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TO PRINT, USE **PRINT VERSION**

of note

Next MCCF Meeting #942

Monday, April 10, 2023, 7:30 p.m. *on-line via Zoom*. Topic: "The Montgomery County Fiscal Year 2024 Operating Budget."

■ **Join the Zoom Meeting Here**
[See further instructions on page 2. No password is required.]
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Meeting Minutes

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Membership Application

JOIN ONLINE | MAIL-IN FORM

Federation Meeting #942

Monday, April 10, 2023
7:30 p.m.
Online Zoom Meeting

AGENDA

1. Call to Order/Introductions
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Approval of Minutes: March General Meeting **P.25**
4. Treasurer's Report
5. Announcements
6. April Program: The Montgomery County FY2024 Operating Budget **P.3**
7. Committee Reports
8. Old Business
9. New Business
10. 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. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the start time is now at 7:30 p.m.

The April meeting will be held online via Zoom (see page 3 for program) at 7:30 p.m.:

■ To be part of the video conference, first **visit the Zoom website** to download the program for your phone or computer.

■ Date and Time: Monday, April 10, 2023, 7:30 p.m. Eastern Time.

■ To **join the Zoom meeting from your browser, use this link.**

■ To participate by phone (audio only), call 301.715.8592. The meeting ID is 889 7640 6355. No password is required.

We hope you will join us! ■

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 33**

April 10 General Meeting Program: The Montgomery County FY2024 Operating Budget

By Jerry Garson, Treasurer

Our guest speaker for the Monday, April 10, 2023, meeting of MCCF which starts at 7:30 p.m. is Richard Madaleno, Chief Administrative Officer of Montgomery County, who will speak on the upcoming County budget.

Richard Madaleno was appointed as Montgomery County's Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) in 2020. The Montgomery County CAO is the second highest ranking executive branch position after the County Executive. Madaleno is responsible for overseeing operations and services of over 30 executive branch departments with a \$5.5 billion operating budget, a \$5.1 billion six-year Capital Improvement Program, and a 10,000-person workforce supporting a jurisdiction that is more than 500

square miles with 1.06 million residents. As CAO, Madaleno also serves as advisor to the County Executive on all administrative, legislative, financial, and operational matters; a lead liaison between the County Executive and County Council; a liaison to organized labor representatives of the County government workforce; and the head of the County's \$6 billion employee investment board and retirement system.

Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich, on March 15, 2023, released his recommended Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24) Operating Budget of \$6.8 billion, which is an increase of 7.7 percent from the FY23 approved all funds budget (County Government plus outside agencies).

The recommended FY24 budget reflects record level and significant

investments for Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), Montgomery College, affordable housing, economic development, public safety, and efforts to combat climate change.

The budget proposal by Marc Elrich will result in an 11%-plus Real Property tax hike for many residents. The average home in Montgomery County is assessed at slightly over \$600,000. This is because the Homeowner tax credit of \$692 is fixed.

The County Executive's recommended budget meets the request of the Board of Education, a request that is a record \$296 million above the funding provided in FY23 and \$264 million over maintenance of effort. This funding is needed to recruit and retain outstanding educators, teachers, and other essential

MORE

April Program, cont.

school staff, as well as to address the increase in special education enrollment. This increase is also needed to improve student performance. According to the results of the 2022 Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP) test, only 31% of MCPS students scored proficient in math, and 53% scored proficient in English.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FY24 RECOMMENDED OPERATING BUDGET

- Preserves vital services for county residents
- Includes reserve balance of 11.4%, \$86 million above the 10% reserve target
- Fully funds MCPS' request at \$3.2 billion and provides a record funding increase of \$223 million

over last year's budget

- \$264 million above State's Maintenance of Effort requirement

- Additional revenue to be raised with a proposed \$0.10 property tax increase solely devoted to schools

- Record funding for climate change and environmental initiatives

- Additional investments in economic development and workforce training

- Reestablishes funding for the Office of the Peoples Counsel

- Provides additional support for the County's community partners

- Applies racial equity and climate change lenses that are reflected in decisions throughout the budget

- Largest public outreach for budget with eight budget forums, including dedicated Spanish-language and Chinese-language forums

- The real property tax is calculated by multiplying the tax rate (per

\$100) by the property's assessed value. The tax rate is set each year by the County Council.

Transportation and Transit

"As commuters have continued to return to the office following the pandemic, our traffic and congestion problems are returning to pre-pandemic levels," said County Executive Elrich. "It is more important than ever that we continue to persuade motorists to opt for public transportation, continue to make progress on our pedestrian and bike infrastructure, as well as our Vision Zero safety efforts. These measures not only make our roads safer but are also more sustainable for our environment and help us combat climate change.

Highlights Include:

- \$61.7 million in the FY24 oper-

MORE

April Program, cont.

ating budget for Vision Zero traffic, bicyclist, and pedestrian efforts

- Maintains RideOn service at current levels pending recommendations of the “RideOn Reimagined” study

- Adds more than \$300,000 to replace the aging Bethesda Circulator buses with electric buses

- New fence atop Wayne Avenue Garage in Silver Spring to restrict access to rooftops of nearby buildings

- Additional targeted investments to increase frequency of inspections for short span bridges

- Reduced parking revenues have created budget pressures in parking district services to maintain service levels and condition of garages:

- | Instituting Saturday enforcement
- | Reducing parking district transfer to the urban districts

Other Enhancements

“I am pleased that we are able to recommend budget increases to both M-NCPPC and WSSC as well as provide payment to our municipalities following last year’s correction of tax duplication payments that occurred for far too many years,” said Elrich. “Additionally, transparency, oversight, and consumer protections are critical to both our government and our residents. In this budget, I am recommending additional staff to the Office of Inspector General and funding for the restoration of the legislative branch’s Office of People’s Counsel.”

Highlights Include:

- Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission: total budget increase of \$8.9 million

- WSSC Water: 7% rate increase per the Council’s Spending Affordability Guidelines

- Payments to municipalities budget increases by \$1.6 million to implement the second year of the three-year negotiated plan to increase tax duplication payments and fund speed camera payments

- Fully funds the request of the County Council and adds two additional staffers to the Office of Inspector General to support investigations

- Adds funding to restore the Office of the People’s Counsel in the legislative branch

Real Property Tax Rates

The calculation of the Real Property Tax rates are as follows:

General County Tax 0.6940 per \$100 of Assessed Value

- This tax is levied on all property in the County and funds, in part, such basic services as police pro-

MORE

April Program, cont.

tection, elementary and secondary education, the community college, transportation, health and social services, and libraries.

