

Special Meeting: AHSI Resolution | On Monday, November 4, at 7:00 p.m., an online meeting will discuss and finalize MCCF's Resolution on the Attainable Housing Strategies Initiative | [P. 2](#)

November Program: Preview of Upcoming State Legislative Session | Scheduled guest speakers on November 14 will be Senator Jeff Waldstreicher, Delegate Julie Palakovich Carr, and Delegate Marc Korman | *Please note change of day from the usual Monday (Veterans' Day) to Thursday* | [P. 3](#)

A Letter to MCCF Delegates and Members | Cheryl Gannon explains upcoming meetings | [P. 3](#)

**SPECIAL MEETING ON
MCCF'S AHSI RESOLUTION
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2024
7:00 P.M.
[USE THIS LINK TO JOIN](#)**

Committee for Montgomery Legislative Breakfast | Read about the speaker lineup at the 7:00 a.m. November 22 event | [P. 4](#)

Academic Versus Overhead Costs | Gordon Brenne of the MoCo Taxpayers League reports on MCPS strategic alternatives | [P. 5](#)

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of note

Next MCCF Meeting #957

Thursday, November 14, 2024, 7:00 p.m. Topic: "Preview of the Upcoming Maryland State Legislative Session."

! [Join the Zoom Meeting Here](#)

Call 301-715-8592; ID: 856 0959 1703

[AGENDA, P. 2](#) • [PROGRAM, P. 3](#)

Special AHSI Resolution Meeting

Monday, November 4, 2024, 7:00 p.m.

! [Join the Zoom Meeting Here](#)

Call 301-715-8592; ID: 871 4548 6074

[AGENDA, P. 2](#) • [READ MORE](#)

October Meeting Minutes

Meeting #956 October 14 [P. 7](#)

Executive Committee Oct. 24 [P. 10](#)

Federation Meeting #957

Thursday, November 14, 2024

NOTE NEW DATE!

7:00 p.m. | **Virtual Meeting**

AGENDA

1. Call to Order/Introductions
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Approval of Minutes: October General Meeting **P.7**
4. Treasurer's Report
5. Announcements
6. Welcome to New Members
7. November Program: Preview of Upcoming State Legislative Session **P.3**
8. Committee Reports
9. Old Business
10. New Business
11. Adjournment

Special Meeting AHSI Resolution

Monday, November 4, 2024

7:00 p.m. | **Virtual Meeting**

AGENDA

1. Call to Order/Introductions
2. Explanation of Process for Review and Approval—*Cheryl Gannon, President*
3. Introduction of Amended Executive Committee Resolution—*Liz Joyce, Second Vice President and Chair, Housing and Land Use*
4. Member Discussion
5. Vote(s)
6. Adjournment

Note: The Resolution will be emailed to all delegates and members before the November 4 meeting. ■

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 11

A Letter to MCCF Delegates and Members

By Cheryl Gannon, President

The last few months have been very busy, with the Attainable Housing Strategies Initiative on our agenda. It is a far-reaching and impactful proposed change to land use and planning in the county. We are a membership organization with diverse views, and getting to a position on AHSI has been time-consuming but necessary. Thank you to everyone who has participated and made suggestions. **We will have a Special Meeting for the limited purpose of adopting a resolution on AHSI Nov. 4 at 7 pm.** Going forward, we plan to implement a legislative alert system with regular important updates and suggested grassroots actions as necessary.

After that, we will have a **General Federation meeting on Thursday, Nov 14, at 7 pm to preview**

the upcoming state legislative session. Senator Jeff Waldstreicher, Delegate Julie Palakovich Carr, and Delegate Marc Korman will present a preview and field questions. Please mark your calendar and plan to attend. The upcoming legislative session will undoubtedly tackle important issues that we all care about. This is your chance to ask question and be heard before the session begins. Note that there is a change in the normal schedule due to Veterans Day.

Our December 9, 2024, General Federation Meeting will feature the new Superintendent of Schools for Montgomery County—Dr. Thomas W. Taylor. He will discuss the challenges and opportunities for schools and his vision going forward. Please mark your calendar for this important event.

This is your chance to discuss and ask questions regarding your concerns, ideas, and hopes for the future of the school system.

