

Join Us at the MCCF Annual Awards Reception on June 12th

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TO PRINT, USE PRINT VERSION

of note

Next MCCF Meeting #944

Monday, June 12, 2023, 7:00 p.m., *in person only*. It's our Annual Awards Celebration in downtown Silver Spring!

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Meeting Minutes

May 8 Meeting #943 **P. 25**

Executive Committee Meetings
MAY 18 **P. 32**

Membership Application

JOIN ONLINE | MAIL-IN FORM

Remember to RSVP!

Please send your full name and affiliation to rsvp@montgomerycivic.org so you'll have a badge at the June meeting!

Federation Meeting #944

Monday, June 12, 2023

7:00 p.m.

Awards Celebration

Welcome: Montgomery County Civic Federation President Alan Bowser

Presentation of the Sentinel

Award: Montgomery County Council President Evan Glass

Presentation of the Wayne

Goldstein Award: Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich

Presentation of the Star

Cup: Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich

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 June meeting is MCCF's Annual Award Celebration. It will be held *in person only*.

■ Location: Cissel-Saxon American Legion Post #41, 8110 Fenton Street, Downtown Silver Spring. Enter from the parking garage.

■ Monday, June 12, 2023, 7:00 p.m. *Please note earlier time!*

■ In person only; this event will not be broadcast virtually.

■ There is no charge for this event. Light fare will be served; cash bar.

■ RSVP at rsvp@montgomerycivic.org by Sunday, June 11.

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@montgomerycivic.org

TO SUBMIT AN ARTICLE, SEE PAGE 34

You are Invited to the Montgomery County Civic Federation Annual Awards Celebration

MONDAY, JUNE 12, 2023 | 7:00 P.M. | AMERICAN LEGION POST #41
8110 FENTON STREET, SILVER SPRING (ENTER FROM THE PARKING GARAGE)

Award Recipients

THE STAR CUP

Given to a Delegate or Committee of the Federation for outstanding service on behalf of Montgomery County

to

Karen Cordry

President

Kensington Heights Civic Association;

Secretary

Montgomery County Civic Federation, Inc.

THE SENTINEL AWARD

Given to an individual or group for a significant contribution to good government at the local level

to

Eric Cathcart

President

North Hills of Sligo Civic Association

THE WAYNE GOLDSTEIN AWARD

Given to an individual or group for outstanding service to the people of Montgomery County

to

Cheryl Gannon

Woodside Civic Association;

Zoning Chair

and to

Kimbllyn Persaud

Past President, Wheaton Regional Park Neighborhood Association; Founder of the online community resource EPIC of MoCo (Empowering People in Community of MoCo)

TO ENSURE YOU HAVE A BADGE, PLEASE SEND YOUR NAME AND AFFILIATION TO RSVP@MONTGOMERYCIVIC.COM BY SUNDAY, JUNE 11. THERE IS NO CHARGE FOR THIS EVENT. LIGHT FARE IS INCLUDED. CASH BAR.

Profiles of This Year's Montgomery County Civic Federation Award Winners

The Montgomery County Civic Federation, Inc., will present the following awards at our June 12 Awards Celebration.

STAR CUP

This year's Star Cup is awarded to **Karen Cordry**.

The Star Cup is given to a delegate or committee of the Federation for outstanding service on behalf of Montgomery County.

Karen is President of the Kensington Heights Civic Association (KHCA) and serves as the Secretary of the Montgomery County Civic Federation. She has dedicated countless hours to making Montgomery County a better place to live, work, and play. She has served as Chair of the Wheaton Redevelopment Advisory Committee and on

the Montgomery County Planning Department's Advisory Committee on Missing Middle Housing, and participated in discussions of the County's Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Traffic Safety Advisory Committee.

On behalf of KHCA, over an eight-year period, she helped lead the successful opposition to the proposed Costco gas station at the Wheaton Mall, working on everything from gathering and presenting testimony of numerous witnesses, to testifying herself, to cross-examining the debtor's experts (and destroying their testimony) during the longest Special Exception hearing in county history, to writing the briefs that defended the community's victory before the Maryland courts.

She has been an invaluable member of the Civic Federation's

executive committee, sharing her expertise on many important issues, especially community development, housing, and pedestrian safety.

SENTINEL AWARD

This year's Sentinel Award recognizes the **North Hills of Sligo Creek Civic Association**.

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

It is awarded this year to the North Hills of Sligo Creek Civic Association, a dynamic and inclusive community association located in Silver Spring. Under the leadership of its President, Eric Cathcart, North Hills of Sligo Creek works to build community by providing a forum

Award Profiles, cont.

for sharing information, connecting neighbors, fostering community spirit, addressing issues, and promoting civic activities in their diverse community. The Association is for the mutual benefit of all living in the neighborhood and dedicated to maintaining the neighborhood as a beneficial, enjoyable, safe, and sustainable place to live.

Among the many activities they support are a regular food truck program, neighborhood electronic recycling and paper shredding events, an “Adopt a Community” partnership with the Montgomery County 3rd District Police District, a community garden project, and a new “Dirt to Doorstep” Farmer’s Market delivery partnership with Seasonal Roots and the Charles Koiner Conservancy.

WAYNE GOLDSTEIN AWARD

This year’s Wayne Goldstein Award is presented to both Cheryl Gannon and Kimblyn Persaud.

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

Cheryl Gannon is a 25-year resident of Woodside in Silver Spring, a member of the Woodside Civic Association, and recently completed a three-year tenure as Zoning Chair. As Zoning Chair, she successfully led her community to endorse a progressive resolution on expanding housing opportunities in Woodside that includes significant affordable housing. She has been a county Democratic Precinct Chair and volunteered with numerous campaigns over the years.

Professionally, she is a Senior Fellow at the Women’s Institute for a

Secure Retirement and, since 2001, has helped design numerous outreach initiatives to provide financial skills to at-risk women. She is an expert on retirement and health issues, has worked in public policy and legislative affairs, and has extensive experience building coalitions of stakeholders and engaging the grassroots of both national organizations and small community organizations.

Kimblyn Persaud is the founder of the online community resource EPIC of MoCo (Empowering People in Community of MoCo) and is the past president of the Wheaton Regional Park Neighborhood Association. She has lived in Montgomery County for more than 25 years, with 16 of those years in Wheaton.

She lives by the motto, “The service we render others is the rent we pay for our room on earth.” This

MORE

Award Profiles, cont.

belief and focus on community led her to numerous volunteer and community leadership roles. She served the Wheaton community as co-founder of Save the Wheaton Library and as co-founder of the Wheaton Coalition. She was a member of The League of Women Voters, the Zoning Advisory Panel as a Community Representative, and the Junior League of Washington, D.C.

Kim was a member of the Women’s Democratic Club and Chair of the nonpartisan ballot initiative Nine Districts for MoCo. ■

MCCF Resolution: Proposed Property Tax Increase to Fund Montgomery County Public Schools

The following resolution was passed by members of the Montgomery County Civic Federation, Inc., at its May 8, 2023, meeting.

