with the “Two-Year Action Plan,” including what was proposed and how the parties are doing in staying on track with the proposals. The list is an ambitious one and a number of parts are reported as being on track. Others, though—including portions of particular interest in the Wheaton-Glenmont area—are listed as being behind schedule. The section dealing with “collaboration with the State” to come up with solutions for that area (which is, of course, crisscrossed with State roads so that a cooperative solution must be worked out) is listed as behind schedule, noting that the plan was to

have potential project areas identified by January 2018. Similarly, the section dealing with publishing a list of high priority area lacking sidewalks by April 2018 is also stated to be “behind schedule” but it’s listed in red, indicating it’s *really* behind schedule.

The notes indicate that the list has not been developed, although several specific projects have been approved for work in FY2019. In total, about half of the projects are on schedule or have been completed; the remaining half range from goals that are being worked on but are behind schedule, to others that haven’t been started at all, to a few for which there are no funding resources. Clearly, this is an area where community attention and pressure will help in keeping these goals at the forefront of the County (and State)

MORE

## Vision Zero, cont.

planning and budgeting process.

Kristy is actively looking for those who want to attend or otherwise support the work of the PBT SAC. (She can be reached at kristy DOT daphnis AT gmail DOT com.) One event coming up soon for those interested in this topic is a community “walk audit” set for Saturday, Nov. 3, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. beginning at the Aspen Hill Library (4407 Aspen Hill Rd., Rockville). It’s hosted by the Montgomery County Planning Department. [Details can be found here.](#)

Following the walk audit, Kristy will participate in a podcast with Jon Foreman of [The Activist](#). When complete, the interview will be available on The Activist website. Click on “Latest” to find it. ■

## Walt Whitman High School’s Student Newspaper Investigation Slams the Door on Synthetic ‘News’

By Bailey Condrey, President

The story goes back to March of 2018 when *The Black & White* student newspaper at Walt Whitman published an investigative piece on the condition of synthetic turf fields at Montgomery County Public Schools, “[Danger on Our Turf: Is MCPS Protecting Athletes?](#)” The *Civic Federation News* [reprinted that article in April.](#)

What CFN didn’t know at the time is that the vice president of Field Turf, Darren Gill, sent *The Black & White* a “Letter to the Editor.” The newspaper printed his lengthy response in its entirety and then the journalists at the student newspaper went to work to dismantle his arguments and mischaracterizations. It is a study in how

the field of journalism works, where verification of what a reporter shares with the public is verified and cross-checked with multiple sources before it ever reaches the intended audience. It should be required reading for all of the adults in Montgomery County and around the region that continue to place children on plastic playing fields.

But you must [read it in its entirety to understand the risks](#) that MCPS continues to force student athletes to face and how the school system refuses to recoup taxpayer losses in the face of fraudulent activity by one of its favorite vendors. The CFN thanks the intrepid work of *The Black & White* reporters, editors, and staff advisor for this excellent work. ■

## MCCF Resolution on Proposed I-495 Beltway Expansion

During the October 8 general meeting, MCCF facilitated a dialogue regarding the I-495 and I-270 Managed Lanes Study of the proposal to add up to four toll lanes to each roadway. Guest speakers included Carol Rubin, Special Project Manager representing the Montgomery County Planning Department, and Christopher Conklin, Deputy Director of Transportation Policy for the Montgomery County Department of Transportation. State representatives were invited but did not attend. The Montgomery County Planning Department has set up a [webpage tracking important milestones for the project.](#)

The Maryland Department of Transportation also has a [website for the project](#) that displays the various alternatives under study and is set



up to receive feedback on the project from residents.

The State is expected to reduce the number of alternatives to be retained for detailed study (ARDS) in January 2019, after which additional public meetings will be held.

