

"Federation Corner" column  
The Montgomery Sentinel - November 23, 2006

### **CountiStat and 311 should be first order of business for Ike Leggett**

by Wayne Goldstein  
MCCF President

County Executive-elect Ike Leggett is making an unprecedented effort to hear from his future constituents even before he is sworn in on December 4th. Last week he held the first of three meetings with various community leaders to listen to their recommendations. He has organized these leaders to focus on one of seven broad issue areas. Next week he will hold the first of three meetings with the rest of the county to find out what they want to happen. Expectations are high for Montgomery County's sixth County Executive whose campaign slogan was "We Like Ike." There is a straightforward way for Ike Leggett to meet a number of those expectations and be liked not just because of his personality, his governing style, and his past achievements, but also because of his bold, new accomplishments.

He can do this quickly and effectively, meeting the requirements of the first broad issue area which is called "Delivering Accountable Government--Responsive Service Delivery," by creating a "CountiStat" program supported by a 311 call system. CountiStat would be the Montgomery County version of Baltimore's CitiStat program, which is itself based on the original CompStat program from New York City. According to Baltimore's web site: "CitiStat is an accountability tool based on the CompStat program pioneered in the New York City Police Department by Jack Maple. CompStat, utilizing computer pin mapping and weekly accountability sessions, helped the NYPD dramatically reduce crime and is employed today by several police departments around the world. Mayor O'Malley is convinced that this same process can be used, not only for crime, but for every City agency from Public Works to Health. In short, CitiStat is how the Mayor runs the City. Strategies are developed and employed, managers held accountable, and results measured--not yearly, quarterly, or monthly, but week to week."

The 311 call system is how Baltimore, and perhaps soon, how Montgomery County gathers information from its residents which helps government do its job or hold managers accountable if the results are not up to the highest standards. The 311 call system was first initiated in Baltimore in 1996 as part of a national pilot program to remove nonemergency police calls from the 911 system. A few days after Martin O'Malley won the Mayoral primary in September 1999, he called Jack Maple who, as a determined NYC subway cop, had used paper maps and push pins to figure out where the worst subway crime was in the late '80s. By finding out where the crime was, the transit cops could concentrate in those areas and catch the criminals. By doing that over and over again, both underground, and then aboveground in the early '90s, NYC was able to drive down crime and turn around that city's reputation as a dangerous place to live. By switching from paper and pins to computers and Geographic Information Systems (GIS), Maple came up with Computer Statistics, or CompStat. Martin O'Malley was looking for the same miracle for Baltimore when he called Jack Maple. Maple came to Baltimore to talk about Compstat, but then he challenged the future mayor to go much farther, to apply CompStat principles to other government services.

From this meeting, CitiStat was born and began operating in 2000. Along with the mapping and the concentrating of resources in problem areas, came the idea of real customer service. O'Malley decided to use the 311 call system, staffed by professionals, to handle all requests for non-emergency services, from potholes to stray dogs to illegal dumping. The call takers forwarded the service request to the appropriate agency, assigning a tracking number that allowed the caller and the call taker to track the progress of the request. In addition, standards were set for various kinds of requests. For example, Baltimore city workers are expected to fill all potholes and remove all graffiti within 48 hours of receiving a request.

Since CitiStat's beginning, government delegations from almost 100 U.S. and Canadian jurisdictions have visited Baltimore to see the system at work. A number of these jurisdictions now either have their own version of CitiStat or they use the 311 system to generate the information needed to do the same kind of analysis and improvement. While the list includes mostly cities, it has also included at least six counties, including Fairfax County and King County, Washington. Surprisingly, no Maryland jurisdictions are included in this list, although Washington, D.C., Virginia Beach, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh have made the trip.

Ike Leggett has talked about CitiStat, and I expect that he will be leading a delegation to Baltimore shortly after December 4th. He will probably want to include a visit to Annapolis where Governor O'Malley - with a Chief of Staff who helped start the CitiStat program in Baltimore - will be starting work on his BayStat to improve the health of the Chesapeake Bay, and his StateStat to help set new standards for state government performance. MCCF brought then-Mayor O'Malley to Montgomery County in June 2004 to talk about the successes of CitiStat, the best attended program we have ever held. In May 2007, we hope that Governor-elect O'Malley will join us at our annual banquet to tell us of his progress using CitiStat accountability in these new ways. We also hope that County Executive-elect Leggett will have rolled out his new CountiStat program so that all of us can throw away the many numbers we have to remember to call to get county workers to eventually show up, now knowing this: 311 - a call that will reach them all.

Last week in this column, I criticized the Baldrige National Quality Program for failing to see that MCPS leadership was so successful at foisting off on them a sow's ear masquerading as a silk purse that MCPS had managed to receive an evaluation by judges that could possibly result in their winning a coveted award. This shows that this system of seeking excellence through relentless accountability and transparency can be manipulated by bureaucrats more adept at creating appearances than achieving performance. CitiStat, adapted as CountiStat, would be a proven and far more foolproof way to seek excellence through relentless accountability and transparency. CountiStat could also do for MCPS what Baldrige has not. This would become more evident should incoming County Executive Leggett hit the ground running toward accountability and performance.