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TO PRINT, USE **PRINT VERSION**

of note

Next MCCF Meeting #938

Monday, December 12, 2022, 7:30 p.m.
online via Zoom. Topic: “A Conversation with Police Chief Jones.”

! **Join the Zoom Meeting Here**

[See further instructions on page 2. No password is required.]

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Membership Application

JOIN ONLINE | MAIL-IN FORM

Federation Meeting #938

Monday, December 12, 2022

7:30 p.m.

Online Zoom Meeting

AGENDA

1. Call to Order/Introductions
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Approval of Minutes: Nov. General Meeting **P.18**
4. Treasurer's Report
5. Announcements
6. December Program: A Conversation with Police Chief Marcus Jones **P.3**
7. Committee Reports
8. Old Business
9. New Business
10. 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. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the start time is now at 7:30 p.m.

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

■ To be part of the video conference, first **visit the Zoom website** to download the program for your phone or computer.

■ Date and Time: Monday, December 12, 2022, 7:30 p.m. ET.

■ 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 863 6155 6889. No password is required.

We hope you will join us! ■

mccf

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 24

December Program: A Conversation with Montgomery County Police Chief Marcus Jones

By Alan Bowser, President

Montgomery County Police Chief Marcus Jones will be our featured speaker at the December General Meeting of the Civic Federation. Chief Jones has regularly joined the Civic Federation to discuss public safety trends in the County and to answer questions from our delegates and the public.

In the past several years, the nation has experienced multiple social disruptions due to the COVID pandemic, historically high firearms sales, as well the murder of George Floyd, and all have had an unusual impact on crime. Early in the pandemic, due to severely constrained mobility, crime patterns changed, and most reported crime dropped. Total violent crime in the County, for example, decreased by almost

13% in 2020. Notable exceptions were carjackings (with an almost 90% increase) and homicides (a 21% increase).

However, in 2021, as COVID-related closures eased, community activity began to normalize, and many crime rates returned closer to pre-pandemic totals. Unfortunately, certain violent crimes—such as homicide and carjackings—continued to escalate beyond pre-pandemic levels. Homicides increased by 88% in 2021 and carjackings increased by 64%.

In 2022, violent crime remains elevated, although certain violent crimes like homicide have decreased. Firearm-related crime and violence remain at elevated levels and contact shootings in particular continue to increase.

In a recent meeting of the Public Safety Committee of the Montgomery County Council, it was reported that:

- Crime has increased 13.4% this year, although homicide as a subset has fallen significantly, by 36%.

- All forms of robbery, including carjacking, have increased significantly from last year.

- Firearm-related crime continues to drive elevated crime levels, and has increased by 20% over last year.

- Drug-related arrests have increased by 56% this year, following two years of notable reductions.

- Nonviolent crime has increased slightly, by 1.5%, although burglary as a subset has increased by 31%.

- Racial disparities in violent victimization remain a concern, par-

December Program, cont.

ticularly in homicides and contact shootings.

Recently, the Office of the County Executive and the Montgomery County Police Department released the Effective Law Enforcement for All (ELEFA) Review of MCPD which recommended changes in how the Department conducts its business.

“For more than a year, the Montgomery County Police Department has worked closely with Effective Law Enforcement for All with one goal in mind—to improve the law enforcement services we provide to the more than one million residents in our County,” said MCPD Chief Marcus Jones. “We have already implemented some of the changes recommended in the report, particularly in the areas of training and crisis intervention. We have created

a new De-escalation/Use of Force training unit for more specific focus on these important issues. We have also improved our Crisis Intervention program by working with the Behavioral Health Crisis Collaboration on a response model that will help officers respond more efficiently to calls or, in some cases, not responding to a call when more appropriate services are available.”

The Elrich administration has invested in continued expansion of the Mobile Crisis and Outreach Teams (MCOTs). Those teams have increased the calls that receive a mental health provider only or a joint mental health provider and law enforcement response. In 2020, MCOTs responded to 495 calls for service. In 2021, that number increased to 979. This expansion will continue and move to more mental health professional only responses.

Moving more mental health responses away from police responses allows the police to focus on other law enforcement challenges and crime prevention measures, provides more meaningful help for people in mental health crisis, and results in fewer negative interactions. To continue the effort to divert mental health calls away from the criminal justice system, Montgomery County, with support from the Maryland General Assembly, is building a Restoration Center which will further our efforts to divert those experiencing a mental health or addiction crisis away from the criminal justice system and towards additional treatment services.

Key recommendations in the Final Report include:

I Use of Force: ELEFA has made several recommendations to improve the training, management,

December Program, cont.

and investigation of uses of force by MCPD officers.