Whereas the Montgomery County Executive has recommended a \$6.8 billion spending plan for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2024, of which \$3.2 billion would go to Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) and that would require a 10% increase in the residential property tax, and

Whereas MCPS’ request represents \$272,245,984 more than the minimum funding required by the State of Maryland’s Maintenance of Effort Law, and would not be a “one time increase” but will require ongoing County funding at this level in

the future, and

Whereas delegates of the Montgomery County Civic Federation, Inc. (MCCF), have expressed concern about the transparency and accountability of MCPS funding priorities, especially as it concerns the serious underinvestment in the public schools in the eastern part of Montgomery County, and

Whereas delegates of the Montgomery County Civic Federation, Inc., are concerned about the process by which Montgomery County residents were informed about the need and timing of the proposed FY24 residential tax increase, and

Whereas delegates of the Montgomery County Civic Federation, Inc., are deeply concerned about the

MORE

Resolution, cont.

steep proposed and likely FY2024 and future tax increases—including not only residential property taxes but also increases to the recordation taxes and school and transportation impact taxes—to be levied on Montgomery County homeowners,

Therefore, be it resolved that the Montgomery County Civic Federation, Inc., calls on the Montgomery County Council to carefully examine the MCPS budget request generally and the need and proposed use of the additional funding requested, and

Be it further resolved that MCCF calls upon the Montgomery County Government to seriously address the capital budget needs of MCPS schools in the eastern areas of the County which are overcrowded, understaffed, and have deteriorated

facilities that are adversely impacting the learning and working environment in these underserved schools, and

Be it further resolved that the MCCF calls on the Montgomery County Council to work to significantly increase the transparency and accountability of the MCPS budget process and improve communication with the public about the County's educational funding priorities, and

Be it further resolved that MCCF believes that the County's proposed several tax increases are too high and will significantly burden Montgomery County homeowners, greatly increasing the cost of living and adversely affecting taxpayers during this period of high inflation and slow economic growth.

Approved this Eighth Day of May 2023

—Karen Cordy, Secretary ■

Update Your Contact Data

Member associations, do you have new officers taking over? Please remember to update your contact information with us, with your Regional Services Center, and with the M-NCPPC. You can do the last quickly and easily [online here](#).

Click on the blue tab marked "Homeowners and Civic Associations Tools." Fill in the necessary information, especially email and snail mail addresses. Without these, M-NCPPC cannot notify you of land use proposals in your neighborhood.

And remember to forward this newsletter to all your members. Together, we are building community, staying connected and staying informed. Information is like manure: it's only useful when it's spread around. ■

Letter to the Editor, MoCo 360

Why Montgomery County Needs the Office of the People's Counsel

The County Council's Planning, Housing, and Parks (PHP) Committee recently declined to fund the Office of the People's Counsel, which operated between 1999 and 2008 but has remained unfunded since then.

County Executive Elrich's FY23 and FY24 budgets proposed refunding the agency, which represents the public interest (but not parties) in land use proceedings and provides technical assistance to residents.

The council failed to fund the OPC last year and, recently, Council Vice President Andrew Friedman proposed Bill 18-32 to remove the current OPC statute from the County code and replace the OPC with a toothless technical assistance agency. The Montgomery County

Civic Federation, Inc., opposes Bill 18-23 and supports funding the OPC to support the needs and rights of residents.

Residents testifying at an April 18 council hearing on Bill 18-23 strongly agreed with us. Of the 11 who testified, 10 argued for rejecting the bill and permanently funding the OPC. The only supporter, a former lobbyist for the developer-funded Coalition for Smarter Growth, opposed the right of residents to obtain legal information from the County on zoning and their land use rights.

The OPC's role is to protect the public interest, to promote full and fair administrative proceedings, and to help produce sound land use decisions. It also helps level the playing field between developers and

ordinary residents, who don't stand a chance against wealthy financial interests with expert attorneys on retainer.

The committee's resistance to the OPC is troubling because of their recent unanimous passage (10/22) of Thrive Montgomery 2050, the county's controversial new 30-year general plan, rushed through by the previous County Council before the last election.

Thrive Montgomery creates the foundation for a myriad of new planning initiatives related to housing, transit, and the environment, which will affect most residents and require thoughtful and comprehensive analyses of prospective changes to communities throughout the county.

OPC Letter, cont.

Now, more than ever, residents would benefit from the technical assistance and advocacy provided by the Office of the People's Counsel.

Montgomery County residents will need informed legal advice to negotiate the complex new landscape Thrive is likely to create. Montgomery County Civic Federation, Inc., members were encouraged that the at-large members of the County Council—Albornoz, Glass, Jawando, and Sayles—all expressed support for the Office of the People's Council at our online candidate forum last spring.

Although OPC's two-person staff operated only between 1999 and 2008, it accomplished a great deal. From 2002 to 2007, the OPC participated in 267 land use proceedings and provided 18,281 in-

stances of technical assistance on 135 different subjects, as well as 47 mediation sessions at a cost ranging from \$104,000 to \$246,375 per year (the most recent budget request for FY 24). Martin Klauber, the first People's Counsel, prided himself on deescalating conflicts and solving problems amicably. "I really believe people can sit down and negotiate their differences."

In a 2008 report from the Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO), the OPC received considerable praise. Most government respondents supported continuing the OPC as a neutral party that represents the public interest. They praised the OPC's explanations of the land use decision process in advance of hearings, which better prepared residents to participate, to present relevant and legally significant testimony, and even to develop suggestions that may

influence the final design or conditions placed on land use approvals.

Land use attorneys complimented the People's Counsel's success in promoting a complete record, his moderating influence on hearing participants, and success in making proceedings go more smoothly. Some respondents urged expanding the OPC's role to represent individuals rather than the public interest as now defined by the law.

The OPC gives low-income and minority residents access to needed help. A recent racial equity/social justice (RESJ) analysis of the bill by the Office of Legislative Oversight (4/19/23) stated: "As advocates for the public's interest in land use decisions, Office of the People's Counsel can be uniquely positioned to advocate for the interests of BIPOC and low-income constituents not typi-

MORE

OPC Letter, cont.

cally represented in land use decisions." OLO urged fully funding the OPC and requiring RESJ reviews for all land use proposals. Because the law now requires RESJ analyses of all new laws and ZTAs, a funded OPC could help the county avoid challenges and even lawsuits over perceived civil rights violations.

The OLO report made several recommendations for the Council to pursue: (1) to revisit the purpose, duties, and structure of OPC as outlined in County law; and (2) postpone the personnel decision regarding reappointment of the OPC until the Council completes that review. The report did not suggest eliminating or defunding the OPC.

COUNCIL OPPOSITION

So why do some Councilmem-

bers want to make the OPC a toothless technical information office with no legal powers? Most arguments for this viewpoint are meritless.

