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## of note

### **Next MCCF Meeting #917**

Monday, November 9, 2020, **7:30 p.m.**  
*online via Zoom. “Transportation.”*

**Join the Zoom Meeting Here**

*[See further instructions on page 2. Password is 577414.]*

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### **November’s Community Hero**

It’s Louis Wilen of Olney. **P. 4**

### **October Meeting Minutes**

Oct. 12 Zoom Meeting #916 **P. 17**  
Executive Committee *Unavailable*

### **Membership Application**

Join or Renew Now:

**ONLINE PAYMENT OR PRINT FORM**

## Federation Meeting #917

Monday, November 9, 2020

7:30 p.m.–9:30 p.m.

### Online Zoom Meeting

#### AGENDA

1. Call to Order/Introductions
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Approval of Minutes, October 12 Meeting #916 **P.17**
4. Treasurer's Report
5. Announcements
6. Community Hero: Louis Wilen of Olney **P.4**
7. Program: Transportation Issues in MoCo **P.3**
8. Committee Reports
9. Old Business
10. New Business
11. Adjournment

## About MCCF Meetings

**All monthly MCCF meetings are open to the public.** They are held on the second Monday of each month, September through June, now online at 7:30 p.m.

**The November meeting will be held online via Zoom** (see page 3 for program) at 7:30 p.m.:

■ Meeting Name: "MCCF Monthly Meeting."

■ Date and Time: November 9, 2020, 7:30 p.m. Eastern Time.

■ To join the Zoom meeting from your browser, use this link.

■ To participate by phone (audio only), call 301.715.8592. The meeting ID is 833 3706 6619. Password, if requested, is 577414.

■ Please mute your device unless you are speaking. We can hear every sound made at your place!

We hope you will join us! ■



The **Montgomery County Civic Federation, Inc.**, is a county-wide nonprofit educational and advocacy organization founded in 1925 to serve the public interest. Monthly MCCF meetings are open to the public (agenda and details at left).

The *Civic Federation News* is published monthly except July and August. It is emailed to delegates, associate members, news media, and local, state, and federal officials. **Recipients are encouraged to forward the *Civic Federation News* to all association members, friends, and neighbors.** Permission is granted to reproduce any article, provided that proper credit is given to the "*Civic Federation News* of the Montgomery County (Md.) Civic Federation."

### Civic Federation News

civicednews AT montgomerycivic.org

**TO SUBMIT AN ARTICLE, SEE PAGE 21**

## November Program: Transportation Issues Facing Montgomery County

*By Jerry Garson, Treasurer*

The Montgomery County Civic Federation, Inc., Zoom meeting on Monday, November 9, 2020, will be on transportation issues facing Montgomery County.

We will have three speakers at the meeting: **Kevin B. Quinn, Jr.**, the Administrator of the Maryland Department of Transportation, part of the Maryland Transit Administration; **Matthew Pollack**, Executive Director of the Purple Line; and **David Fraser-Hidalgo**, Chair of the Motor Vehicle and Transportation subcommittee of the Environment and Transportation Committee of the Maryland House of Delegates.

Some of the topics that will be discussed are the impact of Covid-19 on traffic and mass transit and the latest information on the status of

the Purple Line construction.

In the month of October, we have seen traffic on the Beltway in Montgomery returning to 80–90% of pre-Covid-19 levels. We still have congestion westbound from I-95 to Georgia Avenue most weekday mornings and Eastbound from Rockville Pike to Georgia Avenue most weekday afternoons. We have

### I-495



seen weekday WMATA rail service in October at 12–14% of pre-Covid-19 levels.

Public comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) on the proposed P3 projects covering I-495 and I-270 will be accepted through November 9, 2020. The public may provide comments through an online comment form at [495-270-p3.com/DEIS](http://495-270-p3.com/DEIS). Written comments also may be emailed to [MLS-NEPA-P3@mdot.maryland.gov](mailto:MLS-NEPA-P3@mdot.maryland.gov) or mailed to:

Lisa B. Choplin, DBIA  
Director, I-495 & I-270 P3 Office  
Maryland Department of Transportation  
State Highway Administration  
707 North Calvert Street, Mail Stop  
P-601  
Baltimore, MD 21202. ■

## **Louis Wilen is the Civic Federation's Community Hero for November**

In November, the Montgomery County Civic Federation is proud to recognize Louis Wilen of Olney as our Community Hero.

