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MCCF Nominations | Vote for nominees to an Acting Land Use and Planning Committee and a new Special Housing Committee | [P. 8](#)

County Executive Releases CIP Budget for FY 2025–2030 | The six-year investment is \$5.8B | [P. 9](#)

TO PRINT, USE [PRINT VERSION](#)

of note

Next MCCF Meeting #950

February 12, 2024, 7:30 p.m. *online via Zoom.* Topic: “Housing Issues.”

! [Join the Zoom Meeting Here](#)

[See further instructions on page 2. No password is required.]

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JANUARY

Membership Application

[JOIN ONLINE](#) | [MAIL-IN FORM](#)

Federation Meeting #950

Monday, February 12, 2024

7:30 p.m.

Online Zoom Meeting

AGENDA

1. Call to Order/Introductions
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Approval of Minutes: January General Meeting **P.12**
4. Treasurer's Report
5. Announcements
6. February Program: Housing Issues in Montgomery County **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.

The February 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, February 12, 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 **853 5922 9929**. 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 15

Former Planning Director Gwen Wright Discusses Housing Issues at February Meeting

Former Montgomery County Planning Director Gwen Wright will be the featured speaker at the February 12th General Meeting of the Civic Federation.

Wright was one of the longest-tenured Montgomery County Planning Directors in the Commission's history and was responsible for or contributed to many of the Commission's most notable accomplishments including, but not limited to: Legacy Open Space Program; Montgomery County Heritage Tourism Program; Montgomery County's Historic Preservation Program; Acquisition of key historic properties such as the Josiah Henson property, Warner Circle, and Darby House and Store; Completion and Implementation of the 2017 Bethesda Downtown



Plan; Completion and Adoption of Thrive Montgomery 2050; Creation of the Design Excellence Program; and Initiation of the Commission's Placemaking Program.

In recognition of Ms. Wright's contributions, the Planning Board recently announced that the top Montgomery County Award for Design Excellence will be renamed the Gwen Marcus Wright Award for Design Excellence. Ms. Wright emphasized design during her tenure and created the Design Excellence Program, which includes an award for a project in the county that reflects exceptional architecture, landscape architecture, and urbanism that makes a difference in people's lives and represents the county's highest quality of design to the region, state, and nation.

Appointed in July 2013, Wright oversaw a wide range of projects that aimed to improve the quality of life in Montgomery County by conserv-

February Program, cont.

ing and enhancing the natural and built environment. Ms. Wright also worked for the Montgomery County Planning Department from 1987 to 2008. During this period, she served as the Chief of Countywide Planning, including supervising the Environmental Planning, Transportation Planning, and Historic Preservation Sections, as well as serving as Acting Planning Director.

Prior to her appointment as the Montgomery County Planning Director in 2013, Ms. Wright was Chief of the Development Division for the City of Alexandria Department of Planning and Zoning for five years. In this position, she reviewed development proposals throughout the City of Alexandria and shepherded a wide variety of projects—from urban infill to major brownfields reclama-

tion—through the regulatory process and implementation.

Ms. Wright began her career in Texas as the Director of Architectural Design and Redevelopment for the Galveston Historical Foundation

in Galveston, Texas. She has degrees in Architecture and Architectural History from Yale University and has spoken at numerous national and regional conferences on a wide variety of planning issues. ■

Housing Issues in Montgomery County 2024

Housing issues are increasingly important in Montgomery County, Maryland, because the county is facing a serious housing shortage and an attainability crisis. The county needs to provide more diverse and affordable housing options for its current and future residents, who have different needs and preferences than the previous generations.

According to the Montgomery County Planning Department, the county needs 60,000 new housing units by 2040 to accommodate the 200,000 new residents expected

over the next 25 years.⁶ However, the county is mostly built out, with very little land available for new development, and the pace of housing production is not keeping up with the demand.⁶ Moreover, the county's housing stock is dominated by single-family homes, which are typically designed for families with children, while a quarter of households are made up of single people.⁶ Many single-family homes are also occupied by seniors who are aging in place, leaving fewer options for

Housing Issues, cont.

younger and smaller households.⁷

The lack of housing supply and diversity has resulted in an attainability crisis, which means that, even when residents can afford to rent or buy a home, there may not be an appropriately sized or priced unit available in their area.⁶ This affects the middle-income households, who are often priced out of the market by the high cost of housing but do not qualify for income-restricted or subsidized housing programs.⁷ These households include teachers, nurses, firefighters, and other essential workers who contribute to the county's economy and quality of life.⁷