The MCCF Executive Committee recommends the following resolution for adoption at the November 12th general meeting:

WHEREAS the proposed expansion of Interstate-495 in Montgomery County between the eastern spur

of Interstate-270 and Interstate-95 would greatly increase air and noise pollution in the area, with detrimental health impacts for impacted Montgomery County residents; and

WHEREAS the expansion of Interstate-495 would require adding very significant increases in impervious surfaces throughout the roadway, resulting in adverse environmental impacts, including significant harmful stormwater runoff affecting the health of local County creeks, streams, and rivers; and

WHEREAS the expansion of Interstate-495 would result in the clear-cutting of hundreds of acres of valuable parkland and protected forest areas, and threaten important historic sites in Montgomery County; and



## I-495 Resolution, cont.

WHEREAS the Montgomery County Civic Federation, Inc., is skeptical about State claims that no homes or businesses will be taken as a result of Beltway expansion, that rush hour congestion will be significantly reduced, and that the project will pay for itself, with no taxpayer support; and

WHEREAS the Montgomery County Civic Federation, Inc., has serious concerns about the accelerated timing of this project, the lack of community consultations, and the lack of transparency of the project's public sector planning process; and

WHEREAS the Montgomery County Civic Federation, Inc., has favorably noted increased community concern about this project and, notably, the efforts of several Montgomery County civic and homeowner

associations to jointly meet and discuss the project's implications for their neighborhoods;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY CIVIC FEDERATION, INC.,

COMMENDS the cooperative work of the impacted civic and homeowner associations to educate their residents about the proposed plans for Interstate-495 expansion;

EXPRESSES CONCERN about the health and environmental impacts of Interstate-495 expansion in Montgomery County between Interstate-95 and the eastern spur of

**COME EARLY (7:00 p.m.) to the November 12 meeting to discuss community concerns and meet other civic activists. Light refreshments will be served.**

Interstate-270 on residents and the physical environment and emphasizes the importance of minimizing the associated impacts;

EXPRESSES CONCERN about the lack of transparency and public input in the project planning process;

CALLS UPON our public officials—County and State—to diligently work for measures to increase public participation in the process, as well as the amount of information about the project that is publicly available; and

REQUESTS THAT all government entities conduct comprehensive, thorough, and balanced assessments that should include the effects for neighboring areas affected by all valid alternatives.

*[This proposed resolution will be voted on at the November 12 MCCF General Meeting.] ■*

## State, County Income Tax Increases Predicted for Almost a Third of County Residents

*By Jerry Garson, Treasurer, Montgomery County Civic Federation*

Most Montgomery County residents who previously used itemized deductions in calculating their Federal income tax returns will see an increase in the income taxes they pay to the State of Maryland and to Montgomery County for 2018 compared with 2017. Statewide, the estimate was that 30 percent of residents would pay more income taxes to Maryland as a result of the change in Federal tax laws.

Maryland, in Chapter 577 of the 2018 Legislature, in a law approved on May 15, 2018, by Lawrence J. Hogan, Jr., states in §10–217:

*(ii) If an individual elects to use the standard deduction on the federal income tax return, the individual may not take any itemized*

*deduction in §10–218 of this subtitle.*

### **MARRIED COUPLE, NO CHILDREN**

For an example, imagine a married couple with no children living in Montgomery County.

Because of the limitation of \$10,000 for Federal deductions for State and Local (i.e., County) income and property taxes, most residents who had (say) \$6,000 in real property taxes and \$7,000 in Maryland and County income taxes would be limited to a \$10,000 deduction for State and local taxes.

If their home mortgage interest was \$7,000 and their charitable deductions were \$2,000 in 2017, their itemized deduction was \$22,000 for Federal income taxes.

For 2018, the Internal Revenue

Service raised the Standard Deduction to \$24,000 and their itemized deduction would only be \$19,000, so they would use the Federal Standard Deduction of \$24,000.

For 2018, the Internal Revenue Service eliminated the exemption for individuals, but Maryland kept the exemption and increased the standard deduction for a married couple filing a joint return from \$4,000 in 2017 to \$4,500 in 2018.

In this example, the increase in taxes from 2017 to 2018 would result in a 15 percent tax increase. Depending on a family's income, the increase would vary.

The Comptroller of Maryland estimated 800,000 people would pay more State and Local taxes, which amounts to an average tax increase of \$523. ■

## Commentary: False Equivalencies and Fake News

*By Bailey Condrey, President*

I'm the new president of the Montgomery County Civic Federation. I've lived in Maryland off and on for 17 years of the 60 that I've been lucky enough to live so far. I'm mostly a native Virginian transplanted to Montgomery County by way of marriage. I'm happy to be in both places.