Louis is a member of the Cherrywood Homeowners Association Board of Directors and a delegate to the Greater Olney Civic Association. He has served as a member of the MCCF Executive Committee and Chair of its Public Utilities Committee.

We honor Louis Wilen for his tireless advocacy on behalf of the citizens of Montgomery County, where he has lived since 1994. A career software developer and technical support specialist for IBM Corporation, Louis has taken special interest in examining complicated public policy issues and identifying the underlying problems



that require solutions by elected officials and public sector experts.

One of Louis' more recent analyses revealed that the State of Maryland has been improperly removing millions of dollars (in the aggregate) of property tax credits from homeowners. According to an October 2020 State government audit, Maryland has been miscalculating a tax credit for homeowners for years. Last year alone, just in Montgomery County, the error led to thousands of taxpayers losing significant amounts of money. Auditors found Homeowner Tax Credits (HTC) awarded to 5,388 applicants were improperly reduced by \$4.4 million, and that's just in Montgomery County, for fiscal year 2019. The error dates back to at least 2005,

## Community Hero, cont.

according to the report. The State does not plan to return the money.

Wilen's analysis revealed that the Maryland State Department of Assessment and Taxation (SDAT) has wrongly been deducting other tax credits from the HTC, which benefits low- and moderate-income families, seniors, and people who may have lost their jobs, thereby improperly increasing their tax bills.

His longstanding and continuing efforts to get State and County officials to address the issue were ignored and dismissed for over three years. Finally, however, after contacting the Maryland State Office of Legislative Audits, the State performed its own audit of SDAT, which confirmed the scale of the miscalculations and overcharges to

residents.

His work also caught the attention of Montgomery County State Delegate Al Carr. Carr plans to introduce legislation in the upcoming Annapolis session that will require the state to pay back a portion of the improperly removed credits.

This is not the first time that Louis has received recognition for his community service. In 2007, Louis received the President's Award from the Greater Olney Civic Association for his work in spurring passage of the Homestead Credit Verification Act of 2007. In 2020, the Civic Federation is proud to recognize Louis Wilen again for his service and advocacy and to honor him as our Community Hero.

[Click here to see Fox5's coverage of this issue.](#) ■

## Creation of the 'At-Large' Voting System for the Mont. County Council

Although this is not something that has been a primary part of the discussion about Council structure, it's important for people to know that "At-Large" voting systems have a racist and discriminatory history both here in Montgomery County and in the rest of the Country, especially in southern states. A lot of people don't know this. It's not really talked about in the County because we are considered progressive.

It has been well-established that At-Large voting was created to dilute the votes of communities of color. The only way to remove these discriminatory systems has been through litigation (difficult and expensive) or to chip away at

## 'At-Large' Council, cont.

it through ballot petitions typically organized by activists/voters (not legislators).

The **NAACP Legal Defense Fund (LDF)** has been fighting At-Large voting systems for years:

■ “Since the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965, numerous At-Large systems have been struck down under Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act.”

■ “Although At-Large voting is becoming rarer and rarer, in part due to the advocacy of LDF and other civil rights organizations, such discriminatory election systems remain in some places in our democracy.”

Justice Ginsberg has said, “the focus of the Voting Rights Act had properly **changed from ‘first-generation barriers to ballot access’ to ‘second-generation barriers’** like ra-

cial gerrymandering and laws requiring At-Large voting in places with a sizable black minority.”

In Montgomery County, when the current form of government (County Executive/County Council) was first created in 1968, all Councilmembers were elected in 1970 by At-Large voting. Although 5 of the 7 were required to live in separate districts, they were elected countywide. After 20 years of pressure, that system was later changed. In 1990, a hybrid system was created for 5 Council District members elected by only residents of that District. But, when that change happened, special interests pushed to add two more At-Large seats to the then-existing two At-Large seats in order to continue to be able to dilute minority votes with almost half the members elected “At-Large” instead of all members. Hybrid systems were basically

created to sidestep court challenges under the Voting Rights Act.

## WHAT HAVE THE RESULTS BEEN?

In over 50 years of the County Executive/Council form of government, there have only been two African Americans in At-Large seats on the Council out of 118 At-Large seats (71 seats after 1970).