On December 16 at 7 pm, our Treasurer Jerry Garson will host a Special Meeting on real property tax assessments. About one-third of county properties will be reassessed as of Jan 1, 2025. Residents may challenge assessments, and this meeting will explain the assessment process and how to proceed with a challenge if you so desire. Speakers from State Department of Taxation: Ava McIntyre-Garvey (SDAT, Supervisor of Assessments, Montgomery County), and SDAT staff Bryan Levenson. There will be a powerpoint presentation. *Forward questions in advance to Jerry Garson at treasurer@montgomerycivic.org.*

As always, send us your ideas and suggestions: info@montgomerycivic.org. ■

Committee for Montgomery Legislative Breakfast on Friday, November 22nd, at 7:00am

Join the Committee for Montgomery's 36th Annual Legislative Breakfast on Friday, November 22, 2024, from 7:00 to 9:30 a.m., for a morning of insight, engagement, and community. This annual gathering will feature Governor Wes Moore, Senator Chris Van Hollen, and Congressman Jamie Raskin as key speakers, each addressing critical issues impacting Montgomery County and beyond after the 2024 Presidential election. There will also be a panel discussion with leaders of the Montgomery County State Delegation.

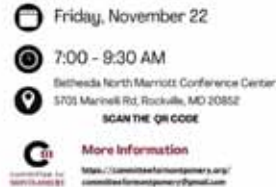
Held just before the Maryland General Assembly's 2024 session, the breakfast provides a unique opportunity to hear directly from



committee for
MONTGOMERY



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leaders shaping state and federal policy. Don't miss this chance to connect, learn, and contribute to Montgomery's legislative future. Tickets and sponsorships are available; reserve your spot today! The event will be held at the Bethesda North Marriott Conference Center, 5701 Marinelli Road, Rockville, Maryland 20852. Each ticket is \$200. [Register to attend at the CfM website here.](#)

The Montgomery County Civic Federation is a founding member of the Committee for Montgomery, which advocates for Montgomery County issues at the Maryland General Assembly. MCCF Secretary Alan Bowser is Vice Chair of the Committee for Montgomery. ■

Academic vs. Overhead Costs: MCPS Strategic Alternatives

*By Gordon Brenne, Treasurer,
Montgomery County Taxpayers
League*

Results for the last school year show that literacy proficiency achievement gap remains for Black/African American (62%) and Hispanic/Latino (54%) students, compared to Asian (86%), and White (85%) students.

Various teacher training and curriculum **changes** are being implemented to improve literacy, but are they the most effective strategies?

An alternative literacy **pilot test** is underway in five elementary schools and is sponsored by the Black and Brown Coalition. Unlike other strategies, the pilot features more parent communications and individual student instruction plans. The beauty of this model is instruc-

tion will be driven by demand, not supply constraints. But, will parent communications work in work in low-income schools, and are teacher work rule and budget issues going to limit the strategy's roll-out?

Another frequent budget priority question is are we doing enough to address student mental health and social service needs. This **issue** was raised by Dr. Taylor at the Black and Brown Coalition meeting when talking about services that have grown significantly in since the lockdown:

“From the outside looking in ... a lot of our resources are going to things that don't touch the classroom,” Taylor said. “That needs to be reevaluated because when we get to the point, the tipping point ... where more than half of what we do is stuff that's not [on] the teaching

and learning side of our business, [that] is problematic.”

How should resource allocation decisions be made when choosing between academic proficiency and other student needs? The Taxpayers League believes that we can't make the right decisions until the budget is broken down by strategies (how specific objectives will get done), their costs and outcomes, and what alternative strategies would cost and accomplish. Detailed strategies for improving academic proficiency in literacy and math for focus student groups are not in the current District-wide strategic plan. Nor are there a performance targets for low-income students.

A strategic budget is absolutely critical for older academic strategies.

MCPS Strategies, cont.

Since base spending is protected by the state's Maintenance of Effort law and makes up 95% of the budget, this is how most ineffective strategies that reduce learning growth are automatically funded, year after year. Same for non-instruction overhead activities. How can replacing ineffective strategies with newer ones improve results? Will accelerating the 3rd grade literacy pilot to all low-income elementary schools as soon as the 3rd quarter this year improve proficiency over benchmarks? Should this strategy be rolled out to all grades in low-income schools next September? Which other new strategies should be tried first? Should new strategies only be rolled out to schools with congruent improvement plans to achieve accountability? How can centrally admin-

istered teacher and principal work rules and school budget formulas be modified in those schools for success?