I Mental Health and Crisis

Response: Building on the observations in the Preliminary Report, ELEFA has made recommendations intended to improve the County's capacity to respond to individuals experiencing a mental or emotional health crisis, to enhance officer mental health crisis response training, and to ensure better understanding by both officers and the public of the ecosystem of resources available to assist individuals in crisis.

I Internal Investigations:

ELEFA has made recommendations to ensure that uses of force and misconduct complaints are independently, uniformly, and transparently investigated and reported.

I Training: ELEFA made a series

of recommendations to improve the quality of recruit and in-service training, including Field Officer Training (FTO), and to expand training to improve cultural sensitivity and reduce the risks presented by explicit and implicit bias.

| ELEFA recommends that the Academy emphasize a "Guardian" approach over a "Warrior" mindset, which was also a recommendation of the RPS Task Force (Data Collection and Analysis).

| ELEFA has recommended improvements to the MCPD's data analysis systems to achieve user-friendly, integrated, and comprehensive data analysis capacity.

| One of the key recommendations is that MCPD adopt an Early Warning and Intervention System (EWIS). By flagging warning signs that an officer is demonstrating performance issues or is suffering

from emotional, mental, or physical health concerns, an effective and comprehensive EWIS system allows supervisors to intervene proactively to prevent harm to the officer or the public, thus saving careers and lives.

I Body Worn Cameras: ELEFA has recommended expanded deployment of Body Worn Cameras (BWCs) and improvements to the standards guiding the recording of officers' interactions on duty.

I Recruitment: ELEFA made several recommendations intended to strengthen an already robust MCPD recruitment program, including more intentional consideration of diversity and inclusion, competitive compensation, incentives, and enhanced technology (for background investigators).

MCPD will also hire a civilian Ph.D. to oversee the police training

December Program, cont.

curriculum, as the interim ELEFA report recommended, to direct development of law enforcement training materials as recommended by the audit. This investment will help to keep the MCPD training current with national best practices, improve tracking of the trainings received, and have a strategic approach to offering continuing learning and improvement opportunities to our officers.

“I’m grateful Effective Law Enforcement Change for All completed the audit necessary to help us evolve into what public safety should look like in Montgomery County,” said Reimagining Public Safety Task Force Member Co-Chair Bernice Mireku-North. “Thanks to the cooperation and commitments from our County Executive, Chief of Police,

Fraternal Order of Police, and other County stakeholders, our community can now move forward with concrete changes the community desires in our Police Department and public safety in general. I look forward to convening with the Task Force members to review and discuss the audit to help with the necessary changes to make Montgomery County safe for all of us.”

The full report can be found [here](#).

Chief Jones was appointed the 17th Police Chief of the Montgomery County Maryland Department of Police in November 2019. He has also served as the Commander of the 3rd District (Silver Spring), Director of Major Crimes, Drug Enforcement Commander, and a variety of other assignments. He is a former National Chairman of the National Black Police Association and held

several leadership positions in the NBPA and its chapters. He has served on the Board of Directors for the National Law Enforcement Memorial Fund and the Task Force on Mentoring in Montgomery County. He has a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Administration from the University of Maryland University College and he is a graduate of the FBI National Academy (Session #267) and the National Executive Institute. Chief Jones is a member of the Major Cities Chiefs Association, the Maryland Chiefs of Police Association, the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), and the International Association Chiefs of Police (IACP).

You can email Chief Jones at CHIEFMCPD@montgomerycountymd.gov and follow him on Twitter [@mcpdChief](https://twitter.com/mcpdChief). Learn more about [Chief Jones here](#). ■

Wash. Post: Mont. County Police Data Collection is 'Woefully Inadequate,' Audit Says

The audit also recommended the agency expand its internal affairs capacity and beef up training for officers interacting with residents undergoing mental health crisis

By *Dan Morse*, The Washington Post, November 18, 2022, at 6:50 p.m.

A two-year outside audit of the Montgomery County Police Department—a 1,200-officer force in Maryland’s most populous jurisdiction—found “woefully inadequate” data collection and recommended the agency expand its internal affairs capacity and beef up training for officers interacting with residents undergoing mental health crises.

The findings, detailed in a 126-page report released Friday, identified other concerns as well, even as the audit stressed the department overall provides good service and is already addressing many of the identified shortcomings.

“The MCPD [Montgomery

County Police Department] is a high-performing organization,” the report concluded. “Yet like all high-performing organizations, there is not only opportunity for improvement, but continuous improvement is essential to maintaining pace with constantly changing environmental circumstances and public expectations.”

The county tapped an outside consulting firm specializing in public safety, Effective Law Enforcement for All, to audit the department’s policies and practices. The audit is just one of many measures the county and jurisdictions across the nation have taken to try to change policing.

The report pointed to “major

gaps in both data collection and analysis.” It also said “inadequate data hampers any understanding of the real problems around use of force incidents” and recommended making data related to use of force publicly available.