State Property Tax 0.1120 per \$100 of Assessed Value

- This tax is levied by the State of Maryland and is used for the payment of principal and interest on State general obligation bonds. This tax is levied on real property only.

Municipal District Property Tax Set by Municipalities

- This tax is levied by each municipal area within the County. It is used for such services as street and sidewalk maintenance, trash removal, tree care, sanitation, and police protection.

Fire District Tax 0.1074 per \$100 of Assessed Value

- This tax is levied to fund the fire services provided by the consolidated fire district within Montgomery County.

Transit Tax 0.0832 per \$100 of Assessed Value

- This tax is levied to fund Montgomery County’s share of construction cost, operating deficits, debt service requirements, and bus acquisition of the Metro Rail and Regional Bus Systems.

Advanced Land Acquisition Tax 0.0010 per \$100 of Assessed Value

- This tax is levied for the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) to purchase land as approved by the County Council, for planned public facilities, prior to development or

improvement.

Metropolitan Tax

- This tax is levied for the M-NCPPC, Department of Parks, and is used to provide for administration, operation, maintenance, and security (Park Police) of the various parks located in Montgomery County. This tax also provides funds for payment of debt service on bonds issued for neighborhood park land acquisition and development.

Regional Tax

- This tax is levied for use by the M-NCPPC to support planning services.

Recreational Tax

- This tax is levied to defray a portion of the costs of providing, maintaining, and managing recreation

MORE

April Program, cont.

facilities and programs throughout the County, with the exception of Rockville, Gaithersburg, and Washington Grove, which have their own separate tax levies for this purpose.

Storm Drainage Tax

■ This tax is levied to defray the cost of planning, designing, construction, maintaining drainage systems, and for the debt service on outstanding bonds issued for storm drainage improvements.

Montgomery County might want to consider changing its method of charging properties similar to New York State, which has four classifications of Real Estate Taxes: 1-3 Family Houses, Apartment Houses, Commercial Property, and Utility Property. ■

Mont. Co. Taxpayers League FY2024 Budget Testimony

By Gordon Brenne, Montgomery County Taxpayers League

I. ORAL TESTIMONY

Residents are increasingly concerned about the cost and effectiveness of our local government. The **budget request** costs nearly 8% more than last year, but doesn't improve outcomes for residents, and a "mild" recession forecast underestimates likely revenue losses.

The proposed 10% property tax increase evades charter limits with an arbitrary education fig leaf (pg. 5-13) to disguise outrageous 13% county pay increases (general wage 6%, service increment 3.5%, and deferred service increment of 3.5%, pg. 8-6, on top of automatic step increases, longevity increases,

and excessive previous year raises). Money is fungible. The tax increase takes another huge bite out of our incomes on top of last year's huge appraisal increase. This increase will be passed on to renters, too. Some taxpayers will lose their jobs during the coming recession, while others will be forced from their homes by the tax increase. All will be tightening their belts, and you should cut costs and lower tax rates until the recession is behind us. (See notes below for more written testimony on revenues, spending and solutions, and other post-employment benefits, OPEB, contribution gimmicks.)

Why aren't proposed pay raises based on a comparative review of worker salaries and wages (last

MORE

MCTL Budget Test., cont.

done in 2011)? Why aren't the **2,000 new positions** added to the various agencies over the last 4 years, and largely funded with one-time Federal money being cut?

Budgets are no better than the strategies they fund. Examples of how residents suffer from weaker performance include:

1. MCPS. The achievement gap is now a chasm but the budget proposes across the board pay raises that are not targeted at low-income schools where the gap is greatest, and doesn't implement Blueprint leadership improvements at the school level where more interventions are needed. MCPS steals money from low-income kids by voraciously spending 45 cents of every dollar on non-instruction

(compared to 37% in Fairfax, MCTL analysis). A dedicated OIG would reduce fraud risks. Limit funding to the maintenance of effort level and tie funding to gap reductions. (See note below for more written testimony and solutions.)

2. Public Safety. **Crime is increasing**, but patrol positions remain vacant and the **911 response time** has increased by nearly a minute. (Tie the budget to crime reduction targets and adopt Fairfax's 911 model.)

3. WSSC. **Water and sewer rates are double those of Fairfax County**, but no cost cuts are proposed, and large families pay higher rates and are forced to cut consumption to afford this luxury. A record 7% rate increase is requested, but the governance debacle remains unresolved, and the balance sheet

remains perilously close to insolvent. (Cut costs and deny any rate increase.)

II. REVENUES AND SPENDING, WRITTEN TESTIMONY SUPPLEMENT

While revenue estimates were reduced by \$100 million last December, more shortfalls are expected due to lower capital gains and because the "mild" recession forecast (pg. 5-6) low balls the growing consensus of a deeper recession. Even with reserves higher than 10%, there is a high risk the budget will have to be revised in July. Recordation taxes have already dropped \$168 million. The boom times for capital gains and income taxes revenues are over for now, property tax assessment increase last year left many hom-

MORE

MCTL Budget Test., cont.

owners struggling, and programs expanded on the backs of unfortunate taxpayers who will lose their savings should be cut to ease the property tax burden. Over the longer term, economic development strategies for our stagnant commercial tax base and jobs level need to be reinvented to reduce the burden on residential property taxes. Use this opportunity to improve property tax equity for “new construction” after tear downs of affordable housing, assessment accuracy, lower the cap on annual increases, and reduce reliance on volatile income taxes. As promised over a decade ago, energy taxes should finally sunset because they reduce our economic competitiveness.

III. MCPS, WRITTEN TESTIMONY SUPPLEMENT

The achievement gap is now wider than in 2017, and math proficiency is the lowest it’s ever been. Our education consultant questions how MCPS teaches low-income kids. Management has failed to answer the Board’s question last fall about what happens to chronically failing schools. Management in low-income schools, not money is the problem. MCPS needs a new budget approach to recruit, retain, and incentivize quality principals and teachers in low-income schools, not across-the-board pay increases. Rewarding better management within our low-income schools will assure teacher pay raises lead to better reading and math proficiency. Instead, MCPS wants to be rewarded with \$264 million over Maintenance of Effort

levels that won’t be focused on low-income schools. Stop throwing money at MCPS until it comes up with a budget tied to strategies that work, with lower non-instruction costs. MCPS should cut back strategies that will only reach a small percentage of low-income kids and don’t improve academic performance. The same goes for County HHS school programs. MCPS should use the savings to **deliver interventions for every kid who isn’t proficient in reading or math.** Since the central office doesn’t know how many teacher interventions are done, and has no intervention targets for next year, they should reward school principals to perform more interventions and find ways to lower the gap.

