

Montgomery County Civic Federation
P.O. Box 1123
Bethesda, MD 20827-1123
August 31, 2026

Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Ave
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Councilmembers:

I am writing on behalf of the Board of the Montgomery County Civic Federation to support County Executive Elrich's veto of the reappointment of James Hedrick to the Planning Board.

Frustration has been mounting for some time among MCCF members over the Planning Board's dismissive attitude toward residents' viewpoints and neighborhood goals. The Board and Hedrick routinely ignore resident concerns about affordability, racial equity analyses, environmental issues, stormwater management, traffic, school capacity, and other infrastructure issues. Residents often note that community meetings are used to present decisions already made, and few of their suggestions make it into final plans. Community benefits agreed upon in development plans are often later waived for developers.

MCCF members are strongly committed to community-based planning, the importance of master plans, and a process that includes residents' voices in shaping the future of their communities. Mr. Hedrick's record does not reflect that approach. He has previously stated that he is tired of hearing from residents with differing viewpoints, which led to the veto of his original appointment. His subsequent service shows little improvement in engagement with residents to find solutions to legitimate concerns.

Over the years, the Planning Board has moved away from its original intent as a citizen panel to review professional planners' recommendations and has evolved into a panel of development industry professionals, with no meaningful mechanism for community input. Mr. Hedrick, like some others on the Board, does not live in a jurisdiction subject to the Board's decisions. This is another serious issue with Board composition that has further removed the process from community voices.

Despite previous controversies over his interactions with residents, Mr. Hedrick remains an administrator and participant on the YIMBY MOCO Facebook page. The page has featured broadside attacks on residents—including people whose concerns he is responsible for considering as a Planning Board member. Although he has removed his offensive past posts, he remains a key organizer of the page. Simply giving up the administrator position now would do nothing to resolve the evident conflict regarding his biased approach to this position. Planning Board members should keep an open mind to differing viewpoints and act in the public interest, rather than with preordained views informed by one ideology. YIMBYism promotes unrestrained growth by eliminating most regulations, including zoning, infrastructure, and environmental regulations, and opportunities for public input; it favors fast-track approvals and by-right development. The goals are far out of sync with residents and neighborhoods and have already had unfortunate results, including the loss of affordable and missing middle housing (Chevy Chase Lake, for example), the devastation of the tree canopy (downtown Silver Spring, for example, is now a NOAA-designated heat island), and the budgetary pressures of persistent school overcrowding.

For these reasons, we urge you to vote "no" to override the veto.

Sincerely,

Linda Nemec
President