First, the OPC's proposed FY 24 funding is negligible—\$246,375, or 0.0004% of the FY 23 budget. Yes, there is a budget crunch. But Councilmembers recently proposed to spend \$315,000 further media outreach, on top of the Council's \$25M media budget and up to \$300K on canvassing, when current agencies such as the Planning Board (with a \$25.4M budget last year) have millions to spend on outreach. So why is the currently unfunded OPC not a priority?

Second, although the OLO report repeatedly charged the Council with addressing their modest recommendations, the Council chose not to comply for 15 years. Yet because Elrich has recently requested OPC

funding, the Council is blaming him for not proposing language to modify the OPC statute as recommended in the OLO report. At a recent Planning, Housing, and Parks Committee meeting (4/3/23), committee members took turns chastising Elrich's land use expert, despite her willingness to work with them on the issue. The goal of this tactic is clear—to avoid responsibility for an unpopular effort to defund an agency that helps their constituents.

Third, The OLO report undercuts critics' claims that OPC would favor residents at the expense of other parties. The OPC's charge, as the statute makes clear, is to serve the public interest—not the County nor petitioners nor residents involved in the process. A report from 2007 cited by OLO showed the OPC "most often appeared in support of an applica-

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OPC Letter, cont.

tion or remained neutral” (p. 21). Therefore, fears of OPC working on behalf of residents who want to “stop projects” are baseless.

Finally, and most important, is the argument (recently voiced by developer lobbyists) that “government funds must not be used to advocate for residents.” By that logic, we would not have a robust Montgomery County Office of Consumer Protection, ethics commissions, inspectors general, or Federal agencies such as the FTC, the SEC, and the EEOC to protect residents’ rights. Do the bill’s sponsors (both of whom have accepted significant developer donations) really want to oppose the needs and rights of their constituents after last year’s bitter conflicts about Thrive and the forced resignation of the Planning Board?

Democrats (the party of all Councilmembers) seek to promote the greatest good for the greatest number. So why would the Council intensify the crisis of trust they have created by seeking to eliminate this successful agency?

As the Civic Federation has argued for two years, there is no excuse for not funding the Office of the People’s Counsel. They should address OLO’s recommendations and fund the OPC immediately.

—Attorney Alan Bowser, president of the Montgomery County Civic Federation and contributor to many civic organizations, lives in Silver Spring.

Second Vice President Elizabeth Joyce, a member of the Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women Board, also lives in Silver Spring. ■

Mark Your Calendar !!!

You are invited to the Civic Federation’s
SUMMER POTLUCK PICNIC
SATURDAY, JULY 1, 2023
6:00 P.M.
11115 FAWSETT ROAD
POTOMAC, MARYLAND

*Come and enjoy seeing your fellow civic activists face-to-face!
Please bring something tasty to share and the appropriate serving implement.
Park on the right side of the road and walk up the driveway.
Join us in the backyard.
If it rains, come right in the door and up the stairs. It’s an upside down house.*

RSVP to Peggy Dennis
hotyakker@gmail.com
301.983.9738

Mont. County Council Updates Recordation Tax Rates to Increase Resources for School Construction, Montgomery County Construction Projects and Affordable Housing

New Recordation Rates Begin on October 1, 2023

The Montgomery County Council enacted *Bill 17-23, Taxation—Recordation Tax Rates—Amendments*, to increase resources for Montgomery County Public Schools’ construction projects, Montgomery County capital projects, and the creation and maintenance of affordable housing through the Housing Initiative Fund. Councilmember Kristin Mink was the lead sponsor of the bill and Councilmember Will Jawando was a cosponsor. The Council’s vote was 7–4 to enact the legislation.

As a result of this legislation, resources to fund capital priorities are projected to increase by \$187.3 million over the six-year Capital Improvements Program (CIP), which

covers fiscal years 2023 through 2028. Montgomery County’s most recent CIP status report shows a funding gap of \$207.5 million, and the additional resources generated through updated recordation rates will help close this gap and fund essential construction projects including schools, affordable housing projects and transportation infrastructure improvements.

“I have heard from residents and parents across the county who share my concern that too many of our school and transportation projects have been delayed for too long. This legislation will help raise nearly \$200 million to fund various school projects, including the renovation of Magruder High

School, Damascus High School, and Highland View Elementary School, among others. The legislation also supports our rental assistance initiatives, recognizing the large number of rent-burdened residents that are in need of help,” said Council President Evan Glass. “At a time when inflationary pressures have increased the cost of construction, we must do what we can to prioritize our schools and infrastructure.”

“I’m extremely grateful to my colleagues for supporting the amended version of this bill and to the advocates in the PTA who worked closely with us to get this done,” said Councilmember Kristin Mink, who serves on the Council’s

Recordation Taxes, cont.

Education and Culture (EC) and Public Safety (PS) Committees. “This rate adjustment will help us keep our promises to communities badly in need of infrastructure improvements, from schools to transportation to public safety projects, while holding home buyers harmless at and below the median sale price in our County.”

“Today, the Council took steps to ensure that we are able to fund and keep on track needed school construction, fire and police stations, recreation centers, libraries, and transportation projects,” said Government Operations and Fiscal Policy (GO) Committee Chair Kate Stewart. “The benefits of this new plan will play a major role in attracting economic development and ensure our infrastructure needs are

met across the County.”

“As a cosponsor, I’m very appreciative that the Council has come together to make critical investments to ensure that every student has access to a safe and productive place to learn,” said EC Committee Chair Jawando. “This is a substantial step forward in the pursuit of equitable public school facilities and creates dedicated funding to address the pressing need for rental assistance among our most vulnerable residents.”

The recordation tax is a one-time cost that applies to the principal amount of debt secured by a mortgage or deed of trust when a house or building is purchased. There are three elements of the recordation tax—the base rate, the school increment rate, and the recordation tax premium rate.

Bill 17-23 progressively in-

creases the premium rate payment depending on the value of the recordation, while the base rate (\$2.08 for each \$500) and the school increment rate (\$2.37 per \$500) remain the same.

The recordation tax premium will increase from its current rate (\$2.30 per \$500) as follows: recordations between \$600,000 and \$750,000 will be charged \$5.75 per \$500; those more than \$750,000 to \$1 million will be charged \$6.33 per \$500; and those valued at more than \$1 million will be charged \$6.90 per \$500.

The recordation tax premium rates are projected to have no effect on the price of affordable housing and will raise \$52 million more for rental assistance over fiscal years 2024 through 2028. The new rates will be implemented on Oct. 1,

MORE

Recordation Taxes, cont.

2023.

The Maryland Department of Legislative Services reports that recordation tax rates across the state range from a high of \$7 per \$500 transaction in Frederick County to a low of \$2.50 per \$500 transaction in Baltimore and Howard counties. These costs are generally split between the homebuyer and the seller. Most Counties have tax rates set between \$3 and \$5 per \$500.