Here is the history of White County Council members in At-Large seats:

■ From 1949–1970 (County Manager/Council) (6 Council terms): 47/47 seats;

■ From 1970–1986 (4 terms): 32/32 seats;

■ From 1986–2002 (4 terms): 16/19 (Issiah Leggett elected three times);

■ From 2002–2018 (4 terms):

## 'At-Large' Council, cont.

16/16 seats (three of these four could not run again due to term limits implemented in 2018);

■ From 2018–2022 (1 term): 3/4 seats (Will Jawando elected).

Meanwhile, when activists try to eliminate At-Large seats through ballot petition, Council members create a poison pill bill to maintain At-Large seats as they did again this year. Question C was created at the last minute by the Council with no notice and no public hearing, which is required by their own Rules of Procedure. They actually introduced it and adopted it on the same day at a special Council session on August 24 after they had already adjourned for the summer. There was no public emergency to adopt a proposed Charter Amendment which usually

takes quite a bit of time to work through the Council.

The Council usually provides 30-days' notice for public hearings and is required to provide 15-days' notice:

*Council Rule 4b:*

*"Publication Requirements. Before a public hearing, the President must publish the advertisement of the public hearing at least once in one newspaper circulated throughout the County. The number of days that advance notice is required, the number of newspapers in which the notice must appear, and the number of consecutive weeks that the notice must appear is established by law. Unless the time is otherwise specified by law or Council action, 15 days advance notice must be provided."*

They also edited the language

of Question D to discourage voters from voting for it, even though Question D was submitted by petition by voters (10,000+ signatures collected).

We're not suggesting the Council's violation of its own rules was overtly racist, but Montgomery County residents should know the way the Council placed their questions on the ballot without proper notice and hearing. Similarly, Question A only provided seven-days' notice of public hearing in the middle of summer and was introduced and adopted within two weeks (July 29).

The Council was well aware of both of the ballot petition efforts (Property Tax and 9 Districts) for well over a year and could have introduced proposed Charter Amendments much earlier than during 2020 summer recess. ■



## World Meteorological Organization Issues Report on Climate Crisis and Covid-19

By Bailey Condrey, Immediate Past President

The chart at right and key findings from WMO's *United in Science Report: Climate Change Has Not Stopped for Covid-19* [can be found here](#). What is overall striking about the situation in which we find ourselves is that the Atlantic hurricane season just continues to drive tropical disturbances in our direction. The list of English alphabet storms has been exhausted. We blew through these 21: Arthur, Bertha, Cristobal, Dolly, Edouard, Fay, Gonzalo, Hanna, Isaias, Josephine, Kyle, Laura, Marco, Nana, Omar, Paulette, Rene, Sally, Teddy, Vicky, and Wilfred.

We're now blowing through the letters of the Greek alphabet in record time. We've already seen al-

pha, beta, delta, epsilon, and gamma, and now zeta. How much more wreckage can the U.S. Gulf coast withstand before the process of chaotic disinvestment begins?

So far, there have been a total of 28 tropical or subtropical cyclones, 27 named storms, 10 hurricanes, and 4 major hurricanes. With 27 tropical or subtropical storms, it is the second most active Atlantic hurricane season on record, behind only the 2005 Atlantic hurricane season. It is also only the second tropical cyclone season to feature the Greek letter storm naming system, with the other season also being 2005.

The WMO report issues another



wake-up call to leaders at all levels of government and those interested in clearly understanding the critical



## Climate Crisis, cont.

need for respecting climate science and urging legislators to maintain funding to backstop our preparedness.

Efforts to lower our collective carbon emissions should be kitchen table conversations with all generations. For individuals and governments, a table of those solutions can be found at the [Drawdown Project](#).

What has been an unfortunate side-effect of the coronavirus pandemic is that it has created gaps in our scientific data because humans have been unable to undertake measurement activities and service data gathering devices for fear of spreading the contagion.

Some of the report's key findings include:

- Atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations showed no signs of peaking and have



Source: NOAA

continued to increase to new records.

- CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in 2020 will fall by an estimated 4% to 7% in 2020 due to COVID-19 confinement policies.