Council leadership can help

MORE

MCTL Budget Test., cont.

MCPS implement better strategies. We know the Council cannot tell MCPS how to spend money, but it can specify performance improvements. The MCPS budget doesn’t include performance-based strategy metrics, and the Council approved budget should be tied to outcomes. State Blueprint objectives and the **Black and Brown Coalition** recommended strategies which include placing and retaining the most qualified principals and teachers in high-needs schools. These objectives are not addressed in the budget request. We believe principals in low-income schools must have the authority and accountability to narrow the gap, and have presented an innovation fund strategy to MCPS leadership to do just

that. This is supported by Wallace Foundation research, but quality principals in low-income schools are missing from the MCPS strategic plan, as are evaluation criteria for quality principals and teachers. Instead, MCPS continues to rely on “experience,” which is a poor proxy for quality.

Lastly, the MCPS budget isn’t crosswalked to Board strategies. How well-funded those strategies are is left to the imagination, not to management. Raising teacher salaries across the board won’t move the needle without better principals. A nonperformance, input-based MCPS budget results in a top-heavy organization and a wasteful 45% non-instruction overhead rate. MCPS should have its own OIG to root out fraud, waste, and abuse that the County OIG misses (e.g., the recent bus

contract fraud).

IV. OPEB, WRITTEN TESTIMONY SUPPLEMENT

The Executive claims FY’23 spending was below the actuary determined contribution (ADC), and has no funding contribution for County Government in FY’24 (pgs. 4-10, 4-16, and 8-3). A shift from ADC contributions to a more “sustainable” amount is proposed without regard to future year impacts. The “unused” FY’23 contribution of \$12.6 million will be used in the future. Also, the temporarily higher discount rate resulting from current inflation results in lower current ADC funding calculations, but that will shift once interest rates come back down, and will create a funding deficit balloon in future years. ■

Take Action: Contact the County Council and Ask Them to Fund the People's Counsel

[On March 15, 2023, Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich recommended that the County Council appropriate monies for the Office of the People's Counsel in the FY24 Operating Budget. This is a high priority for the Civic Federation and its associations and individual members. MCCF members are encouraged to send letters of support for refunding the Office of the People's Counsel to the Montgomery County Council County as soon as possible.]

Members of the Montgomery County Council
Werner Council Office Building
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

RE: Funding the Office of the

People's Counsel, FY 2024 Operating Budget

Dear Councilmember:

I am writing to request that funding be restored to the Office of the People's Counsel (OPC), an agency that is authorized by the County Code to represent the public interest in the County's land use regulatory process. The County Executive has recommended renewed funding in his FY24 Recommended Budget.

Continuing to withhold funding for this agency is not in the public interest and defunding the OPC has led to an imbalance of representation on issues related to land use.

The Office serves to protect the public interest in land use hearings by promoting full and fair representation of relevant issues to achieve

balanced administrative records. The Office also provides technical assistance to residents so that they can effectively participate in the County's land use control process. Reestablishing the OPC will help to restore a balance of trust and integrity to the planning and public engagement process.

Furthermore, the County Code requires that prior to introduction, any proposed Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) be reviewed by a ZTA Advisory Group that includes the OPC. One of the reasons often cited by the Planning Department for the complete rewrite of the County's Zoning Ordinance (which was a seven-year process) was to discourage the use of Zoning Text Amendments that bypass the master planning and

MORE

OPC Funding Letter, cont.

land use public processes. However, since the Zoning Rewrite was adopted, there have been over 100 ZTAs proposed by a small number of Councilmembers. All of the ZTAs were proposed without the benefit of the OPC review.

Other Maryland jurisdictions have established offices of the People's Counsel, including Prince George's County, Baltimore County, and Harford County. It's time to restore Montgomery County's Office of the People's Counsel.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit our recommendation for the FY24 budget on this very important matter of public interest.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

CONTACTS

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Council Passes Legislation to Achieve Greater Forest Planting, Conservation in County

In a March 21, 2023, press release, the Montgomery County Council said it voted unanimously to pass legislation which will help the County achieve greater forest planting and forest conservation with a goal of no net loss.

“Montgomery County’s forests, parks and green spaces are among our most treasured assets,” said Council President Evan Glass, who chairs the Council’s Transportation and Environment (TE) Committee. “The ‘no net loss’ measures included in Expedited Bill 25-22 allow us to meet the current needs of our County while simultaneously planning for a sustainable future.”

Expedited Bill 25-22, Forest Conservation–Trees, in companion with the resolution to approve Montgomery County Planning Board

Regulation No. 25-22 on Forest Conservation–Trees, will amend Chapter 22A, the Forest Conservation Law, and the Planning Board’s forest conservation regulations. The Council passed an amendment to expedite the legislation.

The amendments to the Forest Conservation Law and regulations are proposed to achieve greater forest planting and forest conservation in Montgomery County, with a goal of achieving an equal or greater area of forest planted than forest removed on a Countywide level by projects subject to the Montgomery County Forest Conservation Law.

Specifically, the amendments will require maintenance plans in some instances if mature forest is struggling to compete with nonnative invasive plants, discourage forest

clearing and incentivize forest planting in areas with low forest cover, strengthen reforestation ratios, increase required planting in stream valley buffers, and require more mitigation for removal of large trees, among other measures.

The updated legislation will protect and expand Mont. County forests and move the County closer toward its ambitious climate goals.

The Council held two public hearings on October 4, 2022, and February 7, 2023. The TE Committee held a work session on February 27 and recommended enactment with amendments.

The lead sponsor was former Council President Gabe Alborno, at the request of the Planning Board.

[The full staff report can be viewed here.](#) ■

County Council Passes Open Meetings Legislation

On March 21, 2023, the Montgomery County Council unanimously approved a bill introduced by Councilmember Dawn Luedtke to improve County government operations. [Bill 8-23](#) sets clear and consistent guidelines for open meeting requirements of County boards, committees, and commissions.

ABOUT BILL 8-23

Luedtke introduced Bill 8-23, Boards, Committees, and Commissions–Open Meetings–Supplemental Requirements on Feb. 14 after the State Open Meetings Act Compliance Board found several County boards, committees and commissions violated existing [State Open Meetings Act](#) law by failing to provide reasonable advance notice of meetings, failing to provide information on how to ac-

cess virtual meetings, and failing to post minutes.