Strategic spending allocation questions also apply to non-instruction overhead activities (45% of MCPSs budget compared to 37% for Fairfax County schools) that may improve results, but many do not and may be less cost-effective than alternatives. In general, what overhead strategies provide the highest return on investment for the least money in schools that need the most help? Looking at costs outside of their Departmental silos can help. For example, Supt. Taylor is talking about **safety**, but how much safety and which strategies are cost-effective? Security in low-income MCPS schools is important and leads to questions about how effective new academic proficiency strategies

would be without improved security. Also, reducing chronic absenteeism will improve academic results by improving safety. So, how much do we need to spend on absenteeism strategies, and in which schools, to increase literacy and math proficiency?

Strategic overhead cost management can be achieved by integrating compliance requirements with academic strategies to increase their value added, especially if these costs aren't strictly compliance related. For example, lower bus transportation cost strategies would increase resources available to MCPS core academic activities. Could a mix of diesel and electric buses, combined with shared services with County for bus maintenance and common technology standards lower costs? Which alternative minimizes driver

MCPS Strategies, cont.

time spent waiting around during their afternoon shifts for buses to recharge? Could boundary shifts reduce the transportation costs of starting high school students later and boost attendance and proficiency? Are capacity costs that reduce overcrowded west county schools best solved with boundary changes that have higher transportation costs? Or would moving the best teachers and principals to east county schools increase east county school demand and proficiency while cost-effectively easing west county capacity issues? ■

MCCF General Meeting #956, October 14, 2024, Minutes

By Alan Bowser, Secretary

- 1. Call to Order.** The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m.
- 2. Approval of Agenda.** The agenda was approved as amended.
- 3. Approval of Minutes.** The minutes of the September 2024 meeting were approved.
- 4. Treasurer's Report.** Treasurer Jerry Garson reported a bank balance of \$6,638.00.
- 5. Announcements**
 - a.** President Cheryl Gannon noted that Montgomery County voters would vote on a Montgomery County Ballot Question on Term Limits, reducing the number of

terms that the Montgomery County Executive could serve from three consecutive terms to two terms. Montgomery County Chief Administrative Officer Rich Madaleno provided information on the ballot question, noting that: (1) a simple majority was needed for approval; (2) that the ballot question only applied to the Executive, not the County Council; and (3) that, if approved, the change to the County Charter would affect the powers of the County Executive. Members briefly expressed opinions—pro and con—about the ballot question.

b. Upcoming MCCF meetings. 1st Vice President Joyce Gwadz said that the November 14th meeting of the Civic Federation would focus on the 2025 session of the Maryland

October Minutes, cont.

General Assembly and that State Senator Jeff Walstreicher and State Delegates Korman and Palakovich-Carr would be the invited guests. On December 16, Treasurer Jerry Garson would host a special online presentation on property tax assessments.

6. Community Hero Award—Janis Sartucci. President Cheryl Gannon said that Janis Sartucci of Potomac was being recognized by the Civic Federation for her work revealing financial mismanagement by the Montgomery County School System. A description of her work had been included in the [September MCCF newsletter](#). Ms. Sartucci discussed her work and expressed her appreciation to the Federation for the recognition.

7. Report on Arlington County, Virginia, land use litigation regarding “missing middle housing.” Attorney Michele Rosenfeld discussed recent developments regarding a court case in Arlington, Virginia, challenging efforts by the County Board to implement County-wide upzoning to support new housing developments. She said that the judge in the case had not yet released a written report and that she would provide an update to MCCF when it was available. Members asked questions about the Virginia court case.

8. Discussion of MCCF Executive Committee Draft Resolution on the Attainable Housing Strategies Initiative Report from Montgomery County Planning Board.

a. MCCF Planning and Land Use Co-chair and 2nd Vice President Liz Joyce and Planning and Land Use Co-chair Ken Markison presented the draft Resolution for consideration by Delegates and Members.

b. The draft Resolution was distributed to Delegates and Members by email prior to the October meeting.

