

"Federation Corner" column
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A capital idea

by Jim Humphrey
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Did you ever wonder how funding for new county facilities, or improvements to existing ones, are funded? And where do the ideas come from for an intersection improvement, for example, or a doggy play area in a community park? The Civic Federation will try and get answers to these questions and more when they host a program entitled "How to get your community's request in the county's Capital Improvements Program" at their October 13 monthly meeting.

The budgeting process for Montgomery County is a two-part process, with the County Executive each year preparing both a capital budget (to fund real property purchases, and construction, improvement, and repair projects for county facilities) and an operating budget (to fund the day-to-day functioning of county government--things like employee salaries, supplies, and utilities). The two prepared budgets are then submitted for approval by the end of May by the County Council, the body granted authority in law to approve the allocation of funding.

Every two years, in odd-number years, the County Executive sends his proposed Capital Improvements Program (CIP) for the following six years to the Council for approval. Then at the beginning of each year the Executive submits to the Council his capital budget request for that year, consisting of those projects that were approved as part of the Capital Improvements Program which have come up for funding.

But what is the source of the ideas for capital improvement projects? Some are detailed in the various master plans for the various communities in the county--items like new parks, government services facilities like libraries or police stations, or transportation improvements such as adding dedicated left turn lanes at a certain signalized intersection. And some are requested by Executive Branch departments and agencies, or independent entities like Montgomery College, Montgomery County Public Schools, and the county Park and Planning Commission.

The carousel destined for installation in Ovid Hazen Wells Park in Clarksburg is an example of a master planned capital improvement. Upon his passing, Mr. Well's widow purchased the carousel, and gifted it and the land in Clarksburg for the park bearing his name to the county, in memory of her husband. The carousel was installed in Wheaton Regional Park as a temporary measure, until the population in Clarksburg reached a level that justified creating the new park and moving the carousel there. Today, October 2, the Planning Board will consider the associated amenities for Ovid Hazen Wells Park, such as an enhanced picnic area, a play area and a looped trail system, for which they will request CIP designation and future capital funding.

Still other capital projects are requested by the residents of the county through ideas submitted to the County Executive. Near the beginning of each year the County Executive hosts a series of meetings at which residents or neighborhood citizen associations can submit capital improvement ideas, with each of the five regional services centers hosting a

meeting. But can an idea for a capital project be submitted "out of cycle," and of whom should that request be made?

On the program for the October 13 Civic Federation meeting we will have two speakers who can provide answers to this and other questions. Glenn Orlin, Deputy Council Administrator, will be on hand to explain the Council role in approving the six-year Capital Improvements Program and annual capital budget. And Mary Beck, of the county Office of Management and Budget, will address the process by which the County Executive devises the CIP and annual funding request, and administers the capital budget approved by Council.

The meeting will begin at 7:45 p.m. in the first floor auditorium of the County Council Building in Rockville. Following the presentations by the two speakers there will be a question and answer period, so audience members can ask for clarification of information provided or request answers to questions not covered. There is free parking after 7 p.m. in the multi-level parking garage behind facility, and the Rockville Metro is about two blocks away. As always, the public is invited and encouraged to attend. Hope to see you there!

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 montgomerycivic@yahoo.com