The bill requires the more than 80 County boards, committees, and commissions charged with advising policymakers and serving as a forum for residents to discuss local issues to:

- publish notice of meetings within five business days after the group has determined the meeting date, and at least two calendar days before the meeting;

- publish meeting agendas within five business days after the group has determined the agenda, and at least two calendar days before the meeting; and

- within five days after it meets, publish a recording of the meeting if the meeting was recorded.

“This legislation sets clear and

consistent open meetings rules for the many boards, committees, and commissions that volunteer members and other residents rely on as important opportunities to learn about County policies,” Luedtke said. “Thank you to my Council colleagues and the Executive Branch for recognizing the importance of ensuring transparency for these groups.”

Councilmember Luedtke represents the new District 7, including Olney, Damascus, Montgomery Village, Derwood, Laytonsville, Sandy Spring, Ashton, and parts of Gaithersburg and Silver Spring. She is serving on the Council’s Public Safety and Health and Human Services Committees and as the Council’s Lead for Crisis Response.

The Council staff report on [Bill 8-23](#) can be viewed here. ■

MCCF Testimony by Jerry Garson on H.B. 299, Synthetic Turf Chain of Custody

To the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Dear Senator Brian Feldman and other Committee Members:

I am Jerry Garson writing on behalf of The Montgomery County Civic Federation, Inc. (MCCF), which represents about 150,000 Montgomery County residents. The MCCF considered bill H.B. 299, Environment—Synthetic Turf—Chain of Custody. The Civic Federation unanimously voted in favor the legislation for the following reasons:

This legislation would require the Maryland Department of Environment to establish a system to track the chain of custody of synthetic turf sports or playing fields installed in Maryland. These fields

contain dangerous materials. The basic point is we just want to know where these things went and the materials were disposed properly. This is about transparency.

The Fiscal and Policy Note indicates only a \$52,400 cost for Fiscal Year 2024 and only \$13,800 for Fiscal Year 2025.

H.B. 131 passed the House of Delegates by a vote of 103 to 31 on March 10, 2023.

The mission of the MCCF is to preserve and improve the quality of life for all current and future residents of Montgomery County, Maryland. Since its founding in 1925, the volunteers of the MCCF have committed themselves to providing an effective citizen voice to government policy makers, both elected and appointed.

The Civic Federation is a not-for-profit, county-wide umbrella group designed to promote cooperation, education and effectiveness of civic and community associations in Montgomery County.

It addresses a wide range of concerns in transportation, land use, environment, education, budget and finance, public safety, and ethics. With its strength of numbers and thoroughness of its deliberations, the Federation influences county policy and balances the activities of vested county pressure groups.

Thank you for considering our views.

Jerry Garson ■

MCCF Testimony Before the Montgomery Co. Planning Board on the Pedestrian Plan

By Jerry Garson, Transportation Chair

The mission of the MCCF is to preserve and improve the quality of life for all current and future residents of Montgomery County, Maryland. Since its founding in 1925, the volunteers of the MCCF have committed themselves to providing an effective citizen voice for government policy makers, both elected and appointed.

We offer the following comments on the public hearing draft of the Montgomery County's Pedestrian Plan.

We agree that Pedestrian Safety is critically important for all residents and visitors to our County. Improving it has been a consistent, top priority of the Civic Federation.

We have supported the County's Vision Zero Approach to road safety and support the goal of eliminating traffic fatalities and serious injuries by 2030. We have been pleased to work with the County Executive's office, members of the County Council, and the Planning staff in this critically important effort.

We support the draft Plan's goals: to increase walking rates and pedestrian satisfaction; to create a comfortable, connected, convenient pedestrian network; to enhance pedestrian safety; and to build an equitable and just pedestrian network.

We appreciate the Planning Department's broad community engagement efforts supporting the development of this plan, and we

hope it is a model for future programs.

We have submitted written testimony noting some specific recommendations for enhancing pedestrian safety, and we hope that you will give them serious consideration.

We support building more sidewalks faster, creating direct and accessible street crossings, building more walkable places, and increasing the lighting along all roadways and streets.

We also support greatly enhanced pedestrian improvements, such as sidewalks around school facilities and incorporating roadway maintenance into utility projects.

We do, however, note with

Pedestrian Plan, cont.

concern the suggestion to transfer State highways—these are all numbered roads, in more urban areas—to County control, given the great additional costs and resources that this would entail to County government in a challenging budget environment. The State Highway Administration needs to step up and address the critical pedestrian and road safety issues on state roads.

Finally, we ask you to consider supporting and encouraging the provision of reflective vests to all County residents who request them for walking and bicycle riding. These will provide significantly more visibility to motorists in rain or at night.

Thank you for the time. ■

Who Should Win in 2023?

*This is the **last call** for nominations for MCCF's annual awards.*

I The Wayne Goldstein Award is given to an individual or group for outstanding service to the people of Montgomery County.

I The Sentinel Award goes to an individual or group for a significant contribution to good government at the local level.

I The Star Cup. Yes, It's a real silver cup, to have and to hold for one year, and it's given to a Delegate or Committee of the Federation for outstanding public service on behalf of Montgomery County.

The Awards Committee will make our final selections at the April Executive Committee meeting, and the delegates will vote to approve the nominees at the May general meeting.

If you know an individual or group that has been working hard on behalf of our residents and deserves public recognition, please tell Peggy Dennis, Awards Committee Chair, hotyakker@gmail.com. ■



Antisemitic Incidents Spike 261% Across Montgomery County, ADL Reports

County accounts for nearly 60% of 109 incidents reported statewide last year

By Em Espey, MoCo360, March 23, 2023

Antisemitic incidents increased dramatically across Montgomery County over the course of 2022, according to recent reports from the Anti-Defamation League and county police. The 109 incidents reported to the ADL in Maryland last year represent a 98% increase from the previous year's 55—and over half took place in Montgomery County, an ADL spokesperson reports.

Annually since 1979, the ADL—one of the leading organizations fighting antisemitism globally—produces an audit tracking the number of antisemitic incident reports it received over the course of the year. The data is broken down

by state and tabulated into three categories: harassment, vandalism, and assault. On Thursday, the ADL published its 2022 report.

