

"Federation Corner" column
The Montgomery Sentinel - September 6, 2007

2006-07 MCCF Environment Committee activities report

by Caren Madsen, Environment Chair

Background: The Environment Committee addressed issues in the county within three priority areas - 1) stormwater management; 2) forest and tree protection and reforestation; and 3) green building and environmental design. These issues relate to the county growth policy and development pressure in some ways but are stand-alone concerns expressed by civic association representatives within MCCF and outside of the organization. As appropriate, we supported measures proposed by the County but offered additional suggestions for improvements on legislation and environmental measures. Our end goal was to help Montgomery County improve environmental programs through community involvement.

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS - Caren Madsen, Chair; Wayne Goldstein; Cynthia Fain; Arlene Bruhn; Peggy Dennis, Jim Humphrey, Steve Kanstoroom. Committee conducted business through informal meetings, telephone discussions and e-mail polling of members.

MCCF PROGRAMS - The Environment Committee hosted one program at a regular monthly delegate assembly on the County's Stormwater laws and renewal of the Clean Water permit issued by the state.

REPRESENTATION ON TASK FORCE, ADVISORY BOARD AND WORKING GROUPS - Committee Chair Madsen participated As a member of County Executive Leggett's Transition Team, Committee Chair Madsen co-authored the Executive's environmental policy statement and goals cited in the Taking Charge... Making Change document that was the finished product of the transition team. Committee Chair Madsen represented MCCF on the county Forest Conservation Task Force convened by MNCPPC between June 2006 and January 2007, playing an active role in advocating for better administration of the FCL, making recommendations for a final report and preparing a presentation for the Planning Board. The committee chair has been involved with an informal working group assembled by County Council Members Roger Berliner and Marc Elrich to explore drafting a county tree ordinance that will fulfill a goal of individual tree preservation that the current FCL was not designed to address when it was drafted in 1991.

The committee chair formed a working group of citizens and members of local environmental organizations to study tree ordinances used in other parts of the United States to identify a model for Montgomery County. The chair and Wayne Goldstein identified gaps in the existing county FCL; the chair subsequently drafted a tree ordinance using the FCL as a springboard or companion law for a tree ordinance. The draft was submitted to County Arborist Laura Miller for her review, as well as to staff at MNCPPC. The committee chair was also appointed to the Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services Advisory Board and represents MCCF on that board.

FEDERATION CORNER COLUMNS - Committee member Wayne Goldstein wrote 10 columns on the environment that were published in the Federation Corner column of The Montgomery Sentinel newspaper: Environmental Bureaucrats Biggest Obstacle to Cleaner Water in Montgomery County, 5/4/06; M-NCPPC Unreliable in Enforcing Forest Conservation Law, 5/11/06; Proper Maintenance of Lake Needwood Long Overdue, 7/6/06; Is Montgomery County LEED or FEED on Green Buildings? 10/19/06; County Needs Green Road Code, 1/11/07; Road Code Bill Presents Unique Opportunity for Cooperation, 1/25/07; Truth is "Outside The Scope of the ICC Project" 3/1/07; Ask Not For Whom the ICC Tolls, For It Tolls for Thee, 4/12/07; Lawsuit Against ICC Tells Of Government Manipulation, 4/19/07; Will ICC Right-of-Way Become Future Parkland? 4/26/07.

CORRESPONDENCE - The committee chair sent the following letters: to MNCPPC supporting a citizen on the Ashton case regarding enforcement of the Forest Conservation Law; to M-NCPPC regarding a proposed ZTA to revise elements of the CBD Zones, supporting the Planning Board's recommendation that green space be more carefully considered; to the Secretary of the Maryland Department of the Environment supporting the 11-point proposal of the Stormwater Partners Coalition in October 2006; co-signed a letter with other environmental organizations asking the County Council to delay a decision on Bill No. 15-07 regarding religious institutions' requirements under the FCL until a more comprehensive legislative package can be submitted in the fall of 2007.

MEETINGS - Committee representative(s) attended meetings as follows: with DPWT Deputy Director Gonzalez re green infrastructure & stream quality, Aug. '06 - with Planning Board Chairman Hanson (along with other civic representatives), Sept. '06 - with the Stormwater Partners Coalition and various county agencies throughout 2006-07 - with the DPS Advisory Board, April 2007-present (monthly meetings) - with county agencies and Steve Kanstoroom to try and resolve the issues related to deforestation of his [and his neighbor's] property in Ashton throughout the year - with the Neighborhoods Subcommittee of the Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board throughout 2006-07 - with MNCPPC staffer Joey Lampl to discuss tree legislation and how future activity will intersect with county codes on mansionization - with MNCPPC management and staff and staff from Councilmember Marc Elrich's staff to review the differences between the MNCPPC proposed FCL amendments and the recommendations of the C&O Canal Task Force - with the County Arborist from DEP and with the arborist from DPWT in charge of the street tree program to review how the current county street tree program budget corresponds to requirements - with staff from the County Executive's office to review environmental components of the County Executive's proposed FY08 budget - with the county agencies and Council staff involved in drafting the road code legislation - with the county agencies and Council staff involved in drafting the green building legislation.

COMMUNITY INFORMATION REQUESTS - Committee representative(s) attended meetings with neighborhood groups to discuss issues of importance to them, and responded to telephone and email information requests.

TESTIMONY/STATEMENTS/RESOLUTIONS - The committee testified or submitted statements for the public record on the following issues related to county environmental protection: - MNCPPC Proposed Revisions to the Montgomery County Forest Conservation Law; by Caren Madsen, 6/25/07 - Bill No. 36-06 to establish a Forest Preservation Advisory Committee; by Caren Madsen, 9/19/06 - To Planning Board on Forest Conservation Plan for Sunrise Senior Living, Inc., Special Exception by Wayne Goldstein, 1/5/06 - To County Council on Energy Efficiency and Environmental Design, Bill No. 17-06; Wayne Goldstein, April 2006 - Submitted a resolution to support tree canopy preservation to all agencies of the county government involved with trees and forestry on 4/10/06 - To County Council on Expedited Bill No. 45-06 (Protection of Champion Trees); Wayne Goldstein, 10/10/06 - To Planning Board to support MNCPPC staff for civil citation, administrative civil penalty, and administrative order for Forest Conservation Law violations; Caren Madsen - To County Council on Subdivision Regulation Amendment 06-03, on Applicability of Growth Policy Amendments; Wayne Goldstein 1/16/07 - To County Council on Bill No. 48-06 dealing with Streets and Roads- Design Standards; Wayne Goldstein, June 2007 - To County Council on Bill No. 17-06 dealing with green buildings; Wayne Goldstein, February 2007 - To County Council on Forest Conservation Law enforcement Bill No. 14-07; Wayne Goldstein, 6/26/07.