To address the housing issues, the county is exploring various strategies to increase the supply and diversity of housing, especially the

“Missing Middle” housing, which refers to a range of building types that are compatible in scale, form and construction with single-family homes, but include multiple housing units.⁷ Examples of Missing Middle housing are duplexes, triplexes, quadruplexes, townhouses, cottages, and small apartment buildings.⁷ These housing types can provide more choices and affordability for residents who want to live in walkable, transit-accessible neighborhoods, and can also serve as a transition from low-density to high-density areas.⁷

The county is also considering zoning reforms that would allow greater opportunities for Missing Middle housing in certain areas, such as near transit stations, commercial corridors, and public facilities.⁶ These reforms would not eliminate single-family neighborhoods,

but may result in some single-family homes being replaced by more diverse and affordable housing types, if the property owners or developers choose to do so.⁶ The goal of these reforms is to ensure that people who want to live in Montgomery County can find a home that works for them, whether they want to rent or own.⁶

Housing issues are important in Montgomery County, Maryland, because they affect the well-being, diversity, and sustainability of the county and its residents. By providing more housing options and addressing the housing shortage and attainability crisis, the county can create a more inclusive and livable community for everyone.

RESOURCES

¹ 200,000 new residents expected over the next 25 years. [Montgomery](#)

Housing Issues, cont.

Planning.

² [Missing Middle Housing in Montgomery County](#). Montgomery Planning/M-NCPPC Website.

³ [Housing Issues in Montgomery County web search](#).

⁴ [Housing Opportunities Commission of Montgomery County](#).

⁵ [Housing Unlimited, Inc.](#)

⁶ [Montgomery County, Maryland, Department of Housing and Community Affairs](#).

⁷ [Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development](#).

⁸ [Montgomery County, Maryland, Housing Resources](#). ■

The *Budgetpalooza* is Coming! February 20, 7pm, Zoom

By Paula Bienenfeld

The ***Budgetpalooza*** is coming Tuesday, February 20th, 7 p.m., at the Rockville Library and on Zoom. MCCF, the Montgomery County Taxpayers League, and the Parents' Coalition of Montgomery County are getting together to sponsor the new, improved MCPS ***Budgetpalooza***. We will do the deep dive into the FY2025 Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Operating Budget.

Eleven chapters, seven appendices, and \$3.3 billion. Please volunteer if you can to take one chapter or an appendix and do a deep dive and present your findings. You don't need to be a professional accountant, just a resident that wants to make sure our money is well-spent. If you'd like to volunteer, please email Paula Bienenfeld at [paula.bienen-](mailto:paula.bienenfeld@gmail.com)

feld@gmail.com.

Please join us to do the deep dive into the budget.

How is MCPS proposing to spend your tax dollars? \$3.3 billion—\$3,322,303,371 to be exact—about half of our entire county budget. It is up to us, the residents of the county, to make sure our money is spent effectively. The other half of the county budget supports everything else we do as residents—our libraries, first responders, emergency services, roads, bicycle and pedestrian safety, transit, police, safety, county government, parks, and so much more. We do all that on half of the entire county budget. Let's make sure the half that goes to MCPS is spent effectively, transparently, and honestly. It's up to us.

See you there! ■

MCPS Superintendent McKnight Recommends \$3.3 Billion Operating Budget

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Superintendent Dr. Monifa B. McKnight has recommended a \$3.3 billion Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2025. According to MCPS, it continues the district's focus on preparing all students to thrive in their futures. The funding would maintain key investments that support Board of Education priorities to advance student achievement in math and literacy, agreed employee association agreements providing at least a 3% salary increase next year supporting recruitment and retention, and investments to support school safety and enhance communication between schools and families.

Released Thursday, Dec. 14, Dr. McKnight's budget recommendation represents a \$157 million

increase—5%—over the current budget (FY 2024). The recommended increase includes \$99.4 million to fund negotiated salaries and health-care costs.