Antisemitic incidents are at an all-time high, the report showed, with a total of 3,697 incidents reported nationwide—an increase of 36% compared to last year. Maryland ranked tenth highest in the country, with 109 incidents reported in 2022. Comparatively, Virginia saw a 50% increase in reported incidents, and Washington, D.C. experienced a 30% decrease this year.

Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington (JCRC) Associate Director Guila Siegel told *MoCo360* that the ADL's new data “completely vali-

dates and tracks” with what her organization has been seeing in its day-to-day work across the state. Headquartered in North Bethesda, the JCRC is a large nonprofit engaged in a variety of policy advocacy efforts and community education programs geared toward supporting the local Jewish community.

Reacting to the spike in reported incidents, Siegel said, “We have to get beyond feeling shocked and horrified and actually address the problem, dispelling any notions that we're somehow immune to the trend we're seeing nationally when it comes forms of hate like antisemitism.”

Siegel added that both local

Antisemitic Incidents, cont.

and national data shows incidents related to racism, transphobia, and homophobia are also on the rise.

Montgomery County's 65 incidents made up almost 60% of the total statewide tally, according to ADL Regional Director Meredith Weisel—an increase of over 261% from the previous year's 18 reports. Weisel said 2023 is already on track to reach even higher levels of antisemitism in Maryland, but she was unable to provide *MoCo360* with current data.

Eighteen of the 65 incidents reported across the county last year occurred on school grounds, Weisel said. In February 2023, nine antisemitic incidents were reported within Montgomery County Public Schools in the span of a week.

"We're definitely continuing to see a pattern of incidents in schools," Weisel said. "We're also seeing a pattern of incidents in what we consider white supremacist propaganda—everything from flyers to stickers being distributed across the region."

County police data mirrors the ADL's report of rising antisemitism. Montgomery Police responded to 48 antisemitic incidents over 2022, according to an annual report on hate bias incidents published in February—a 65% increase from 29 incidents the previous year.

Recent antisemitic activities reported across the county have ranged from Nazi symbols and other graffiti, flyers, and anonymous emails all the way to outright physical assault. In November, the County Council unanimously

passed a resolution condemning antisemitism and pledging to support Jewish residents, who make up 10% of the county's population, according to government data.

School and county officials have made statements in support of the Jewish community, and the school district has said it is working to expand educational opportunities for students and staff in light of the recent rise in antisemitic acts.

"We know schools are a microcosm of what is happening across the country and that we must work together to proactively address hate of any kind," MCPS spokesperson Jessica Baxter wrote to *MoCo360* in an email. "These conversations allow us to hear more from our students and their families about their experiences and

MORE

Antisemitic Incidents, cont.

how schools can best respond."

She added that MCPS is committed to working with community partners like the ADL and the JCRC to increase education about hate bias and antisemitism.

Out of three antisemitic assaults reported to the ADL in Maryland, Weisel said two were specific to Montgomery County. She said the first occurred in January, when an individual shouted antisemitic statements at a group of people in a Bethesda parking lot and assaulted one of them. The second took place in June, when someone threw eggs at a group of Jewish men walking to a synagogue in Kemp Mill.

Weisel said it's difficult to pinpoint why the county in particular saw such a dramatic rise in

antisemitic incidents, but she cited its proximity to the nation's capital and its large Jewish population as likely contributing factors.

"This is an incredibly diverse and sophisticated area, but that doesn't mean it can't harbor hateful people," she said. "We really need to be doing more education with our students and faculty to combat the spread of conspiracy theories, tropes and stereotypes."

Siegel said Montgomery County is home to a very established and highly visible Jewish population. When it comes to tracking hate bias, she said a basic rule of thumb is that "where there are Jews, there will be antisemitism." She added that successfully combating the continued rise of these hate-based incidents necessitates a multipronged approach shared by elected officials, law enforce-

ment, school leaders, faith leaders, parents, and other community stakeholders.

"We need to look at antisemitism not only on its own but as part and parcel of a dangerous escalation of hatred in society," Siegel said. "This normalization of expressions of hatred that in years past would have been so completely socially unacceptable plays a huge role in what we're seeing now."

On Thursday evening, March 23, the JCRC hosted its second of two town halls featuring MCPS Superintendent Monifa McKnight, where local Jewish community members of all ages were encouraged to engage in a Q&A-style conversation with the superintendent about how MCPS can better combat antisemitism in public schools. ■

We Mark the Passing of Political Activist and Civic Leader Norman G. Knopf*By Peggy Dennis*

On Monday, March 20, the civic community lost one of our long-time friends and champions, Norman Knopf. He was a lifelong political activist and civic leader with a successful legal career spanning nearly 60 years. Those of us who came to the Civic Federation as the result of land use battles have special memories.

I hired Norman to represent Concerned Citizens of Great Falls some 30 years ago. It was our third and final fight against wildly inappropriate proposals for four acres of undeveloped land across from the entrance to the C&O Canal National Historic Park at Great Falls. The land owner told us outright that he could not “maximize his profits” by building four



NORMAN KNOPF

single family homes – the outcome specified by both the zoning and the Potomac Master Plan. Our adversary was an LLC set up to build an 82,000-square-foot assisted-living facility. George Barnes of the West Montgomery County Citizens Asso-

ciation told me we could never win a fight against “the elderly.” But win we did! Norman led us through eight days of hearings before the Board of Zoning Appeals and then before the Court of Special Appeals in Annapolis. His rates were modest, but he did so much more as pro bono work. And he was always the epitome of charm and grace.

As we in the civic community contemplate the destructive potential of “Thrive” (throwing the baby out with the bath water), we should read the following tribute to Norman read by Julie Davis and Jenny Sue Dunner at Norman’s funeral. I have edited it slightly for length. It shows forcefully the importance of a united response to threats to our community as a whole.

MORE

Norman G. Knopf, cont.

Many of you have known Norman only in more recent years as one of the leaders of the Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights (or CCCFH). However, we became acquainted with Norman over fifty years ago when, as a civic activist in his early thirties, he was organizing a new citizens coalition to monitor proposed development in the Friendship Heights area.

It was the early 1970s, and mass transit was coming to Montgomery County. In anticipation of a new Metro station in Friendship Heights, major real estate developers and property owners in the area announced plans for nearly 10 million square feet of new commercial and residential development in the Friendship Heights

business district. If approved, the new development would have equaled the then square footage of two Rosslyn or four Crystal Cities. It would also have generated over 13,000 new vehicle trips during the evening rush hour also on just the Montgomery County side. It would be a gross understatement to say that the communities in and around Friendship Heights were shocked and appalled by these plans. However, they were uncertain as to how to respond to these unprecedented development proposals.

