

"Federation Corner" column  
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### **Who is the Montgomery County Civic Federation?**

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*The following is an updated reprint of the Federation Corner column originally published on July 22, 2004.*

The Civic Federation was formed in 1925 to promote civic, community and general welfare in Montgomery County. MCCF is the only county-wide umbrella group of civic associations. We strive to protect and improve the quality of life for all county residents.

With a government as large as Montgomery County's, the voice of the people--even close to a million people--can often be drowned out in the discussion of important issues by the more politically persuasive voice of special interests (those after a financial gain). These special interests, such as the development industry in this county, often make large contributions to political campaigns that result in their having greater influence over the decisions of government than the average citizen or even community. MCCF is able to at least place another side of the issue on the table to be heard.

The Federation is effective in providing a voice to governments at the County, State and occasionally the Federal levels because we represent many different associations and associates. We address issues of a regional or county-wide nature. Neighborhood issues remain the purview of local associations or local associate groups. We bring together diverse views from members to arrive at a consensus. Government officials know that our positions synthesize various viewpoints, which are valuable to them in sorting out the wide range of opinions they hear. We pride ourselves on the thoroughness of our deliberations.

Citizens typically do not coordinate their positions with the result that some are for a proposal and some against it. These voices tend to cancel each other out, which increases further the effectiveness of the special interest. The Civic Federation is the only group that is able to present a consensus position on issues, developed by citizens from across the county. On most issues we achieve a high degree of consensus. In recent years, we have given attention to schools, transportation, land use, recreation, the environment, public safety, and the budget.

The Federation is nonpartisan and does not endorse candidates for public office.

Benefit to You. The benefits to you and your community association or group include the following:

- Develop a network of friends and contacts with common interests and problems.
- Learn about the issues, views, and strategies of your counterparts. The issues may be impacting you and you may not yet be aware of it.
- More effectively present issues to your association or group.
- Most effectively represent views to government officials
- Work toward a consensus on issues in order to create an effective citizen voice.

Membership. The Civic Federation membership consists of five categories: local association, umbrella association, regional or county-wide organization, individual associate and associate group. The vast majority of the members are local, umbrella, and county-wide associations. Local groups go by many names including neighborhood civic or citizen association, homeowner associations, and municipalities. Based upon its size, an association can appoint up to four delegates to the Federation of their own

choosing. Only association delegates can vote, but all members can participate in debates, receive the newsletter, and serve on appointed committees.

The membership year runs from July 1 through June 30. If your association is not already a member, please join us. If you are not part of an association, please join as an individual associate. The membership application form with rates can be found on our web site – [www.montgomerycivic.org](http://www.montgomerycivic.org).

Meetings. Most regular membership meetings consist of a program lasting about an hour followed by a business meeting, where positions are taken. These delegate meetings are open to the public and are usually held on the second Monday of each month (except July, August), starting at 7:45 p.m. The membership meetings are held in the first floor auditorium of the County Council building, accessed via the rear entrance of the building which is located at 100 Maryland Avenue in Rockville. The date and topic of each upcoming meeting is announced on our website.

Taking Positions. The Bylaws provide that all formal positions taken by the Federation are established by approval of a resolution or motion at a regular meeting. Our bylaws require that positions be adopted by an affirmative vote at membership meetings, which is 60% of those voting. Normally, the proposed resolution is printed in the newsletter prior to the meeting. Often, articles “for” and “against” a proposed resolution are included. Resolutions on new subject matter, proposed by a motion from the floor and seconded by delegates from two member associations, will be referred to the appropriate committee for recommendation and will be included in the agenda for the next meeting. Emergency resolutions, seconded by five other member associations may be added to the agenda by affirmative vote and acted upon at that meeting. Our officers and committee chairs communicate MCCF adopted positions to county officials and advocate their acceptance.

MCCF Organizational Structure. Elected officers and appointed officers and committees are responsible for most of the Federation's activities subject to guidance and confirmation by the Delegates. Elected officers consist of the President, First Vice President, Second Vice President, a Corresponding Secretary, and a Treasurer. There are also Members at Large on the Executive Committee, each of whom focuses on a specific area of interest. Appointed offices are Newsletter Editor and Public Relations Officer. The standing committees are Environment, Education, Legislation, Planning and Land Use, Public Safety, Parks and Recreation, Public Finance, Utilities, and Transportation. In the past we have also created Special Committees to address specific subjects, and have committees at select times during the year to deal with nominations, awards, and financial audit.

*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)*