In addition to recordation taxes, many Counties have transfer taxes that are paid at settlement, ranging from half of one percent to 1.5 percent. The transfer tax rate in Montgomery County is one percent and remains unchanged. ■

Is Your Community Well-Served by Public Transit?

By Peggy Dennis, Transportation Committee Member

Some will remember the excellent program organized by then-President Jim Zepp a few years ago on the city of Houston, Texas, to redesign their public bus system. The objectives were to carefully redesign the routes to serve more communities more often and more reliably. When accomplished, ridership



increased. Many of us longed for the same approach to be carried out here in this metropolitan region.

A case in point: as a member of the BCC Citizens Advisory Board, I ran into other residents of the western side of the county who longed for WMATA’s T2 bus route to run from Rockville to Bethesda instead of Rockville to Friendship Heights. The Friendship Heights destination made sense when the Metro was under construction and commuters could use the T2 to access the new Metro station at Friendship Heights well before the Bethesda station was operable. For decades, that route has been of minimal use for those of us who want to get to Bethesda, which has far more economic and cultural activity, more

MORE

Public Transit, cont.

medical offices and restaurants, the Connie Morella Library, and the BCC Regional Services Center. No one wants to ride the T2 to Friendship Heights then have to switch and back track one Metro stop to get to Bethesda.

WMATA has begun this process and it is now well advanced. [This link gives a general overview of the process.](#) They are now in Phase 2 and will advance to Phase 3 this autumn. [This link shows customers the proposed routes and allows for general feedback right now.](#) There should be additional public outreach meetings in the fall. So, if you think your community could be better served by WMATA and our RideOn buses, don't delay. Check out what's in the works and be prepared to advocate for better bus service. ■

Montgomery County Council Votes to Approve \$6.7 Billion Fiscal Year 2024 Operating Budget and Amendments to the FY23-28 Capital Improvements Program Focused on Education, Housing and Economic Development

Council's budget makes historic investment in education, provides essential services for residents and funds all collective bargaining agreements, while reducing proposed property tax increase by more than half and achieving savings across government operations

County's effective property tax rate increase will be 4.7 percent, with a \$692 property tax credit for homeowners

ROCKVILLE, Md., May 25, 2023—Today the Montgomery County Council voted to approve the County's \$6.7 billion Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Operating Budget and the \$5.7 billion amended FY23-28 Capital

Improvements Program (CIP).

"This budget makes historic investments in education and in meeting the needs of our residents and our workforce," said Council President Evan Glass. "We achieved these goals by reducing the proposed property tax, finding efficiencies in government operations, and making strategic investments to keep Montgomery County moving forward."

"The Council's budget deliberations carefully balanced our strong and steadfast commitment to our students and teachers with our residents' many other priorities, while also upholding our responsibility to be fiscal stewards of taxpayer dol-

MORE

Budget Press Release, cont.

lars," said Glass. "We fully funded teacher contracts and met salary and benefit agreements for our hard-working first responders, police and healthcare workers. At the same time, we cut the County Executive's proposed 10 percent property tax hike by more than half. I'm grateful to my Council colleagues who brought new and unique perspectives to the table and shared a commitment to transparency and oversight every step of the way."

The Council's budget deliberations this year focused on balancing the needs of Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) with those of other County agencies and departments, as well as reducing the 10-cent property tax rate proposed by County Executive Marc Elrich. Following weeks of deliberations and

careful review of Council and committee recommendations, the Council lowered the proposed tax rate and was still able to provide historic funding for MCPS.

The Council voted 7-4 to reduce the proposed property tax rate to a 4.7-cent increase per \$100 of assessed value, which reduces the tax burden on property owners by approximately \$118 million, while also funding MCPS at the largest year-to-year increase since the Great Recession. The Council also took action to use County resources efficiently by reducing the recommended budget by more than \$49 million and identifying an additional \$7.7 million in resources. The Council funded a reconciliation list of high priority items to fund essential services for residents totaling \$215.4 million. These combined actions reduced the tax supported Fiscal Year 2024

Operating Budget by \$110.7 million compared to the Executive's recommended budget.

With a total budget of \$3.165 billion allocated for MCPS, which is approximately half of the County's tax-supported budget, Montgomery County continues its strong and steadfast commitment to education. The County ranks near the top of all Maryland jurisdictions for total per pupil funding for MCPS. The budget also fully funds Montgomery College at \$345 million.

During its committee and Council worksessions, the Council determined cost reductions related to vacancies in County departments that save \$7.1 million in taxpayer funds.

In addition, the Council approved Bill 17-23 on May 9, which amends the County's recordation tax

MORE

Budget Press Release, cont.

rates in a progressive way for recordations valued at \$600,000 or more. The additional resources generated through these updated rates will raise more than \$187 million, which will help close the CIP funding gap and will fund essential construction projects for school and transportation infrastructure improvements. The recordation tax premium rates are projected to have no effect on the price of affordable housing and will raise \$52 million more for rental assistance over five years.

This budget also increases Montgomery County's ongoing investments in education through youth programming, expands access to health and human services, generates solutions to develop affordable housing opportunities, increases rental assistance and supports in-

novative ways to boost economic development in the County.

Moreover, the Council ensured that resources were maintained to honor the County's long-term commitment to its retired employees and to fully fund the County's reserves. Funding for these fiscal obligations helps the County retain its triple-A bond rating.

Council President Evan Glass, Vice President Andrew Friedson and Councilmembers Gabe Albornoz, Marilyn Balcombe, Natali Fani-González, Will Jawando, Sidney Katz, Dawn Luedtke, Kristin Mink, Laurie-Anne Sayles and Kate Stewart unanimously voted for the capital budget amendments. Council President Glass, Vice President Friedson and Councilmembers Albornoz, Balcombe, Fani-González, Jawando, Katz, Luedtke, Sayles and Stewart voted to approve the operating bud-

get, including the budget resolutions for County government operations and MCPS. Council President Glass' full budget comments can be viewed here.

Both the operating and capital budgets begin on July 1.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Almost half of the County's total budget funds MCPS with a budget of more than \$3 billion, which is an increase of 8.4 percent from the FY23 Operating Budget. This funds 97.5 percent of the Board of Education's request in tax support funding and 68 percent of the requested increase in County funding; 63 percent of the total FY24 MCPS budget is funded by County funds. Bolstered by the 4.7 cent property tax increase dedicated to the schools, an additional

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Budget Press Release, cont.

\$156.4 million in County revenue and \$215.7 million in total tax-supported revenue was added for MCPS in FY24. This funding is more than enough to fully fund the negotiated agreements for teachers, support staff and administrators as well as other key priorities.

The 8.5 percent increase in County funding for MCPS in FY24 brings the increased investment in MCPS to a nearly 14 percent increase in County funding alone over the last two budget years.

In addition, the updated recordation tax rates recently approved by the Council largely benefit the MCPS capital budget and allow much needed facility renovations, HVAC replacements and other school infrastructure and capacity projects to move forward, even under historic

inflationary and supply chain cost challenges.