But not Norman. That’s when his career as a civic leader began in earnest. He was already president of his Brookdale Citizens Association, but he realized that this situation needed a much broader response. Working with a small group of civic leaders from other

nearby communities (including the two of us), Norman formed CCCFH. More than 20 communities in the Friendship Heights area, including Norman’s Brookdale community and the Village of Friendship Heights, ultimately joined the organization. Norman also recognized and emphasized the importance of working with civic groups on the D.C. side of Friendship Heights to establish an interjurisdictional approach to planning for the area.

But this was just the beginning. Norman also understood that the real estate industry exercised significant influence over Montgomery County elections through campaign contributions and other means of support. Although the CCCFH neighborhoods could never even that playing field, these neighborhoods had thousands of

MORE

Norman G. Knopf, cont.

residents that could be organized and energized to vote for County Council candidates who would support controlled growth in Friendship Heights. Norman decided that CCCFH could and should become a political force to be reckoned with in County politics.

Keep in mind that political marches and rallies, whether for civil rights or against the Vietnam war, were hallmarks of the 1970s. Norman borrowed liberally from that playbook. With a small group of other CCCFH volunteers, he organized hundreds of residents from the CCCFH communities to participate in marches throughout the Friendship Heights business district. The group also organized rallies at Planning Board and County Council hearings and

meetings, making sure these events were covered by local news outlets.

Most Planning Board and Council hearings and meetings were in the evening, and many elderly residents in the Friendship Heights area were reluctant to drive at night. Norman and his CCCFH volunteers thus arranged for carpools and buses to bring residents to those meetings and hearings.

At several Planning Board and County Council hearings in the B-CC High School auditorium, so many buses and carpools brought in so many CCCFH residents that the auditorium with nearly 1,000 seats was filled, and there was standing room only in the school hallways and parking lot.

Knowing that one picture is worth a thousand words, Norman also worked with an area public re-

lations firm to make a video showing the potential impacts of over-development in Friendship Heights on the residents in and around the area. He then made sure that the video was shown and reshown at as many Council and Planning Board hearings and meetings as possible.

But political pressure alone was not enough to limit development in Friendship Heights. There were also significant legal battles to be fought. Norman developed an expertise in Maryland land use law that even the most experienced members of the County land use bar came to respect, if not fear.

With Norman leading the legal charge, court case followed court case. Several went all the way to the Maryland and U.S. Supreme Courts, and CCCFH was on the

Norman G. Knopf, cont.

winning side in each. Norman also took an active role in raising funds to pay for the lawyers representing CCCFH.

By the late 1970s, new development for Friendship Heights on both sides of the D.C. line had been successfully limited by D.C. and MoCo planning officials, and these controls on future growth had been upheld by the courts after nearly a decade of litigation.

Through the years that followed, Norman remained actively involved in CCCFH. He also opened a law firm in Rockville in the 1980s, and successfully represented numerous other communities throughout the County in land use cases.

Through his career as a civic leader for over half a century, Norman became a legend in his own

time.

Although we deeply mourn his loss, his memory will forever be enshrined in the Friendship Heights

and other Montgomery County communities for which he worked so diligently for so many years to protect and preserve. ■

Update on PEPCO's Shared Use Path

By Peggy Dennis, Transportation Committee member

Remember? The Civic Federation was heavily involved in getting PEPCO to agree to putting in a shared use hiker/biker path along one of its main power distribution lines. Here's a status report.

"The section from Westlake to Tuckerman is under design and will be at 'concept' level soon. We've had coordination meetings with review agencies pertaining to some of the permits the project will need; topographic survey has happened; concepts related to stormwater management are under development;

accessible routes were planned; the north and south trailheads at Cabin John RP are being conceptualized; and the crossing over Cabin John Creek is being planned now that topo is available."

It's good to know that this long-awaited public facility is moving along, and sometime in the future (we hope not in the next century) it will be available to us. It will provide a great bike commuting route that will not take up any space on our roads but provide a safe way for cyclists to get to the transportation hub at Westfield Montgomery Mall. ■

Minutes of March 13, 2023, MCCF General Meeting #941, Virtual Zoom Meeting

By Karen Cordry, MCCF Recording Secretary

[Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the General Meeting was held via Zoom as a virtual meeting. A total of 48 persons attended on the Zoom platform.]

Call to Order: Alan Bowser, President, called the Meeting to order at 7:37 p.m. Meeting was recorded.

Approval of Meeting Agenda: moved, seconded, and approved by voice vote.

Approval of February General Meeting Minutes: moved, seconded and approved by voice vote.

Treasurer's Report: Jerry Garson reported \$1,017 received for the

first eight months and \$40 in the last month. Expenses of \$1,228 for a net balance of -\$210. Bank balance of \$8,492.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Alan Bowser stated that County is looking for applicants for Planning Board Chair and one member with a deadline date of April 3 at 5 p.m. Members are paid \$30,000 and the chair is paid \$208,000. Information on the positions is on the County website.

Peggy Dennis noted that we used to try to interview leading candidates and Alan said we would see if we could pull that together.

MARCH PROGRAM

Liz Joyce, Second VP, was the moderator for two presentations:

first by Dr. Scott Bruton, Deputy Director of Montgomery County Dept. of Housing and Community Affairs on the County's work in this area, and second by Michael O'Grady, a quantitative analyst on the Arlington "Missing Middle" proposal for affordable housing. Liz noted that we are at a major action point on these issues with Thrive 2050 passing recently with a framework for future change. We are looking to achieve more housing but at rates that people can afford; since many of them will be making \$50,000 or less so they will need deeply affordable housing.

Dr. Bruton began by noting that he has recently taken on the role of Acting Director and is interested in our perspectives when he looks

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March Minutes, cont.

at what the county needs, what it's trying to do, and how we can be involved in the process. Affordable housing is a major priority for the county and they are using tools including revitalization of commercial building and existing multifamily buildings. His department is also responsible for Building Code enforcement, rental licensing, and the Office of Landlord-Tenant Affairs, including mediation, adjudication of disputes, as well as regulating Common Ownership Communities (co-ops and condos rights and responsibilities).

CREATION/PRESERVATION OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Housing Initiatives Fund. Rental assistance administered by Dept. of HHS. Can provide short-

and long-term capital investment, new or rehab.

