



*Serving the Public Interest Since 1925*

Tuesday, March 20, 2012

Testimony to County Council delivered by Peggy Dennis, MCCF President

The Montgomery County Civic Federation **supports Bill 11-12** as a long overdue measure to correct an important imbalance between the County Executive and the Council in regard to authority over decisions on important county property issues.

Residents purchase their homes giving great thought to what school cluster they are buying into, what the surrounding land uses are and how the relevant zoning and master plan may preserve or change their neighborhood and protect or jeopardize their investment. This is why there is so much interest in and consternation about the rewriting of our Zoning Code.

The current system allows the County Executive, in essence, to play Monopoly with properties that are owned by all of us – the residents and tax payers. The Executive can currently sell, lease or change the uses to which public lands are put and the financial remuneration that the county and we, the taxpayers receive for these uses without first consulting with and gaining the approval of the very residents who are most directly affected by these changes. The current system is unacceptable in a democracy where transparency and accountability are highly valued.

No County Executive should be able to make arbitrary and capricious changes to the use and disposition of publicly owned property. Giving the Council the final say in such decisions will insure that the public's concerns and interest are taken into account before deals are cut and before contracts to sell, lease or rent public properties are signed. We therefore heartily support Bill 11-12, and hope that you will all vote "yes" and pass this bill as expeditiously as possible.