The County also provides significant amounts of funding for critical MCPS support services including school health nurses, technology modernization, Linkages to Learning programs and school-based health and wellness centers.

MONTGOMERY COLLEGE

The Council fully funded Montgomery College's operating budget at \$345.2 million. The College requested the Maintenance of Effort level of \$148.4 million, which is the minimum level required by the County, and requested to supplement these funds with \$20 million in fund balance for its FY24 operating budget. The College's budget assumed the first tuition increase since FY20, at a rate per semester hour increase of \$2 for County residents, \$4 for state

residents and \$6 for non-residents.

PUBLIC SAFETY

The Council funded a budget of more than \$313 million for the Montgomery County Police Department. This is a 5.3 percent increase compared to last year's budget. The approved budget includes funding for four crossing guard positions, three firearm instructors and a wellness officer plus several technology initiatives to facilitate improved public safety response.

In the Sheriff's Office, the total budget is \$29 million, which is an increase of over \$2 million or eight percent from last year's budget.

The budget for the Department of Correction and Rehabilitation is nearly \$77 million. This is an increase of more than \$3.5 million, or five percent, over the approved FY23

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Budget Press Release, cont.

budget.

The Fire and Rescue Services operating budget is \$266 million. This is a \$14 million increase from last year. The approved budget includes 11 new positions that will enhance emergency medical services delivery. The Council included more than \$4 million in the budget for the Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security, including an additional \$100,000 for nonprofit security grants for organizations and facilities at high-risk of hate crimes.

NEGOTIATED AGREEMENTS

The Council funded salary and benefit increases for employees represented by the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP), the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF), the Municipal and County Government

Employees' Organization (MCGEO) and non-represented County government employees. In FY24 these increases total more than \$61 million.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Council approved \$3.2 million for the County's incubators and economic partnerships. A new non-departmental account was created this year to support small business. The funding includes more than \$1.2 million to support Black and Latino-owned businesses in Montgomery County.

It also approved \$3.5 million for the County's Economic Development Fund, which is used to assist private employers who are located, plan to locate, or substantially expand operations in the County.

It approved nearly \$11.1 million in the budget for the Bethesda, Silver

Spring and Wheaton Urban Districts. This year, the Council also approved an amendment to the FY24 budget to appropriate funds collected by the newly formed Friendship Heights Urban District.

The Council approved a nearly \$1.9 million appropriation for the KID Museum to fund organizational development and growth, expand new initiatives, and deepen community outreach and engagement. The KID Museum provides hands-on learning that develops STEAM education for program participants through creativity and critical thinking skills. It expects to serve more than 40,000 residents in FY24, with approximately half of yearly program participants being from under-resourced communities.

The Council continued its support of the Montgomery County

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Budget Press Release, cont.

Economic Development Corporation (MCEDC) with an almost \$6 million appropriation in FY24. MCEDC advances the County's economic development goals by connecting businesses located in, locating to, or expanding in the County with critical resources, such as local real estate intelligence, funding, business incentives and talent.

The Council supported Work-Source Montgomery, which is the County's lead workforce development organization, with an over \$2 million appropriation. This is an increase of almost three percent compared to the previous year.

It also approved more than \$6 million to the Arts and Humanities Council, which provides the infrastructure to maintain and support

500 cultural organizations and 2,000 artists and scholars in the County.

The Council approved a \$71 million operating budget for Alcohol Beverage Services, which provides licensing, wholesale and retail sales of beverage alcohol products, enforcement and education and training programs.

TRANSPORTATION

The Council funded the Department of Transportation's (DOT) General, Mass Transit, and Parking Lot District Fund budgets at more than \$270 million in total. Nearly \$300,000 in funding is included to support the Transportation Service Improvement Fund and funds were also added for bridge inspections and the maintenance of new subdivision roads.

OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

The Council funded the Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) at nearly \$1.4 million, which is an increase of \$122,000 or almost 10 percent from the FY23 approved budget. Personnel costs comprise over three quarters of the budget and fund 8.5 full-time equivalent positions for the ORESJ in FY23.

OFFICE OF FOOD SYSTEM RESILIENCE

The Council provided \$1.1 million in funds to the Office of Food Systems Resilience (OFSR), which develops strategies for improving and maintaining the efficiency, equity, sustainability and resilience of the countywide food systems. FY24 OFSR operating funds will support

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Budget Press Release, cont.

food security priorities including the Market Money Grants program, gardening grants, Farm to Food Bank program and the Strategic Plan to End Childhood Hunger.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

The Council funded more than \$480 million for the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), which is an increase of almost 11 percent compared to last year's budget. In addition, it included \$120 million for Children, Youth and Family Services, \$53 million in Behavioral and Health Crisis Services, \$98 million for Public Health Services, \$59 million for Services to End and Prevent Homelessness and more than \$66 million for Aging and Disability Services.

The approved budget includes the following items: \$595,069 to operate a new school-based health center at South Lake Elementary School; \$110,549 to restore funding to substance abuse rehabilitation providers; \$300,000 to restore funding for educational support services through the George B. Thomas Sr. Learning Academy; and \$673,699 to continue Youth Harm Reduction Initiative services.

Food insecurity continues to be a significant need in the County; therefore, the budget includes \$6.4 million in one-time funding to continue the County's response to this need.

The Council recognized the extraordinary work of the County's nonprofit organizations and approved additional funding so that eligible contracts can be increased

by three percent. The Council added more than \$850,000 to the budget to provide supplemental funding to organizations that serve and care for residents with developmental disabilities and increased funding for the supplement to adult medical day care providers.

The Council also supported funding the County's Minority Health Initiatives and programs and approved more than \$2.5 million in funds to continue their essential and culturally competent work in communities across the County by providing guidance, resources and health care to some of the County's most vulnerable residents.

It also funded the Guaranteed Income Pilot NDA by more than \$3 million, which is a 24 percent increase from the FY23 Approved Budget.

Budget Press Release, cont.

WORKING FAMILIES INCOME SUPPLEMENT

The Working Families Income Supplement program was funded at \$27.5 million, which provides funds to supplement Maryland's refundable Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and is intended to benefit working families with low incomes in the County. This is a decrease of \$25 million due to the end of federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding. The Council approved a supplemental appropriation of more than \$4 million due to the higher than anticipated number of recipients in the prior year.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The Council continued its ongoing commitment to generating and preserving affordable housing. The

Council allocated more than \$77 million in funds for the Department of Housing and Community Affairs, which aims to preserve and increase the supply of affordable housing, maintain existing housing in a safe and sanitary condition, preserve the safety and quality of residential and commercial areas, ensure fair and equitable relations between landlords and tenants and support the success of common ownership communities.

In addition, the Council supported the production and preservation of affordable housing by allocating \$57 million to the Housing Initiative Fund (HIF). The Council also provided \$8 million to the Housing Opportunities Commission.