Affordable Housing Opportunity Fund. Loans for acquisition of property (pay back within 3 years); also deals with Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing (NOAH). Portion of HIF used for purchase/rehab of existing property to create AH. Do have developer, new build interest but have put some aside for NOAH fund. Right of first refusal (ROFR) program since the early '80s gives the Housing Oppor. Commission (HOC) and tenants first right to property by taking over contract between owner and 3rd party for properties with 4 units and up. Funds kept in reserve so they can seize opportunities when they arise. We have 60 days to exercise the right and make deposit to hold while giving tenants 90 days to get financing to take the bid.

Low-Income Households.

Divided into 3 tiers: 0-30% of Area Median Income (AMI) (extremely low); 31-50 (very low income), 51-80 (low income). 0-30% AMI is pretty much only Section 8 vouchers/public housing; these programs have been shrinking since the Reagan era. There are still not many programs that focus on the 31-50% tier, with basically just Low-Income Tax Credits (LITC) to institutions that put capital into projects. The MPDU program focuses on those with 60-75% of AMI; there are some other purchase programs but not much support for rentals. Basically not enough money at any level (federal, state, and local) to meet needs and the area has been in crisis status since the late 1960s. In '70s and '80s, rent stabilization programs were tried in recognition of these

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March Minutes, cont.

problems and for the last 10–15 years there has been more recognition of the problem of AH but still not enough done.

Liz Joyce noted the tools they had weren't enough and trends seem to be pushing loss of NOAH since nothing stops the purchase/up-scaling of such units. Dr. Bruton noted the MPDUs built in the last decade have to keep affordability limits for 99 years and the ROFR is another way to keep AH units. There are always tradeoffs with other needs such as schools, public safety, etc. Two rent stabilization bills are at the Council to try to moderate rent hikes and there are a lot of different views on the appropriateness of such bills and how they should work.

Mike O'Grady pointed out that the LITC is too small to be useful

except for bigger projects (greater than 50 units) due to the additional work and applicable restrictions and Dr. Bruton agreed unless one could pull a number of smaller properties together. He also noted that for single family housing, down payment assistance was usually what was needed, but for the properties in the 4–50 unit range, there weren't a lot of tools to help maintain them. He formerly worked with D.C. government and they are now looking at a "Cash for Covenants" program. \$5 million was set aside for a pilot project but it hasn't moved forward. This was proposed as an alternative to rent stabilization legislation.

Note in chat: **AMI for Washington Metro area**, including Montgomery County is \$142,300 for a family of 4; \$99,000 per year for 1 person household.

Alan Bowser asked about what

D.C. is doing with Accessory Dwelling Units: do they have an MPDU program and are they thinking about the "Missing Middle Housing" concept. Dr. Bruton noted that D.C. has spent over a billion dollars on housing under Vincent Gray and now Muriel Bowser. They have had a rent supplement program since 2008. D.C. is like a state in some ways for federal funding and spends more per capita than any other jurisdiction in the country. MoCo has been upping its efforts, too. D.C.'s MPDU program is referred to as "inclusionary zoning" and provides that to get bonus density, you have to certain percentage of affordable units. They do have an ADU program similar to MoCo to build in-law suites, etc., on existing lots.

As far as Missing Middle, the problem is that you can't afford to

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build low-rise, garden-style apartments because the land cost is so high. So, you're left with high-rise apartments or very expensive single-family homes. Nobody builds starter homes in MoCo because land cost is so high; there are still townhouse developments but they have their own issues. Mr. O'Grady noted that much of what is the current NOAH are smaller homes that were built with massive federal subsidies in the 1950s and '60s. We stopped spending on building and maintaining those homes so a lot of it just disappeared over time.

Peggy Dennis asked about programs to incentivize home sharing. Dr. Bruton noted that they have put in provisions to dealing with AirBnB, etc., for sharing bedrooms, basements, etc.

Lloyd Guerri noted a D.C. initiative to convert vacant office/retail space to housing and asked what the County is doing in that regard. Dr. Bruton noted that he had worked on the issue for D.C. and for now it appears cost-prohibitive to make offices into affordable housing, but may be feasible for higher-cost housing units. The building codes are very different so it's expensive to try to put in what's needed for dense housing and the money can be better spent on new AH. There has to be careful analysis to decide whether conversion or new build works better, especially if they look at mixed-use projects with housing on top of low retail/office space.

Liz Joyce then turned the discussion to the Missing Middle issue and the idea of broadly allowing multifamily houses on each lot will solve the problem. She introduced

Michael O'Grady, a research development economist who has analyzed Arlington's efforts in this regard. **His Powerpoint is available here.**

Mr. O'Grady noted that the concept is part of the New Urbanism (NU) which pushes cities to redevelop as vibrant, diverse complete communities. Markets are supposed to allocate the resources but the NU standing alone doesn't create the mixed, diverse group looked for; instead, to the extent it creates desirable neighborhoods, they tend to gentrify and price out those who were there to begin with, creating displacement risk and stress on the original residents.

Arlington has been working on its own Missing Middle proposal and will be voting on it shortly. It's about 72% white, but there are pockets of majority minority population

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areas. The proposal would allow up to 6 units on 5,000–10,000 foot area R-60), even smaller sq. footages near public transportation: 16 ft width for townhouses and 24 feet for semi-detached, with ½ a parking space or less per unit and no greenspace requirement (although there are major flooding issues in Arlington). These units would be permitted *by right*.

ARGUMENTS

Pro

Greater housing diversity could lead to greater demographic diversity. More supply will drive down prices and generate more tax revenue to support the projects. The existing single-family housing went in during Jim Crow/segregation and need not be retained.

Opponents

The proposals will result in higher taxes and displacement. Denser properties will raise prices for everyone on the assumption their properties may convert, too, encouraging speculation. There is no evidence that developers will actually build cheaper units since they have no incentive to oversaturate the market and drive down prices. The more typical result is a \$700,000 SFH will be converted into duplexes selling at \$1.2 million each. Columbia Heights has been upzoned and it has gone from being 90% minority and is now majority white as it gentrified and has pricing far above AMI level. The Arlington proposal will sacrifice existing NOAH with hope of more and more affordable housing, but no empirical analysis to show that it will result. For marginalized residents, research shows up to 30%

are pushed out of upzoned areas. Rent control can keep existing tenants in place but it does push down new construction.