- The average global temperature for 2016–2020 is expected to be the warmest on record, about 1.1°C above 1850–1900, a reference period for temperature change since pre-industrial times and 0.24°C warmer than the global average temperature for 2011–2015.

- Human-induced climate change is affecting life-sustaining systems,

from the top of the mountains to the depths of the oceans, leading to accelerating sea-level rise, with cascading effects for ecosystems and human security. This increasingly challenges adaptation and integrated risk management responses.

- The global ocean has warmed unabated since 1970 and has taken up more than 90% of the excess heat in the climate system. Since 1993, the rate of ocean warming—and, thus, heat uptake—has more than doubled.

- By 2050, the number of people at risk of floods will increase from its current level of 1.2 billion to 1.6 billion. In the early to mid-2010s, 1.9 billion people, or 27% of the global population, lived in potential severely water-scarce areas. In 2050, this number will increase to 2.7 to 3.2 billion people.

- The COVID-19 pandemic has

## Climate Crisis, cont.

produced significant impacts on the global observing systems which, in turn, have affected the quality of forecasts and other weather-, climate-, and ocean-related services.

From risk management and resiliency perspectives, we must urge our fellow citizens to once again embrace science as a friend. We will not overcome the coronavirus pandemic or the climate crisis without once again placing our faith and trust in verifiable data and the scientists and organizations that devote their lives, livelihoods, and reputations to delivering it. The longer the coronavirus continues to disrupt the U.S. and world economies and human interactions, the greater the data holes become in gauging progress on the climate crisis. Something we can ill afford. ■

## County Council to Consider Adopting the 2018 International Green Construction Code (IgCC)

*By Tim Willard, Vice President*

The Department of Permitting Services will soon send the County Council the 2018 International Green Construction Code to replace the 2012 version that was passed in 2017. The new version of the code looks to be a significant improvement over the previous one. Since buildings contribute around 60% of all greenhouse gasses, a robust green building code is vital in making the county more sustainable. The City of Gaithersburg has already adopted a version of the 2018 code.

In the previous version, most of the requirements of the code were moved to a non-mandatory appendix, including important elements such as green roofs or standards for renewable energy, leading critics to



charge that the new code actually weakened previous green codes the county had enacted. Furthermore builders were allowed to continue

## **MoCo Considers IgCC, cont.**

using the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) standard as an alternative. Ultimately, the 2017 regulation changed very little.

The proposed 2018 IgCC adds back some important provisions. It contains mandatory provisions for green roofs, a requirement to “Track and Assess Energy Consumption,” revises mandatory peak energy load reduction, and revises some performance tables to a stricter standard.

In other areas, the new code creates standards for site waste management during construction, moves water use standards from the optional section to mandatory, and increases indoor air quality standards.

There are still holes in the proposed code. No provisions about

zoning, water use reduction, or regulations of buildings after issuance of a certificate of occupancy can be enforced by DPS because it has no authority in those areas. Additional changes in the law would be required before those areas could be regulated.

The 2021 IgCC is in the final stages of preparation and will be published in the first quarter of 2021, but before any local jurisdiction could pass it the state would have to pass legislation authorizing it. This never happened with the 2015 version of the IgCC and it’s not clear whether the state would authorize the 2021 version.

When the council gets the new regulation it will have thirty days in which to vote it down. Otherwise it will automatically become law. The new regulation won’t solved all of our climate change challenges but it is a significant step forward. ■