The conclusion of federal COVID-19 pandemic emergency relief monies under the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) program puts the district at a critical juncture, facing what is known as the “ESSER cliff.” The current year (FY 2024) budget relies on more than \$125 million in investments and next year, that funding will no longer be available. The superintendent seeks to move \$33 million in support for essential programs and personnel currently funded by these dollars to the base budget, such as:

- Social workers

- Psychologists
- Parent community coordinators
- Restorative justice specialists

Other important factors driving the FY 2025 operating budget are inflation costs of \$15.6 million, and funding to support the Blueprint for Maryland's Future legislation at \$8.2 million.

To meet these needs and maintain a prudent increase over this fiscal year (FY 2024), MCPS has required central offices to identify reductions of 8% of their operating costs for next year (FY 2025). These required savings plans are estimated to realize \$14.3 million and 73.6 full-time equivalent positions in reductions and will limit some functions due to loss of staff.

“Following a record local invest-

MCPS Budget, cont.

ment by County Council last year, we are seeking a fiscally responsible, but necessary, increase that keeps our commitment to staff for their raises and to continue to build on the targeted work we are doing for student academic achievement,” Dr. McKnight said. “The Board of Education rightly prioritizes math and literacy following pandemic losses and we have made sure our investments, curriculum, and programs do just that. The future is bright for all of our students and that work remains our North Star.”

TIMELINE

The Montgomery County Board of Education will hold public hearings on the budget on Thursday, Jan. 18, and Thursday, Jan. 25. The Board also will hold budget work

sessions on Tuesday, Jan. 16, Tuesday, Jan. 23, and a tentative third work session set for Tuesday, Jan. 30, before tentatively approving an operating budget on Feb. 6, 2024.

After the Board of Education approves an operating budget for FY 2025, it will be sent to the Montgomery County Executive and County Council for consideration. The County Council will approve its final FY 2025 Operating Budget on May 23, 2024.

It is essential to keep in mind that this budget represents a recommendation offered during a snapshot in time. Given the uncertainties in budget decisions by the County Executive, County Council, and the county and state governments, adjustments will likely be made before the Board of Education adopts a final FY 2025 Operating Budget on June 11, 2023. ■

MCCF Nominations

MCCF President Alan Bowser has made the following nominations.

Acting Land Use and Planning Committee. *Elizabeth Joyce* and Woodside resident *Cheryl Gannon* are recommended to be the Co-Chairs of the Land Use and Planning Committee.

Special Housing Committee. The following individuals are recommended to serve as members of an ad hoc Special Committee on Housing Issues: *Elizabeth Joyce, Cheryl Gannon, Brenda Freeman, Genevieve McDowell Owen, Chris Reynolds, Tony Byrne, Ken Markison, and Joyce Gwadz.*

The nominations will be presented to the membership at the February 2024 General Meeting. ■

County Executive Releases Capital Improvements Program Budget for FY 2025–2030

[The County Executive released the recommended Capital Improvements Program (CIP) budget for Fiscal Years 2025–2030. Here is part of his statement.]

The proposal calls for a six-year investment of \$5.8 billion, which is a modest 2.3 percent increase over the previously approved CIP. These investments will be spent on many different projects spanning school buildings, libraries, and transportation needs. We are also ramping up efforts to improve our stormwater system to prevent catastrophic flooding in our community.

The proposal also includes a heavy investment in designing and rolling out a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system that will help relieve traffic congestion, giving many commuters new, fast, and reliable

options for commuting. Since I introduced BRT in 2008 while still on the Council, I have been working on implementing the system. We are picking up the pace on building this out which had been far too slow.

[Aside from Jerry Garson, Chairman of the MCCF Transportation Committee: The Montgomery County Civic Federation, Inc., has asked for more studies to see if expanding the BRT system at such a high price is cost-effective since we see the latest ridership figures for the Flash BRT weekday ridership for the 210 trips are only 10.8 riders per trip and the Ride On 101 Extra Express bus, on MD 355, which has 106 trips. The bus running from the Lakeforest Mall to the Medical Center has only 8.5 riders per trip.]

This budget also includes close to

\$200 million for affordable housing efforts with another \$50 million coming from our surplus reserves. Using this surplus in a housing fund will allow us to be ready for new projects since much of the already budgeted housing money is committed to projects that produce, preserve, or protect affordable housing.

This is my third full CIP and is \$133 million more than the prior approved budget for capital improvements I presented two years ago. One of the biggest disappointments in this process is realizing that we cannot afford all the projects being requested. It is frustrating to see our schools, roads, and communities delayed because we are constrained by an antiquated tax structure. It has been this way for as long as I can

CIP Budget, cont.

remember.