Liz Joyce noted that we all agree on the goals for an affordable, livable, diverse community but so far what we have heard is what doesn't work. Is there any place that has pulled this off? Mr. O'Grady said, sadly, not much except perhaps in some Scandinavian counties that have put a lot more money and effort into the approaches. There were comments about whether there needed to be a higher commitment of money and direction from the government to make any of this viable. Mr. O'Grady noted that there were no estimates yet on what implementing the Arlington proposal will cost or what results they will obtain.

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There were a variety of comments along the lines of how this would affect tax revenues and whether that was a goal, especially in light of the losses in revenue following COVID, are there federal or state funds to assist in these processes, are there viable models out there to make this work (including the ideas of Community Land Trusts, project developments by churches or other nonprofits, etc.), and how to get government to actually listen to valid concerns being raised, rather than writing them off as NIMBYism. At the end of the day, there were no clear answers for the questions and Mr. O'Grady summed it up by noting that there were always trade-offs between decisions and effects and it would take time for those effects to manifest.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Education

■ Alan Bowser expressed concern about rise in antisemitism showing up in MCPS. Doesn't seem to be diminishing even with attention paid.

Public Safety

■ Liz Joyce reported that District 18 Democrats had a meeting with the MoCo Police Chief. He was opposed to the Jawando/Mink bill barring traffic stops on minor offenses such as expired tags, etc., noting that such stops often exposed bigger problems. With respect to the issues from all-night businesses, they are working to make them commit to better security, rather than forcing them to shut at a particular time. The actual statistics show we are in reasonable shape compared to other jurisdictions in the area.

Legislation

■ Peggy Dennis noted that we should support Dawn Luedtke's resolution on transparency in government, which is No. 8-23 at the Council level.

■ She also suggested that the MCCF website should have a broader legislation section so she could post information generally about bills at the local and county level.

Transportation

■ Jim Garson noted that the PPP proposal on expanding I-495/I-270 has basically collapsed.

■ The County will be holding a public hearing later this month on its Pedestrian Master Plan and we will send out an announcement note with the video link.

■ He also noted that road diet proposals (i.e., restricting travel

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March Minutes, cont.

lanes and expanding pedestrian/ bike lanes) are emerging around the County and not clear communities are being engaged enough. We will be looking at since it has been raising a lot of controversies.

■ We will also look at the CoExec budget which will be released by then and added that we supporting the funding for an Office of People's Counsel at a level of about \$250,000.

Adjournment: Video recording ended and meeting adjourned at 10:01 p.m. ■

Minutes of the March 23 Executive Committee Meeting

By Karen Cordry, Rec. Secretary

Attendance: Alan Bowser, Karen Cordry, Liz Joyce, Jerry Garson, Peggy Dennis, Imad-ad-Dean Ahmad (latter two joined ~8:30).

1. Meeting began at 8:05 p.m.
2. The topic for the April 10th general meeting is the upcoming County budget, with Rich Madaleno as speaker.
3. Jerry Garson presented MCCF positions at the Planning Board Meeting held on March 23 on the draft Pedestrian Master Plan language. We were supportive of it and the work done by the Planning Board and Councilmember Glass' work.

4. There was discussion about Arlington's recent passage of its Missing Middle policy on housing on March 22 which relates to the same topic as the general meeting. Alan Bowser will try to get details for the newsletter.

5. There was discussion about how to get a better sense of who our interested members are and who are attending meetings. That will help us increase our effort to add paid-up members and grow the pool of those eligible to vote on positions being taken by the Civic Fed.

6. Possible newsletter articles included discussion of pending legislation, including Rep. Luedtke's proposed bill on added transparency

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ExCom Minutes, cont.

for boards and commissions. Jerry Garson noted that he had testified today on H.B. 299, the chain of custody bill for artificial turf, and that could be included. We would also want an article/tribute to Norman Knopf who passed away. The Taxpayer League gave us an article on the budget that can also go in.

7. It was agreed that we would move back the stormwater/tree canopy discussion to the May meeting and probably include a wrap-up on the General Assembly. The June meeting is our normal date for our award ceremony.

8. The issue of awards and nominations for next year were then taken up. We have advised in the newsletter of the opportunity for members

to serve on those committees. In the absence of other volunteers, Peggy Dennis offered to chair both groups and Allan noted that, for the last couple of years, the ExCom had taken on the jobs of those two committees. It was moved and seconded to name Peggy as chair and for the ExCom to fill the slots on the committees and approved by voice vote.

9. There was general discussion on the topic and we will aim to settle on nominees by the April ExCom meeting so they can suggest persons they would like to present their awards. She will prepare an article for the April news about the awards and that we are still seeking nominees. There was also discussion about who the primary speaker should be, with suggestions for either Co. Exec. Elrich or Senator Van Hollen with a video from Rep. Raskin if he cannot

attend.

10. Peggy then turned the conversation to the Nominations Committee and noted that we need to look at the full slate. Karen, Jerry, and Liz are willing to stay in their current positions of Secretary, Treasurer, and 2nd V-President. We do need to look at the President slot and the 1st V-President position. There was substantial discussion about what we should be looking for in the positions and there was a consensus that we need people who both had a history with the Civic Fed and a willingness and commitment to stay active and involved. It will also be useful, if possible, to try to open up the leadership both demographically and age-wise to try to help keep the Civic Fed active and relevant to the many issues facing the County going for-

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ExCom Minutes, cont.

ward. Peggy will put another article together for the newsletter indicating that nominations are still open and noting our interest and desire to add new faces in the leadership.

11. There was also discussion about what could be done to invigorate the membership and increase the active roles. It was noted that the Regional Service Centers have lists of all civic/homeowner associations and Peggy offered to visit them and obtain the lists. We can then do direct outreach to them to make them aware of the Civic Fed and invite their participation and we can also look at persons who actively participated in hearings like the Pedestrian Master Plan hearing tonight. Liz noted that we may need to update the software we are currently using to be able to

keep better track of our contacts and to be able to make direct outreach to members. Alan noted that sending specific dues reminder emails is probably one good approach. This is an area we will try to focus on more directly over the next several months.

12. Transportation. Jerry Garson noted that the P3 plan for the Beltway/I-270 is dead for now, although Virginia is continuing to expand on their side of the river. He noted there were still issues that need to be addressed on the bridge and a number of our issues that could be resolved by restructuring lanes and so forth, but it's unclear for now where this is going.

13. The meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m. ■

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Submit contributions for the next issue by the 26th of the current month. Send to CFN at civicfednews@montgomerycivic.org.

Send all address corrections to membership@montgomerycivic.org.

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