## **CIVIC FED TONIGHT!**

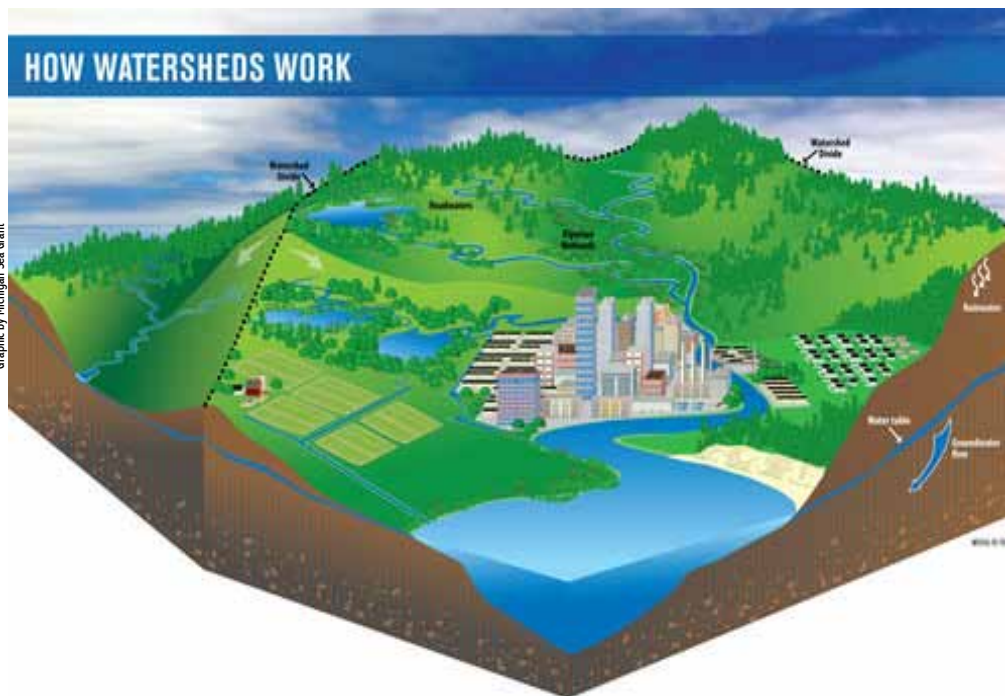
### ***SEEKING POSSIBLE SPEAKERS FOR YOUR CIVIC ASSOCIATION MEETINGS?***

**Members of the MCCF Executive Committee have extensive experience in issues such as transportation, land use and zoning, schools, parks, environmental concerns, taxes, and public spending. Plus, they have a community-oriented perspective on these matters. If you would like an executive committee member to speak at a meeting, contact President Alan Bowser at *president AT montgomerycivic DOT org*. Include topics, possible dates.**

## Focus on Streams and Stormwater to Restore Watersheds, Advocate for Clean Water

The Montgomery County Civic Federation is a member of Montgomery County's Stormwater Partners Network. It's a coalition that works throughout Montgomery County and at the State level with stakeholders responsible for environmental management to advocate for clean water, restore our watersheds, and connect communities to their backyard creeks and streams.

We were, therefore, pleased to join members of the County's environmental community concerned about stormwater and stream restoration to help develop a joint program of advocacy for State and local efforts to protect our watersheds. To this end, a working group has been established to explore this issue over the next months including the following topics:



Graphic by Michigan Sea Grant

■ principles of effective stream restoration,

## Stormwater, cont.

- connections to the MS4 and general permit process,
- impacts on and surveys of native species,
- special considerations in the Ag Reserve,
- finances of stream restoration, and
- alternative stormwater management strategies.

MCCF members will play an important role in this project.

For more information, check out these links.

■ **Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection webpage about stream restoration.** Stream restoration is a set of techniques or methods the County uses to protect adjacent properties and public infrastructure by reducing stream bank erosion,

minimizing the down-cutting of stream bed, and restoring aquatic ecosystems (natural stream system).

■ **Montgomery Parks stream restoration page.** The Stream Restoration Program is intended to restore degraded stream channels and protect adjacent infrastructure at various Parks throughout Montgomery County. This project makes corrective improvements to damaged stream channels, floodplains,

and tributaries. The prevention of continued erosion is a key goal as well as improving the aquatic habitats in our local eco-system. Stream protection projects are examined from a watershed perspective to identify and control the source of the problems.

■ **Recent Bay Journal article about stream restoration.**

■ Learn more about the **Stormwater Partners Network here.** ■

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## MCCF Shares Concerns About I-495, I-270 Managed Lanes

The Montgomery County Civic Federation, Inc., has expressed its concern about the Governor's proposal for Managed Lanes on I-495 and I-270, in a **Resolution approved at its September 2020 General Meeting.**

The Maryland Department

of Transportation State Highway Administration's (MDOT SHA) 18,000-page Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for SHA's proposed Beltway and Interstate 270 widening plan was released on July 10 with a comment period ini-

## Managed Lanes, cont.

tially established for October 8 and subsequently extended to November 9.

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) and other agencies have raised serious objections about the \$11 billion project and did not concur with the proposed list of alternatives. MCCF concurs with many of M-NCPPC's concerns.

