

"Federation Corner' column  
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### **Public meetings set to discuss changes in county procedures**

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In the next ten days, two important public meetings will be held by agencies of Montgomery County government to discuss proposed changes in important procedures which will impact every neighborhood in the county. Members of the public are invited and encouraged to attend these meetings, and share their comments with officials.

### **Streamlining Development Approval**

The Department of Permitting Services has scheduled a meeting for Tuesday, May 15, from 7 to 9 p.m., on proposed changes to the county's permitting process for construction of new buildings. The meetings will be held in the County Executive Building, located on Monroe Street in Rockville. Attendees should use the entrance to the Cafeteria on the Terrace Level.

In a press release on January 20, 2012, County Executive Isiah Leggett announced the start of a cross agency Streamlining Development effort. The CE asked DPS to consider making meaningful changes to the development application process by streamlining reviews and inspections.

As an initial step, the county has already consolidated construction inspections being done by DPS and Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Services. The Planning Board is also helping with the effort by looking into changing the way it reviews DPS issued building permits. All three agencies, along with others, have committed to collaborate to make their customer service more business-friendly, and make it easier for builders and developers to navigate the development process and obtain building permits.

Attendees at the May 15 meeting can provide comments in the context of several roundtable discussions on the following topics that were identified by DPS.

- 1) Environment, Storm Water and Sediment Control Permits
- 2) Transportation and Utilities
- 3) Pre-development Review Committee, Development Review Committee, Pre-Preliminary Plan, Preliminary Plan, Site Plan, and Planning Board Resolutions (these are all functions handled by the Planning Department staff or Planning Board)
- 4) Special Exceptions (which are approved by the Board of Appeals) and Rezonings (which are approved by the County Council, with recommendations from the Planning Board, its staff, and a Hearing Examiner)
- 5) Record Plats (approved by Planning Board) and Right of Way Permits (issued by DPS)
- 6) Building Permits (issued by DPS)
- 7) Bonds

The objective of each discussion will be to clearly state the problem(s) to be solved, identify solutions and the advantages and disadvantages of the recommended solutions. Following the meeting, the

recommended solutions will be researched by work groups of stakeholders. A report of the work group findings and recommendations will then be submitted to the County Executive and County Council.

Members of the public who anticipate attending the May 15 meeting should register online at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/WFWZ9PY>

### **Accessory Apartments**

Last week the Planning Board held a public hearing on draft legislation to change the standards and approval process for accessory apartments. The draft Zoning Text Amendment contained a mix of standards for small and large accessory apartments, for attached and detached units, and for units in the small lots zones (lots up to 9,000 square feet, mostly inside the Beltway) and for units in the large lot zones (half-acre to two acres lots).

Following the public testimony, the Board discussed the initial draft and decided not to forward it to the County Council for introduction, but instead to host a meeting of stakeholders to consider changes to the draft ZTA. A public meeting has been scheduled on the topic for the evening of Monday, May 21, from 7 to 9 p.m., in the Board's auditorium at 8787 Georgia Avenue in Silver Spring (main entrance is off the parking lot in the rear of the building). **[NOTE: After publication of this column an additional meeting, identical to the evening session, was scheduled for May 21 from 3 to 4:30 p.m.]**

Attendees at the May 21 meeting will be able to comment on any and all aspects of the accessory apartment issue, including--standards for compatibility to be applied as part of the approval process; which government entity should oversee approval of accessory units (currently handled by the Board of Appeals, but the draft ZTA proposed certain accessory apartments in certain locations be allowed by right); maximum occupancy of units; number of off-street parking spaces to require; environmental safety standards; and frequency of inspection of units.

These important meetings on May 15 and 21 are on issues that have a significant impact on residents of the county, and they are open to the public. Please plan on attending.

*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)*