I was trained as a journalist at Virginia Commonwealth University's School of Mass Communications in the broadcast discipline and I've held many positions both in the news and corporate worlds. Does the journalistic admission make me your enemy? Facts matter and the complexities of life that we engage and reflect upon with the marketplace of ideas should have a foundation in the truth.

Of course, my truth may not necessarily be yours, because one of us may not possess the breadth of knowledge on a subject that the other has obtained. But in the end, it will be the truth that rules the day and the consequences of ignoring it may be harsh. To wit, the unbridled physics of man-made climate change have begun to show Americans how vulnerable we are to the atmospheric and oceanic whims of nature. Other nations already deal with these forces regularly and are reeling from the economic impacts. The U.S. insurance industry suffers greatly.

The intended and actual abhorrent violence that our nation has faced in the last two weeks lays bare the truth that societal outliers only need incendiary rhetoric to act, at times, in the most horrific manner.

In the age of the human genome, however, being readily available to determine ancestry, it's a myth to believe that we're all exactly descended as our parents may have told us. I know white Anglo Saxon Protestants who may indeed possess Jewish ancestry. Do I look at them differently knowing this? Should a Holocaust survivor alive in the 21st century ever lose her life in the United States at the hands of a stranger with a gun? Should the parishioners of any place of worship in this nation feel the need to hire security guards just to attend services or pray?

Our nation and county lie within transcendent times and the choices we make and the facts we embrace will determine whether justice, something we discuss a lot as Ameri-

MORE

## Commentary, cont.

cans, will flow to all of the citizens of our county. In this political season, many candidates espouse the same slogans and most of them are focused on asking for more money. I would argue that the first order of business concentrate on how this county can spend existing revenues more judiciously and to greater effect, with all constituencies in mind.

The MCCF works on issues affecting the entire county and all of our member civic organizations and individual members can introduce subjects for the group's consideration. We need greater engagement by people throughout Montgomery to address the challenges we face locally and at the state and national level.

Bigotry, hate, and divisiveness have no chance of gaining a foothold

when members of any community engage civically, socially, professionally, and through other means. The door to the Civic Federation is open to all dues paying members and guests. We need volunteers to help us analyze the data that we use to formulate positions and encourage politicians to consider our views. We have collegial relationships with other groups throughout the County and we engage them in fact-finding to broaden our views.

As we approach the 2018 midterm elections and beyond, we should all ask ourselves and one another whether we're bound or distracted by false equivalencies and, should we become cognizant of an inconvenient notion, might we endeavor to broaden the scope of what we believe?

The MCCF extends its collective hand to all neighborhoods through-

out the region, to the young, the middle-aged, and the old, to help us in our mission to improve the lives of all Montgomery County citizens. Communities helping communities is, after all, the work of humanity. ■

### CIVIC FED TONIGHT!

#### SEEKING POSSIBLE SPEAKERS FOR YOUR MEETINGS?

MCCF Executive Committee members have extensive experience in issues such as transportation, land use and zoning, schools, parks, environmental concerns, taxes, public spending. If you would like an executive committee member to speak at a meeting, send an email to [president@montgomerycivic.org](mailto:president@montgomerycivic.org). Include topics/possible dates.



## SOMETHING TO TALK ABOUT?

*Need to share  
a community concern?*

*Want to know how to do  
something for your own  
civic association?*

*Would like to meet  
your fellow civic activists?*

Come early to the November 12 meeting to discuss community concerns and meet other civic activists. From 7:00 to 7:45 p.m., members of the MCCF Executive Committee will be available to talk in the RMHS Cafeteria. Light refreshments will keep you from going hungry. Be social, be a part of the civic movement, and be here.

**Like our Facebook Page  
and follow us on Twitter.**

Montgomery County Civic Federation

[www.montgomerycivic.org](http://www.montgomerycivic.org)

info AT montgomerycivic.org

Twitter Feed @mccivicfed

[MCCF Facebook Page](#)

## cfn

The *Civic Federation News* is published monthly except July and August by the Montgomery County Civic Federation, Inc. 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."

**Submit contributions for the next issue by the 26th of the current month.** Send to CFN at [civicfednews AT montgomerycivic.org](mailto:civicfednews@montgomerycivic.org).

**Send all address corrections to membership AT montgomerycivic.org.**

**VIEW PAST ISSUES ONLINE [HERE](#)**