Here's a summary of M-NCPPC's major issues with the I-495/I-270 draft Environmental Impact Study, Joint (Wetlands) Permit Application (JPA):

■ MDOT SHA and the Federal Highway Administration have eliminated alternatives from detailed study—including the MD 200 Diversion Alternative, transportation demand management, and transit

alternatives—that are practicable and would be much less damaging to the environment.

■ The limits of disturbance (LOD) in the DEIS do not adequately address the likely impacts of the project on aquatic resources.

■ The JPA and supporting documents fail to adequately address required mitigation.

■ The JPA and supporting documents do not comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

■ The Clean Water Act Section 401 Water Quality Certification and the Coastal Zone Management Act (CMZA) Section 307 consistency should be reviewed prior to the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS).

■ Insufficient accounting for the Intercounty Connector (ICC). The MD 200 Diversion Alternative

should be studied in more detail as a reasonable and practicable technique to avoid impact to critical environmental resources. Various modeling assumptions should be considered in the analyses with and without the I-95 segment.

■ LOD modifications after FEIS and Record of Decision (ROD) and Managed Lanes access issues.

■ Making Parks Whole Again.

■ Adherence to the Capper-Cramton Act. M-NCPPC will need a complete understanding and commitment from MDOT SHA regarding parkland impacts and mitigation before approval from the National Capital Planning Commission is sought for a change in use or ownership of Capper-Cramton parkland.

■ Social equity. The DEIS does not sufficiently address impact to economically challenged popula-



## Managed Lanes, cont.

tions or social equity as required under NEPA.

■ Alternative modes of travel. The DEIS does not meet the stated goal of leveraging other modes of transportation.

■ Non-auto driver mode share (NADMS). NADMS is a primary performance metric and a goal in many Montgomery County master plans, particularly for the urban centers, yet the DEIS does not address how the project will impact those goals or how negative impacts to these goals will be mitigated.

■ Non-conformance with the Historic Preservation Act. The DEIS does not adequately fulfill the Historic Preservation Act, Section 106 requirements as part of the NEPA process.

■ Inadequate stormwater treat-

ment. The storm water management (SWM) approach presented in the DEIS is insufficient and ignores decades of degradation that the

existing highways have inflicted on local land.

[More information on M-NCPPC's comments can be found here.](#) ■

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## A Message from the MCCF President

*By Alan Bowser*

I'm writing to remind you to renew your membership in the Montgomery County Civic Federation, Inc., as we begin our 2020–2021 membership year. Or, if you and your association are not current members of the Civic Fed, we invite you to join us in our work.

As you know, by renewing or joining the Civic Federation, you become part of our County-wide organization in support of our civic associations and homeowners' associations. With your help, we can continue our active advocacy work

on behalf of our neighbors and maintain the high level of service we provide to Montgomery County's residents.

We are fortunate to have a great group of Civic Federation officers who selflessly volunteer their time to monitor programs, policies, and events at the County and State levels, and who work tirelessly to educate our members and advocate for valuable changes in policies.

We invite the participation of you and your organization at our meetings and in the work of our



## President's Message, cont.

Executive Committee and in our subject-matter committees. And there are many opportunities for your delegates to serve as chairs of Civic Fed committees and to be part of our Executive Committee team.

### WHY SUPPORT YOUR COUNTY'S CIVIC FEDERATION?

■ For ninety-five years, the MCCF has been devoted to improving the quality of life in Montgomery County, advocating for improvements in the infrastructure of the County, and evaluating and discussing issues of concern to its members.

■ We are the only Montgomery County-wide membership organization which addresses critical issues across a wide spectrum, including land use and planning, public

safety, environment, education, public finance, health, and community development.

■ We have successfully mobilized community support to make meaningful changes in transportation, environmental, and public accountability issues.

■ With member feedback, communications, resolutions, and testimony are provided to the County government, State government, and bi-County agencies on a regular basis.

For example, recently, with help from our members, our efforts to promote good government resulted in the Maryland State Legislature creating new Inspector General authorities for Montgomery County Public Schools, the Maryland-National Capital Parks and Planning Commission, and the Washington

Suburban Sanitary Commission.

