

"Federation Corner" column
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Federation weighs in on state legislation

by Dan Wilhelm
MCCF Legislation Chair

The Maryland General Assembly convenes on January 8 and runs until April 7 for the 90 day 2014 legislative session. The Montgomery County Delegation has already started considering legislation. Each year at this time, the Montgomery County Civic Federation (MCCF) also considers which legislation to weigh in on, deciding whether or not we believe it to be in the best interests of county residents, following which testimony which is written and delivered to the County Delegation.

The County Delegation held a "Priorities" hearing on November 20 and held a hearing on December 2 for local bills (bills affecting only Montgomery County) and December 4 for bi-county bills. The bi-county bills affect WSSC (the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission) and M-NCPPC (the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission) and affect both Montgomery and Prince George's Counties. For online information on local and bi-county bills, see www.montgomerycountydelegation.com

Those bills that are approved locally will be introduced to the entire General Assembly for action during the upcoming session. For online information about all formally introduced bills, see <http://mgaleg.maryland.gov>. There will be some 2500 bills introduced before the session is complete.

The MCCF Executive Committee (ExComm) considers many bills and decides which ones to take positions on - those on subjects of interest to MCCF. Any controversial topic would be brought before the full Federation membership before taking a position. If anyone knows of a bill that they believe MCCF should support or oppose, they should contact Dan Wilhelm, MCCF Legislation Chair, by emailing him at montgomerycivic@yahoo.com.

The ExComm considered local and bi-county bills at its November 21 meeting and took positions on the following bills, which we transmitted to the County Delegation at their December 2 and 4 hearings:

MC 1-14: Barbershops – Restriction on Operation. ExComm supported this bill. It will repeal current law that limits the number of days per week that a barbershop can be open. Passage of this bill would mean they can be open 7 days a week, rather than 6 days. No such limitation exists in State law for barbershops located in any other county, nor does it exist for beauty salons located in Montgomery County or any other county.

MC 5-14: Montgomery County - Archery Hunting - Safety Zone. It would allow bow hunting within 50 yards of any building occupied by humans. This is already the law in Carroll County and Frederick Counties. The distance is either 100 or 150 yards in other counties. MCCF supported this bill last year as a safe and effective means of reducing the excessive number of deer at no cost to the taxpayers.

MC 6-14: Montgomery County – Alcoholic Beverages Sales – Prohibition on Use of Self-Scanning Cash Registers. ExComm supported this bill since there needs to be a way to verify the person purchasing the alcoholic beverage is of the legal age.

MC 9-14: Montgomery County – Alcoholic Beverages – Beauty Salon License. A beer and wine license can be obtained by a person with a beauty salon license. The holder would be able to provide

beer and wine by the glass for on-premise consumption when a cosmetology service is being provided or a fundraising event is being held. This is already the law in D.C. ExComm supported this bill.

MC 12-14 Montgomery County - Alcoholic Beverages - Class B Beer, Wine and Liquor Licenses.

This bill removes the limit on the number of such licenses for restaurants that can be issued in the county. This was approved by the full MCCF membership at our November 11 meeting.

MC 14-14: Montgomery County – Proportion of Food and Alcoholic Beverages Sales – Class B Licenses and Class B–BWL (H–M) Licenses. ExComm opposed this bill since it would allow too much alcohol to be served in restaurants. It would lower from 50 percent to 40 percent the total dollar amount that must come from food sales (not for each meal, but in total sales in each restaurant). The effect would be to make restaurants more like bars.

PG/MC 104-14: WSSC - Forest Conservation Act - Application to Infrastructure Maintenance Activities. This bill would exempt WSSC from obtaining a permit for any cutting or clearing of forest necessary for access to Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission infrastructure or otherwise associated with the rehabilitation or maintenance of Commission infrastructure. The ExComm opposed this bill since it would exempt WSSC from compliance with forest conservation legislation for the stated situations. (NOTE: this bill has been withdrawn.)

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 the montgomerycivic@yahoo.com