

"Federation Corner" column  
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### **Civic Federation helps educate county citizens**

by Jim Humphrey, member, MCCF Executive Committee

In 2010, the Montgomery County Civic Federation will celebrate its 85th anniversary. Founded in 1925 with a mission to preserve and improve the quality of life for county residents, the all-volunteer organization brings together delegates from neighborhood citizen associations and homeowner associations from all across Montgomery to educate them on the workings of our county government.

The list of Federation committees mirrors the organizational structure of our local government: budget; transportation; environment; education; planning and land use; parks; and public utilities. There is also a Legislation Committee that focuses on legislative matters being dealt with by the State General Assembly in Annapolis.

The MCCF holds monthly meetings on the second Monday of each month, from September through June, in the first floor auditorium of the County Council Building in Rockville. Each meeting consists of an education program, usually first on the agenda, followed by a business meeting. And you do not need to be a delegate, nor does your neighborhood civic association need to be a member of the Federation, for you to attend the monthly meetings. The public is always invited and encouraged to come.

The Federation committees take turns hosting the education programs for the meetings, lining up speakers to address issues which fall within their area of focus. Meeting programs in just the past three years, for example, have hit on a wide range of topics--some on issues of timely importance while others are more general in nature, such as a program explaining the structure and programs of a specific department or agency of government. And a question-and-answer period normally follows the speakers' presentations, giving both Federation delegates and members of the public in attendance a chance to ask for elaboration on a particular point or information on a topic not covered.

The program for the meeting in January 2007 was on the list of issues facing the State General Assembly during their coming session that year, with speakers Delegate Anne Kaiser (District 14) and Senator Richard Madeleno (District 18). In February that year, representatives of the county's Fraternal Order of Police were invited to discuss issues impacting the provision of public safety--hiring, training, equipment, etc. The topic for the March 2007 program was the county budget, as it is at a meeting in the spring of every year. County parks were the topic for the April '07 meeting, with the speaker being Parks Department Director Mary Bradford. In May, then-Director of the Research and Technology Division at the Park & Planning Commission, Karl Moritz, was the speaker for a program on the county growth policy.

Featured speakers for the remaining programs of 2007 were Department of Permitting Services Director Carla Reed, representatives from the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission, Montgomery County Police Department Chief Thomas Manger, and County Arborist Laura Miller accompanied by Brett Linkletter, Tree Maintenance Manager for the Department of Public Works, Supervisor Michael Galvin with the State Forest Service, and Mark Pfefferle, Forest Conservation Coordinator in the Environmental Division at Park & Planning.

In 2008, program topics ranged from explanation of CountyStat, a government accountability and performance measures program, to an explanation of the Base Realignment and Closures (BRAC) plan to move Walter Reed Army Medical Hospital to the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, to an introduction to the county's Department of Fire and Rescue Services. Again in spring, as in each year, a program was held on the county government budget. Mid-year saw a fascinating program on the judicial

system, with an explanation of the workings and jurisdiction of both the district and circuit courts. This was followed by a program to explain the functioning of the Board of Appeals, another on demystifying county labor contract negotiations, and a program on the ballot questions which were before the voters in the November 2008 elections, led by Nancy Soreng from the League of Women Voters. We wrapped up that year with a program on housing affordability, with a shared presentation from Rick Nelson, Director of the Department of Housing and Community Affairs, Council housing analyst Linda McMillan, and Sharon Suarez, Housing Coordinator at Park & Planning.

We kicked off this past year with Planning Board Chairman Royce Hanson addressing the delegates for a program on growth management. Other programs included one on local historic preservation efforts, the county's climate action program, and our annual program on the county budget. Bill Matuszeski, former Director of the Federal Environmental Protection Agency's Chesapeake Bay Program, spoke on the state of health of the Chesapeake Bay. The programs for two separate meetings were dedicated to the county's growth policy, with a June program on Planning Board recommended changes to the policy and a September meeting focused on establishing the Federation position on those recommendations. Then, we ended 2009 with programs on police and public safety issues, on the Maryland Public Service Commission, and on our Montgomery County Public Libraries.

*The views expressed in this column do not necessarily reflect formal positions adopted by the Federation. To submit an 800-1000 word column for consideration, send as an email attachment to [theelms518@earthlink.net](mailto:theelms518@earthlink.net)*