RECREATION

The Council funded total expenditures of more than \$60 million for

the Department of Recreation. This is a nine percent increase compared to last year's budget. It includes more than \$3 million for senior adult programs and more than \$14 million for youth development programming. The budget includes the expansion of two youth development programs: TeenWorks, which provides job readiness training and skill building workshops; and Excel Beyond the Bell (EBB) Elementary out of school time programming at two new sites in Harriet R. Tubman and Watkins Mill Elementary Schools.

ENVIRONMENT

The Council approved a \$9 million operating budget for the Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) General Fund, which is a 20 percent increase from last year's approved budget to expand the Coun-

Budget Press Release, cont.

ty's Tree Montgomery program and climate-change related efforts.

In addition, the Council approved \$18.6 million to fund the Montgomery County Green Bank, which leverages public and private investments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the County. The Council approved \$33.9 million for the Water Quality Protection Fund, which is an increase of 9.4 percent, while lowering the Executive's proposed increase in the Water Quality Protection Charge by \$2. The Council also approved more than \$142 million for DEP's Recycling and Resource Management Division.

LIBRARIES

The Council funded the total recommended FY24 Operating Budget

for the Department of Public Libraries at nearly \$50 million, which is an increase of nearly \$4 million or eight percent from the FY23 Approved Budget of \$45 million. The Council included funding to recruit and hire frontline library positions to provide increased customer service and presence to residents. Additionally, the Council fully funded refurbishment costs for Damascus Library and Senior Center and approved \$1 million in state aid for both Damascus and Long Branch library branches for building and site improvements.

PARK AND PLANNING

The Council provided \$171 million in tax-supported funding for the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC), which is a nearly six percent increase from last year's approved budget.

An additional \$300,000 was provided for park activation, natural resources management and internships. Funding was also included for the Germantown Employment Corridor Check-In and the Randolph Road Corridor Study.

WASHINGTON SUBURBAN SANITARY COMMISSION

The Montgomery and Prince George's County Councils held their bi-county meeting and reached a budget agreement for the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC). The Councils fully funded WSSC's Operating Budget and CIP, and approved a FY24 Operating Budget of \$931 million, which is a \$66 million or seven percent increase from the FY23 Approved Operating Budget.

Budget Press Release, cont.

AMENDED FY23-28 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAM

The County's FY23-28 Capital Improvements Program (CIP) as amended is \$5.7 billion (without WSSC Water Projects).

In April, the Council received a status update on the Amended FY23-28 CIP affordability. The update identified a total six-year gap of \$207.5 million because of the Council's goals of funding the requests of the Board of Education, Montgomery College and M-NCPPC; not delaying essential capital projects; and staying within the Spending Affordability Guidelines, instead of increasing the guidelines by \$40 million as proposed by the Executive.

On May 9, the Council enacted Bill 17-23, Taxation—Recordation Tax Rates—Amendments, which

progressively increased the rates for the recordation tax. This increase is estimated to generate \$187.3 million in revenue during fiscal years 2024-2028. This action significantly decreased the affordability gap in the CIP expenditures relative to resources.

The CIP approved by the Council maintains the approved Spending Affordability Guidelines for General Obligation Bonds of \$1.68 billion across the six-year period. Expenditures are reduced and adjusted each year through a combination of production delays and technical adjustments, as well as a limited number of cuts and deferrals in Montgomery County government and agency projects.

The approved CIP includes the necessary funding to keep all individual MCPS projects on the approved schedules and within the

scope requested by the Board of Education. Some of the projects include: maintaining the \$48 million Board of Education request to fund the Burtonsville Elementary School replacement project; the \$47 million addition to the JoAnn Leleck Elementary School at Broad Acres; the nearly \$195 million in funding for a new high school in the Gaithersburg area to be named Crown High School, which will reduce overcrowding at surrounding high schools; more than \$200 million to expand Northwood High School in Silver Spring; and more than \$195 million for the Charles W. Woodward High School reopening project.

The Council also took action to address school-based health programs by adding funding to plan and construct additional High School Wellness Centers, after a

Budget Press Release, cont.

comprehensive analysis of need has been completed for candidate high schools and shifts \$1 million in general obligation bond funding to state aid programs. The CIP budget also adds \$850,000 in general obligation bonds to fund the planning, design, supervision and construction of a Linkages to Learning Center at Greencastle Elementary School.

Council deliberations on all of these budget items and more can be found on the Council's website.

[For more information, contact: Sonya Healy, 240.777.7926, Sonya.Healy@montgomerycountymd.gov, or Lucia Jimenez, 240.777.7832, Lucia.Jimenez@montgomerycountymd.gov.]

[Read the full press release here.](#)

■

Minutes of May 8, 2023, MCCF General Meeting #943

By Karen Cordry, Recording Secretary

[Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the General Meeting was held via Zoom as a virtual meeting. A total of 40 persons attended on the Zoom platform.]

Call to Order: Alan Bowser, President, called the meeting to order at 7:38 p.m. Meeting was recorded.

Approval of Meeting Agenda: Alan moved to amend agenda to add nominations for offices and awards. Moved, seconded, and approved by voice vote as amended.

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

Treasurer's Report: Jerry Garson reported \$1,127 received for the first ten months. \$20 received this month. Expenses of \$1,834 for a net balance of -\$707. Bank balance of \$7,907.

NOMINATIONS FOR OFFICERS AND AWARDS

Peggy Dennis submitted a slate of names based on her role as head of the Nominations Committee (and based on prior notices in the newsletter). The proposed slate was Alan Bowser for President, Peggy Dennis for 1st VP, Liz Joyce for 2nd VP, Jerry Garson for Treasurer, and Karen Cordry for Recording Secretary. It was moved and seconded to consider the report.

A call was made for any alterna-

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tive nominations from the floor. No additional nominations were made. The vote was called and was unanimous in favor of the slate.

Peggy Dennis also reported on the proposed nominees for the MCCF Awards that would be handed out at the Annual Awards Banquet in June. The first award was the Star Cup (which dates back to the 1920s). This was proposed to go to Karen Cordry. The second was the Sentinel Award, which was proposed to go to the North Hills of Sligo Creek Association (and its President, Eric Cathcart). The third was the Wayne Goldstein Award and this year we had two outstanding nominees that the Executive Committee believed were both deserving of the award—Cheryl Gannon of Woodside and Kim Persaud of

Wheaton.

The Banquet will be held at the American Legion Post on our normal meeting date (June 12) but at 7:00 p.m. There will be a number of speakers, including County Executive Marc Elrich. Alan Bowser presented the nominations; there was a motion to accept that was moved and seconded and the vote in favor was unanimous.

MAY PROGRAM

Our speakers were Pamela Rowe from the MoCo Dept. of Environmental Protection Site Design and Stormwater Mgmt. office and Ann English from the County's Rain-Scapes Program. The session was organized by Peggy Dennis. She noted that Pamela Rowe is an Environmental Planner at M-NCPPC and DEP and has worked on plans for several watersheds. Ann English, as

manager of Rainscapes, they concentrated on providing technical guidance and other services to homeowners looking to work on stormwater management and interested in the scope of available rebates. There is a [write-up about both speakers in the May newsletter](#) for those wanting more background.