We have an opportunity this year to make the kind of changes at a State level that can be a gamechanger for counties across Maryland. Allowing jurisdictions like Montgomery County to create local taxing authorities can help us address our own needs. The State has never been able to fund the statewide needs, so money comes out in small pieces over years. Without a steady stream of resources, the County cannot apply for Federal funds that require a State and local match.

We are in the situation that Northern Virginia was in more than a decade ago. Instead of doing nothing and hoping money would fall from the sky, the political and business leadership of Fairfax County went to the Republican-controlled

General Assembly and the governor and to seek taxing authority so it could fund transportation projects that would drive development in Fairfax. It got the approval, the governor talked about it as a major tool for economic development, and today we see the infrastructure those moves created. Northern Virginia's special taxing districts paved the way for the kind of transportation projects we desperately need here.

Fairfax had the courage to step up and make the political decision to take control of its fate. We fixate on whether developers would embrace the higher taxes or if would thwart economic development. The developers across the river supported the new special taxing districts and the countywide taxing district because the tax money was only used for transportation projects that benefit the business areas being taxed. They

saw it as an investment that would increase the value of their properties. Well, it did. And this is important too: they did not pass the bulk of this burden on to their residents. Their commercial taxes dwarf what Montgomery County receives and the investments they made with that money spurred the development that everybody envies.

They made deliberate decisions about tax policy that made it possible to attract businesses because they could promise the infrastructure that developers saw in their master plans. The promised and delivered projects that could be built and built on time—something that we cannot do in Maryland.

I have proposed ditching our Impact Tax system and replacing it with the tax structures used in Northern Virginia. If we are going

CIP Budget, cont.

to drive economic development, we need infrastructure. We can use the roadmap that Northern Virginia followed and replicate its success. Our rate on corporate taxes over the past decade has remained low compared to Northern Virginia's. Yet, that has not kept it from growing and attracting business.

You can look over my budget proposal by following [this link on the Office of Management and Budget website](#). I also encourage you to participate in opportunities over the next several weeks to offer feedback to the County Council as it considers this proposal.

SNOW

Significant snowfall returned to Montgomery County after two nearly snowless years. Many of us saw

several inches of snow pile up, impacting roads, closing schools, and putting our winter preparation to the test.

Our road crews are the most visible part of our operation, and there are many people coordinating those sand trucks and plows. We also had people from our Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security, Montgomery County Fire and Rescue, Montgomery County Police, and our Department of Health and Human Services working countless hours and assisting those in need.

ELECTRIC VEHICLES

We have some great news for electric vehicle owners. Montgomery County is already home to more than 25,000 registered EV owners, more than any other County in Maryland. Now, they will get more infrastructure support from the State

and Federal governments.

Recently, the County added 16 new electric vehicle charging ports to garages and parking lots in Silver Spring, Bethesda, and Wheaton. It brought the total number of EV charging ports in County facilities to 64. This new funding source will help expand those efforts, so EV ownership becomes more of a possibility for thousands of families.

We have come a long way since installing our first public charging port for EVs in 2015. Our efforts, and those of our partners, in providing renewable energy stations for public use helped fuel the high level of interest EV vehicles. We encourage people to sign a pledge to consider an EV when making their next car purchase. By signing up, you can access information about local, State, and Federal rebates that can

CIP Budget, cont.

apply to a new EV purchase.

The \$150 million restores some of the funding for projects through Highway User Revenue funds. For Montgomery County, \$17 million will be back in the mix to help pay for Ride On services and to keep a DMV office open that is likely to close once FY25 ends.

MARYLAND CLIMATE POLLUTION REDUCTION PLAN

Electrifying school buses, transit buses, and government fleet vehicles.

Many of the fundamental aspects of the State's CPRP complement Montgomery County's Climate Action Plan (CAP). These include the increased electrification of buildings and transportation, including electrifying school buses, transit buses, and

government fleet vehicles; expanding EV infrastructure and innovative clean energy standards; and incentivizing consumers in the electrification of their homes via electrical appliances. Additionally, there are actions like striking trash incineration from the State's renewable portfolio standard, matching that of Montgomery County, which is on track for the closing of its incinerator in the near future.

January Meeting Minutes

By Elizabeth Joyce, Acting Secretary

Call to Order. The meeting was called to order at 7:34 p.m. on January 8, 2024, via Zoom.