As we approach the 100th anniversary of the Civic Federation, we seek to expand our membership and to enhance the effectiveness of our education and advocacy mission. We can do that with your membership.

You [join the Civic Federation online here](#) and you can pay via PayPal or credit card after submitting your application. If you prefer to write a check, you can [download and print a paper form here](#), which can be mailed in with your payment.

We'll be meeting virtually for the foreseeable future due to the coronavirus pandemic, so it will be easier to participate in our regular monthly and special meetings.

Thank you for your time and we hope to see you soon. ■

## Minutes of the October 12, 2020, MCCF General Meeting #916 Held Virtually Via Zoom

*By Karen Cordry, Recording Secretary*

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the General Meeting was held via Zoom as a virtual meeting. The time of the meeting was revised to 7:30 p.m.

**Call to Order:** President Alan Bowser called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. There were 44 participants on Zoom.

**Approval of Agenda:** It was moved and seconded that the agenda be approved; so approved by voice vote.

**Treasurer's Report:** Jerry Garson reported that for the period from July 1 to date, we received a total of \$799 in dues and had \$514 in ex-

penses, for a net surplus of \$284. The expenses were for the website and our membership in the Committee for Montgomery. Our current bank balance is \$9,617.

**Membership Report:** Alan reported that he had been working on expanding the MCCF member associations more into the northern and western areas of the County. Other new groups that joined recently and were welcomed include North Woodside, Good Hope Estates, North Hills of Sligo, Long Branch, Rosemary Hills, and Lyttonsville.

**Community Hero Award:** In these trying times, MCCF is announcing a monthly Community Hero Award for someone who is making a difference in their commu-

nity. This month's honoree is Elliot Levine, who lives in the Dale Drive/Piney Branch area. He has been using his musical talents to raise money for food security groups, such as Shepherd's Table. He has already raised more than \$2,000, but much more is needed. Those who wish to donate can text to "24365." Elliot's concerts are Sundays at 4:30 p.m.

### OCTOBER MEETING

The topic was the Montgomery County General Plan Revisions Public Hearing Draft. Speakers:

■ Gwen Wright, Director, Planning Department;

■ Casey Anderson, Chair, Planning Board;

■ Khalid Afzad, Project Manager, General Plan; and

## October Minutes, cont.

■ Carrie McCarthy, Chief, Special Projects Division.

Planning Department representatives presented **some PowerPoint slides on their Public Hearing Draft recommendations** for the revised Comprehensive General Plan for the County called “Thrive Montgomery 2050.” The **Public Hearing is scheduled for November 19**. In September, MCCF adopted a resolution seeking postponement of further action due to the pandemic and sent it to the County Council. The Planning Board opposed the request.

Planning Staff responded to questions that had been received by MCCF as well as questions in the Zoom Chat. It was noted by the Planning Department that this proposed General Plan is directed at a long-range vision for the County

through the year 2050. It was noted that the **1964 General Plan, “On Wedges and Corridors,”** had worked on a “hub and spoke” concept, with D.C. being the hub and growth was channeled along major roads while preserving wedges of open space. The Wedges and Corridors General Plan was refined in 1969 and 1993. Now, the County has become much more of an interconnected web with residential and transportation grouped along both north-south and cross-county axes.

The report noted the numerous forms of change—demographic, economic, social, technological, and climate—and the need to respond to all of them. There are nine themes that form the basis for their recommendations in Thrive Montgomery 2050:

■ Compact form of development/urbanism and complete communi-

ties.

■ Corridors are the place for new growth.

■ We must stop planning for cars.

■ Eradicate greenhouse gas emissions.

■ Attainable housing for all income levels.

■ Evolution of single-family neighborhoods near transit.

■ A diverse county.

■ Champion the importance of place.

■ Regional solutions and strategies.

The three overarching outcome goals are economic health, equity among community members, and environmental resilience. The presentation also summarized the outreach performed to date. The draft envisions “complete communities,” with all needed activities being

## October Minutes, cont.

available within a 15-minute walk, citing Silver Spring and Kensington as examples.

The overall process will unfold over 30 years and will involve numerous partners in the rest of the County government, state and federal agencies, and private sector participants. The plan itself does not make cost estimates; those would be made at finer levels when particular projects and sector plans are being revised.