Pam Rowe began by describing DEP's structure, which has four main offices: (1) Watershed Mgmt. Operations—capital projects and the MS4 program; as well as Stormwater, Rainscapes, and Tree Montgomery programs, (2) Energy, Climate, and Compliance programs, (3) Recycling and Reuse programs, and (4) Intergovernmental Affairs.

MoCo is mostly in the Potomac watershed, with a little draining to the Patuxent river. It's a very diverse county both in terms of its

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population (with communications programs needing to cope with the 184 languages used in the County) as well as the nature of its soils and drainage.

These programs largely began with the Federal Clean Water Act in the 1970, which initially dealt primarily with point sources but later expanded to all sorts of runoff. There is a national permit program, but it is administered by the states to cover many types of discharges.

The MS4 permit programs deals with storm sewer system; the MoCO DEP administers it here. The MS4 program works to restore streams and deal with runoff, with priority for the most impaired streams and the ones with greatest potential. Before 1980, sites did not need to design in storm water controls when

they were developed so they had to be retrofitted. Now, we use Environmental Site Design principles to build in these controls from the start. The program also includes training and inspectors to ensure facilities are maintained.

Stormwater is just rain runoff but we used to have forested ecosystems that could absorb and control it. Now, as we develop, we pave over surfaces and try to achieve the same controls by putting in storm drains and channelizing water into very limited points. As of now, there are multiple times more storm piping than streams still in place. This all changes the nature of stream bed which have to cope with faster and larger flows resulting in more erosion of banks and the beds. Stormwater practices are meant to try to cut down on what comes off our yards but everything that isn't

adequately retrofitted contributes to the problem. As climate change produces more intense storms and more water flows, creating more defined flowpaths that channel the water more narrowly, creating a vicious circle.

Stormwater is meant to manage smaller storms. They don't try to deal with the 100-year storm (predicted to increase by 7% by 2040) but rather to look as the smaller, frequent ones. Right now, MDE is predicting about an 11% increase in the size of regular storms by 2070. They are also working on a **Flood Management Plan**. It covers a variety of topics including flood insurance, preparations, etc. Stormwater and flooding use different approached but work together.

Countywide, there are currently about 17,000 Stormwater manage-

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ment facilities (ponds, holding cells, sand filters, dry ponds, underground facilities), referred to as BMP (best mgmt. practices) facilities and many other programs to monitor dams, etc. Routine inspection and maintenance is done, which saves money, protects infrastructure, protects property and public safety, and keeps pollutants out.

The BMP Facilities reduce flooding and conversely help recharge groundwater in droughts. They also include programs for green streets, green roofs, permeable parking, and sidewalks. The green areas near streets help filter out what flows off. The BMPs are inspected at least every 3 years and have to be cleaned out periodically to keep them working. DEP maintains publicly owned BMPS (and HOAs may be able to

transfer their BMP structures to the county). DEP also checks on compliance by private BMPs.

The Water Quality Protection Charge—part of property tax bills—is used to fund these programs. These are calculated based on impervious cover. All property owners pay it; there are credits that can be applied. There will be HOA training session this summer. She can be reached at pamela.rowe@montgomerycountymd.gov.

Ann English said this program is part of the DEP and can be accessed at rainscapes.org. It works with homeowners to let them know what they can do with their own property to help reduce storm water while improving their property. It can include removing or converting pavement, a green roof, and indeed anything from a rain barrel up to a major pond.

The general value of conservation landscaping and gardens is to slow the flow of water so it can infiltrate. The goal is to use 75% plus native plants which can help support pollinators and limit carbon. Various types of planting/landscape approaches can be used; and they tend to be fairly densely planted. Using diverse plant heights can help slow water down before it hits the ground. In addition to plantings, revised hardscapes that increase permeability can be used and projects can extend to several households.

There is a rebate program for the costs of installing these projects. "We are shooting to get funding for 50% rebates but we're not there yet. We did see a lot of new projects after they were increased in 2018." As of 2022, the program has dispensed about \$3 million in rebates. There

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have been about 42,000 raingarden projects to date and a lot more in process. They will be taking new applications from July 15-Oct. 15. They have 3 FT planners now plus her and there's only just so many projects they can handle so they limit the applications so they can keep up. She also noted they have a list of deer-resistant plants to help keep the plantings intact.

View their [RainScapes Overview here](#). View their [RainScapes Resources slides here](#).

QUESTIONS

The session was opened to questions from the audience.

A. Why is the water quality charge capped when property gets to 6200 square feet, which seems regressive. Ms. Rowe referred the

question to the Council or to Vicky Wan at their office who deals with that process.

B. Carole Barth asked about how the County was doing with designing new infrastructure to cope with the larger rainfalls expected. Ms. Rowe stated their flooding study was just getting started. Their new stormwater permit includes a project inventory to look at future efforts and they are getting ready to hire a planner for nature-based solutions to climate solution. They can take comments on those issues.

C. Quent wondered if our efforts are enough. Even with the work being done, stream quality keeps going down, like in the Northwest Branch. And, with the emphasis on building more housing to accommodate folks, it doesn't appear there is adequate coordination with DEP to ensure that overdevelopment isn't outpac-

ing them.

Ms. English conceded that permitting services and planning are outside of DEP so they don't necessarily come out at the same place. In response to a question from Lloyd, she conceded that those offices had not talked to them about proposals to allow up to 4-6 unit density on R-60 lots and whether those structure would preclude drainage, tree cover, etc. More inter-agency coordination is needed.

D. Eric Cathcart had questions about where to complain if there appeared to be violations of the Ms4 permit, such as dumping items in storm drains. Ms. Rowe noted they do have an inspection/compliance section under Steve Martin. People can call 311 and it will be routed there but that doesn't work on the weekend. She will find out from Mr.

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Martin how to deal with problems that are seen on the weekend.

E. Ira Ungar asked about the connection between increased storm water and climate change and Ms. English noted that their mgmt. practices are based on past storms, etc., but the effects are intensifying so they do need to amp up their efforts.

F. Joan McDermott asked about the scenario of small houses being torn down and replaced with bigger houses, and basements that may hit groundwater and result in sump pumps being used to pull out and discard water. Ms. English stated that this was an issue that needed to go to Permitting Services and Mark Everidge was the person to talk to in DPS. Even if the person had a permit, the County probably did need to do more to be preventative and

change the Building Code to take these hydrology issues into account.

G. Sheldon Fishman asked a question about artificial turf field noting the problems with particle runoff and PFAs from them affecting water quality of water versus quantity. Specifically, does the MS4 permit control/limit those run-offs. The permit does not address that and pressure to date hasn't got the County or State yet to move on these issues. Ms. English agreed this was an issue that for now had to depend on political action.