9. Discussion. Delegates made a number of comments about the draft Resolution.

a. A speaker expressed concern that the draft Resolution was prepared by the Executive Committee with no input from other MCCF members who had previously worked on MCCF Housing issues. He commented that the draft Resolution incorrectly described conclu-

October Minutes, cont.

sions from the work of the Council of Governments on housing and affordability issues. He noted that there was no legislation before the County Council, so a call for suspension of Council consideration of the AHSI was premature and unnecessary.

b. Another speaker commented that the AHSI Report did not deal sufficiently with MPDUs and the value of community land trusts. He also observed that the AHSI recommendations did not apply to the entire County, and that some regions were exempted from proposed zoning changes. He also said that there was inadequate attention to environmental issues, such as stormwater management.

c. A speaker said that it was important for MCCF to call for

mitigation measures to be included in any County Council action, along with annual publication of metrics indicating progress with housing construction.

d. A speaker said that the AHSI Report did not include the necessary background information on land and home values and that this data needed to be considered by the County Council.

e. Committee co-chair Liz Joyce observed that the AHSI Report focused on attainable housing and not *affordable* housing, which was the greatest need in the County. She said that more attention needed to be given to the preservation of naturally occurring affordable housing and the potential role of outside investors in the rental and homeownership market.

f. Another speaker asked about the reference to vacant land in the

draft resolution and suggested that the reference be clarified.

g. A speaker urged that more attention be given to appropriate and accurate demographic information to underpin the AHSI analysis and Council consideration.

h. A member asked about the process for making comments on the draft. President Gannon said to send any comments to her or the committee co-chairs. She said that she would recommend a special MCCF meeting to discuss changes and amendments to the resolution.

i. A speaker expressed her view that there should be more community outreach by the County Council with regard to any proposed zoning changes.

j. Members generally expressed support for the draft Resolution and expressed their appreciation

October Minutes, cont.

for the work of the Executive Committee.

10. MCCF 100th Anniversary Celebration. Cheryl Gannon asked for volunteers to help plan the 100th anniversary celebration of the Civic Federation. She suggested that the 100th anniversary celebration be held in June 2025 and coincide with the annual awards program.

11. Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 8:57 p.m. ■

MCCF Executive Committee October 24, 2024, Minutes

Members Present: Cheryl Gannon, Alan Bowser, Joyce Gwadz, Jerry Garson, Margaret Dennis, Elizabeth Joyce, Jacquie Bokow, Brenda Freeman.

1. Discussion on draft Housing Resolution. Members discussed the process for edits by the Planning and Land Use Committee co-chairs. Cheryl Gannon suggested that the amended Resolution would have to be sent out to members by email in order for it to be considered at the special November 4th meeting.

2. Peggy Dennis discussed the possibility of Council legislation to prevent investor speculation. Cheryl Gannon offered to ask an attorney about the best approach for such legislation.

3. The new superintendent of schools has agreed to speak at our December meeting.

4. There was a discussion about new members getting welcome emails from SimpliDues. There has been an increase in new memberships. Liz will double check to make sure new members get future emails.

5. Members discussed future outreach efforts and legislative updates and alerts.

6. Jerry reported that we have received \$1,169 in dues this year.

7. Jerry reported on a personal meeting with Jason Sartori on the

Oct. ExCom Minutes, cont.

Attainable Housing Strategies Initiative. Jerry discussed many issues including the parking, paved front yards, and that public transportation usage is down. The County also appears to have no funds for climate planning, despite the urgency of this need. Jerry suggested that perhaps the Civic Fed could support funding for a climate specialist at Planning.

8. Brenda Freeman mentioned that she had received a postcard from the Planning Board inviting her to complete a survey on “how you walk, roll, or bike” around the County. The survey offers participants a chance to win a \$100 gift card.

9. Joyce Gwadz reported that the Planning staff made a presentation to the Planning Board on the proposed minor master plan amendment to the Bethesda Downtown plan that included a staff recommendation to eliminate the density caps in Bethesda.

10. Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m. ■

Montgomery County Civic Federation

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Send all address corrections to membership AT montgomerycivic.org.

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