Approval of Agenda. The agenda for the January 8, 2024, meeting was approved.

Approval of Minutes. The minutes of the December 2023 General Meeting were approved.

Treasurer's Report. Jerry Garson presented the Treasurer's Report.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

■ Peggy Dennis noted that community members would meet with

Jan. Mtg. Minutes, cont.

officials of the County Department of Transportation to discuss a volunteer weed warrior program to remove invasive vines on trees in the public right-of-way.

■ Patricia Tyson reported on a recent community program on fire prevention organized by MCFRS and recommended that other civic associations consider a similar program for their residents.

Program: A Conversation with Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich

County Executive Elrich was the special guest of the Civic Federation

at its January meeting. He discussed a broad range of topics, including the Office of the People's Counsel, job creation and economic development, environment and climate change, tax reform, affordable housing, pedestrian and bicyclist safety, public safety, and transportation issues.

After his presentation, he answered questions from delegates and guests. [The entire meeting was recorded and may be viewed under [Recorded Meetings](#) on the MCCF website.]

Resolution on Trees, Stumps, and Invasive Plants. After discussion, the Resolution was approved by the membership. [[View resolution here.](#)]

Affordable Housing. President Alan Bowser announced that he was recommending a special committee on affordable housing issues. [View the people he is nominating on [page 8 of this newsletter.](#)]

The committee would meet virtually and draft a Federation Resolution on housing issues for consideration by the membership.

February 2024 General Meeting. The February meeting will focus on affordable housing issues and the County Council's Office of Legislative Oversight.

Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 10:04 p.m. ■

MCCF Executive Committee January 18, 2024, 7:00 p.m., Minutes Via Zoom

By Elizabeth Joyce, Acting Secretary

Members and Delegates Present:

Alan Bowser, Peggy Dennis, Elizabeth Joyce, Jerry Garson, Jacquie Bokow, Kim Persaud, Daniel Meijer, and Byron Bloch.

Debrief of January 2024 Meeting. Members discussed the January meeting with Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich. Members noted that the County Executive addressed each of the Civic Federation's budget priorities transmitted to his Office in December 2023.

Future General Meetings

■ The February meeting will focus on housing issues. We're still working to identify the speakers for the

meeting, but we have reached out to the Montgomery County Affordable Housing Conference for suggestions and recommendations.

■ The Montgomery County Operating Budget will be the subject of the March meeting with Chief Administrative Office Rich Madaleno as the guest speaker.

Office of the People's Counsel.

Jerry Garson reported that he had spoken with several Montgomery County State Delegates and with Senator Ben Kramer in Annapolis about Kramer's bill to establish an Office of the People's Counsel for Montgomery County under State law.

Special Housing Committee.

Alan Bowser discussed the formation

of MCCF's new special committee on housing issues. It will be a subcommittee of the Land Use and Planning Committee.

MCPS Budgetpalooza. MCCF will cosponsor the February 2024 MCPS Budgetpalooza with the Parent's Coalition and the Montgomery County Taxpayers League. It will take place at the Rockville Library on February 25, 2024.

Proposed Resolution on American Legion Bridge, I-495, and I-270. Members discussed a proposed draft Resolution expressing the sense of the Federation with regard to rebuilding the American Legion Bridge, health impacts from highway construction, and possible

Jan. ExCom Minutes, cont.

toll lanes on I-495 and I-270. It was agreed that the draft Resolution needed some more discussion and some revisions and could usefully be separated into two or more unique Resolutions.

Proposed Action on Local Bill on State Preemption of Local Zoning Laws. There was discussion of a Montgomery County local bill which would preempt land use restrictions by homeowners associations, individuals, and other groups that prohibit the development of new housing. The bill was introduced by Delegates David Moon, Lorig Charkoudian, Jheanelle Wilkins, and Julie Palokovich-Carr. Members agreed to send the bill to the special housing committee for research, discussion, and action.

Social Media and Constant Contact. Members discuss how to increase MCCF's social media presence and how to better use the Constant Contact account. There was discussion about organizing an online survey of Federation Delegates.

MCCF Social Event. Members made suggestions for a MCCF happy hour for delegates and prospective members. Members agreed to support a modest budget for the regional events.

Newsletter Articles. Articles for the February newsletter are due by January 26.

Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m. ■

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Send all address corrections to membership AT montgomerycivic.org.

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