H. Leanne Tobias noted that D.C. has a program whereby business owners have to either do conservation or pay into an offset fund. Ms. Rowe noted that a lot of the points being raised in the discussion are really matters that the Council/State need to address to make the needed policy changes and suggested

maybe a paper from the Civic Fed would help.

I. Liz Joyce again pointed out that the "smart growth" push for denser development wasn't necessarily taking account of the environmental concerns. Storm water is part of clean water control, but this new paradigm can be a problem if it doesn't ensure retention of adequate open space and water management to balance the dense development proposed.

They agreed they will get back to us with some more information in response to a number of the questions that were raised.

RESOLUTION ON PROPERTY TAX INCREASE

MCPS has been asking for an extra \$300 million for this budget year. The County Executive has

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proposed a 10% increase in property taxes to cover that. A draft resolution (contained in the newsletter) was read into the record. It was moved and seconded to open discussion of the resolution.

There was a substantial discussion of the resolution, its “whereases,” and its conclusions. A number of persons were concerned that, while there might be problems that needed more funds to address, it also appeared that there was a significant lack of transparency and accountability with respect to these funds (which are some 50% of the overall County budget) compared to that applied to the rest of the budget.

It was also noted that this 10% increase would be applied on top of the reassessment of property values (which are being pushed up

from inflation) so the actual difference would be even more than 10%. It was also noted that, under the Maintenance of Efforts provisions in current law, this increase would remain in place going forward so it could not be described as a “one-time” increase to deal with a specific, limited problem.

Concerns were expressed about the lack of clarity as to how the problem became as large as is currently being presented, as well as the fact that this increase would be on top of other increases such as changes to the recording tax. There were a number of other comments about restructuring the resolution by tightening up and removing some of the whereas language, and making clear that we believe that any increases in funding needed to be tied in with better transparency and accountability measures. With those

suggestions (which would be incorporated into a subsequent redraft of the proposal, [see page 6](#)), the group voted on and approved the proposal.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Office of the People’s Counsel. The County Executive’s budget proposed restoring funding to the OPC and MCCF sent a letter supported the funding and reinstating the office which has not been funded or operational since 2010. At that earlier time, the Office of Legislative Oversight had suggested some changes/further analysis should be made of the structure but the County Council never did anything to make such changes although County Executive Marc Elrich had made some suggestions (while on the Council). The submitted proposal did not make changes to the prior structure;

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instead, Council Member Friedson suggested that only a more limited resource officer position would be created that could provide information but not take or push for specific position.

There was a hearing on his bill with substantial testimony opposing that limited structure. There was also a subsequent hearing on the County Executive’s proposal before the Planning, Housing, and Parks Committee. Meredith Wellington, from the CE office, appeared to testify and the Committee members pushed very hard as to why the CE bill did not address and resolve all of the OLO issues. At this point, it’s unclear whether either proposal will pass or be funded.

Planning Board Chair. It was noted that, at this point, it appears

that Hans Riemer and Artie Harris are the two most likely finalists. In one view, we should support Harris. Some were basically hearing that Fosselman has no real support. There was discussion about the two and the sentiment generally was inclined towards supporting Harris

for the position as the most neutral apolitical party with the experience in the area and without ties to any factions. No formal vote was taken.

ADJOURNMENT

Video recording ended and meeting adjourned at 10:05 p.m. ■

Minutes of the May 18 Executive Committee Meeting

By Karen Cordry, Recording Secretary

Attendance: Alan Bowser, Karen Cordry, Liz Joyce, Jerry Garson, Peggy Dennis, Jacquie Bokow.

1. Meeting began at 7:05 p.m.

2. **Discussion of Awards Meeting, June 12.** CE Marc Elrich and Council President Evan Glass will be there to make presentations. Glass

will make the Sentinel Award to Eric Cathcart of the North Hills of Sligo Creek Association and Elrich will do the Wayne Goldstein Awards. Either or both may be asked to present the Star Cup. Alan will also ask Jamie Raskin if he can attend.

We will also ask the recipients of the awards during the pandemic (when they could not be recognized in person) to attend and we will give them a shout out.

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It will be at the Silver Spring American Legion Hall at 7:00. Alan is a member there; he will find out what the final rental cost will be. There will be a cash bar and Alan and Liz will pick up some food trays, plates, napkins, etc., from Costco as well as soft drinks. Since this is the first time back in person, we won't charge in order to push for a strong attendance. We will ask for RSVP and Jacquie has badges she can print out and bring.

In addition to our normal mailing list for meetings, we will also invite the Council, our state delegation, as well as some other groups and ask them to send to their members (including MoCo360, Indivisible, CAP Coalition, Safe Silver Spring, Taxpayers' League, etc.). We will also ask New Planning Board

Chair Artie Harris (and the other members). rsvp@montgomerycivic.org is the link that will go to Jacquie so she can do badges. She'll bring add'l badge stock and holders.

We'll take information from the newsletter bios to put together a program. The front page will have the MCCF logo, the bios inside, and a blurb about the Civic Fed and how to join on the back. Alan will look for our Civic Fed banner and the sound system. The Ex Com will have a Zoom meeting on June 5 to be sure we are on track for the program.

3. Newsletter Articles. These will cover the final results on the Council legislative session, including the decision to pass a 4.5% property tax hike and the recordation tax hike and the resulting budget structure. It will also cover the appointment of the new Planning Board chair and

member.

There will also be an article about the dueling initiative of the Office of the People's Council (OPC), which received a lot of support at the public hearing, versus Member Friedson's proposal for a lower-keyed office. It was noted that the Civic Fed had signed onto letter supporting the OPC along with about 50 people and 11 organizations.

It was also noted that the Attorney General had issued a ruling stating that the Council's decision to seat 3 new Planning Board members before the County Executive had a change to review the appointments and decide whether to approve or veto them, violated the law. MoCo 306 did article on that issue today, which noted the Council was told they shouldn't proceed that way but did it anyway. It is unclear what ef-

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fect the ruling will have if someone challenges a decision of the Board as currently constituted including whether there may need to be another appointment round.

Other articles will report on the election of officers and the designation of awardees.

4. It was noted that Delegate Marc Korman was appointed as Chair of the Transportation and Environment Committee; if he's at the Award Ceremony we can announce and recognize him as a good friend to the Civic Federation. We'll invite him for a meeting in the fall.

5. Liz and Alan will be looking at a software demo on membership software. We need to get the list from the Planning Board of contact

information on civic and homeowner associations and make a concentrated push to reach out for additional members. Liz will look at some options and get back to us on pricing so we can move forward on this.

6. Peggy Dennis offered to host a potluck supper for member organizations and prospective members to get together and find out about what we're doing. If the weather cooperates, we can do it outside, but she can host a group of up to 50 or 60 folks inside.

7. The meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m. ■

Montgomery County Civic Federation
www.montgomerycivic.org
info@montgomerycivic.org
Twitter Feed @mccivicfed

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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 AT montgomerycivic.org.

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