The panel noted that, despite the effects of COVID-19, they did not want to delay moving forward on the proposed Plan because this was such a long-term project and they didn't want to waste the outreach efforts to date. They did recognize that COVID could illustrate that some changes could well be possible that had not been thought of before and Casey

noted that it did throw a spotlight on some of the challenges that needed to be incorporated into the Plan.

Staff welcomes public comments on the draft Plan before or at the scheduled November 19 public hearing. The record will be held open until early December. A work session will be held in mid-December with a goal of adoption by the County Council in Spring 2021.

Comments were made that the length and breadth of the Draft Plan presented a real challenge to anyone seeking to engage with it and make serious comments while we are in a public health crisis. Alan Bowser noted that the **Civic Federation has passed a resolution asking that the process be delayed for a year** after the pandemic emergency had been rescinded.

Another comment was that the scope of the plan might be too much

to deal with in a single document. Gwen noted that the Plan did not propose to alter the roles of other County departments. They are laying out a high-level work program to guide the Planning Department's efforts going forward, which is similar to what was done in prior plans in 1964 and 1993. Casey noted that a failure to plan tended to result in sprawl by default and that drives up costs. Gwen noted that the 1964 Plan dealt with more of a blank slate, while this plan works with a much more developed area that requires a more fine-grained approach.

There were questions about the extent to which the plan focused on growth instead of sustainability. Casey stated that properly designed compact development can result in growth that is still sustainable. The Draft Plan still maintains 1/3 of the

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County in the Ag Reserve, along with 37,000 acres in parks. The need for further efforts to maintain the urban tree canopy was raised and Casey agreed that was a factor that had to be integrated into project approvals.

Gwen prefers that any rezoning of single-family neighborhoods be done through context-sensitive master and sector plans for fine-tuning, not through a one-size-fits-all zoning text amendment (ZTA) or other county-wide zoning map document.

An issue was raised with respect to the need to deal with the aging demographics and issues specific to seniors. Casey noted those were important questions, but, in many ways, all age brackets want similar “complete” communities that give them access to all of the connections they need.

He noted that part of the proposed Plan (along with the County’s Energizing Public Spaces Plan passed two years ago) was designed to maintain and expand the County’s outdoor facilities and people’s ability to use them. He noted again that “compact” development was meant to leave more unbuilt space for environmental uses, including parks, storm water management, etc.

The discussion wrapped up with points about the need for proper metrics to measure results, the need to ensure that developers pay their fair share of infrastructure costs to support their developments, the need for further outreach, and the importance of ensuring affordable housing throughout the county.

Planning Staff agreed to provide written answers to questions that were not able to be asked due to time constraints. These, along with the

Planning Department’s slide presentation, [can be found here](#).

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

### *Transportation*

■ The next MCCF meeting on Nov. 9 will include the head of the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) and the Purple Line Managers to talk about how to go forward on the project after the break down of the private contract. Right now, public transit use remains down about 88%, while auto traffic is back up to about 88% of normal. Financing further transit will be a major issue under that scenario.

■ The Route 29 Flash Express will be starting service in the next few days.

### *Legislation*

■ Peggy Dennis noted that she was heading up this committee and would



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be asking the County delegation to Annapolis to let us know about any bills of interest. She urged anyone with interest in those matters to let her know and join the committee.

### *Environment*

■ Carol Barth noted that they had met with Forest Conservation Coordinator Laura Miller and talked for a couple hours about the Urban Tree Initiative and the need for Community Tree Councils organized by watershed to make sure that trees were part of a stormwater analysis.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

■ There was considerable discussion about Ballot Questions C and D and what position MCCF should state thereon. Dick Kauffinger gave some historical perspective and

noted that the Civic Fed had long supported using districts in order to ensure that it was not only those who could afford a county-wide at-large campaign that could run. Alan Bowser noted that the Civic Fed had voted in the early 2000s to support a 9-district Council. There was discussion as to whether we should or needed to take a new position or merely maintain the existing position. It was noted that some delegates had not consulted with their membership on the issue.

The final question as moved and seconded was that: “The Civic Fed should announce that it reaffirmed its support for a 9-district council as set out in Ballot Question D and recommended a vote against Question C.” The motion passed by voice vote, with six members abstaining.

**Adjournment:** Approved 9:50 p.m. ■

## cfn

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