“MCPD’s systems for tracking and classifying uses of force, [Crisis Intervention Team] responses, and Calls for Service are outdated and woefully inadequate relative to the Departments’ needs, generally accepted practices, and the public’s demand for transparency,” the report said.

Police officials said that better data tools are on the way.

“The Montgomery County Police

MCPD Data Collection, cont.

Department is amid procurement for a new Records Management System, which will allow for implementation of several data sets,” they wrote in a letter that was part of the audit released Friday.

The larger report pointed to highlights of the department’s work.

“There was excellent handling of domestic abuse calls for service; officers used appropriate de-escalation where necessary and were empathetic, well-trained, and informed,” the report said.

Auditors watched more than 500 video recordings taken by officers’ body cameras that showed them interacting with residents. “Most officers were courteous and friendly while handling calls for service and traffic stops,” the audit stated, adding that “there were no indications

of racial bias in the [body camera] incidents observed. However, of the traffic stops reviewed in the random [body camera] sample, most interactions included people of color.”

David Douglass, an official with Effective Law Enforcement for All, said that Montgomery County Police Chief Marcus Jones embraced a detailed look at its operations and has been open to suggestions and recommendations. Speaking directly to him at a news conference Friday, Douglass told Jones, “You embraced this, you welcomed it, you made everyone available to us. You’ve partnered with us.”

The police department has already made some changes based on preliminary findings from the audit released earlier. Some of those changes include moving to hire “a civilian Ph.D. to oversee the police training curriculum” and “to direct

development of law enforcement training materials as recommended by the audit.”

At a news conference on Friday, County Executive Marc Elrich noted that the decision to have the audit performed predated the murder of George Floyd, who was killed by Minneapolis police.

“This decision to move in this direction was taken before George Floyd,” Elrich said. “We did not get woke when George Floyd happened.”

In his letter addressing the audit, Elrich added that the county needs to continue to expand efforts to address mental health concerns.

“Too often law enforcement has been left to manage situations that society has failed to address. My administration has invested in continued expansion of the Mobile Crisis and Outreach Teams,” he

MCPD Data Collection, cont.

wrote. “Those teams have increased the calls that receive a mental health provider only or a joint mental health provider and law enforcement response. In 2020, MCOTs responded to 495 calls for service. In 2021, that number increased to 979. This expansion will continue and move to more mental health professional only responses.”

The auditors concluded that the department’s Crisis Intervention Team unit “does not use data or analytics to inform strategy or operations. Its work has been self-described as being ‘reactive’ to incoming calls and referrals.”

Auditors also addressed Internal Affairs investigations of incidents where officers use force.

“Revise MCPD use of deadly force investigation policies and pro-

ocols to require a prompt, separate, parallel administrative investigation of each officer-involved shooting, and require the preparation of a report documenting investigative

findings,” one of the suggestions said. “This would be an improvement on the current IAD administrative report.”

[\[Read full article here.\]](#) ■

The Alborno Council Disappointed Many Constituents

By Elizabeth Joyce, Second Vice President

On December 5, the County will inaugurate a new County Executive and County Council. To prepare for the future, it’s time to assess the record of the outgoing Council, led by Gabe Alborno. The promising and congenial Alborno, eager to govern by “consensus,” often met stiff resistance from colleagues in no mood to compromise. As a result, this Council leaves a record of modest legislative achievements and a raging controversy over its handling

of Thrive Montgomery 2050, the flawed 30-year general plan rushed to passage on October 25, and of scandals involving the Planning Board that devised it.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

First, what did this Council accomplish? They approved most of County Executive Elrich’s \$6.3 billion FY 2023 budget, which had significant financial support from the federal government and the state, as well as a strong county financial

Albornoz Council, cont.

recovery from the pandemic. Without raising taxes, it increased funding for the Department of Health and Human Services, the County's Consolidated service hubs; and the school system, early childhood education, and Montgomery College; and funded affordable housing and rent support for low-income residents. Exactly how the \$190 million appropriated to build and preserve affordable housing will be used is not clear, and constituents should pay close attention to how the next Council acts to advance these goals.

Other approved measures included a property tax credit for first responders, increased compensation to help recruit and retain police officers, a new Police Accountability Board (PAB) and Administrative Charging Committee (ACC)

to review public complaints about police misconduct, and a measure to reduce access to ghost guns by minors. To fight climate change, the budget increased the Department of Environmental Protection funding by 116% and provided \$20 million for the Montgomery County Green Bank. The budget also invested \$228.6 million in the Department of Transportation to boost support for public transportation.

PLANNING BOARD SCANDALS

Yet the Council's most consequential act was its unanimous passage of Thrive Montgomery 2050, a 30-year general plan driven by former Planning Board Chair Casey Anderson, whom the Council forced to resign (with all his fellow board members) in early October 2022. Before the scandal involving Anderson's years-long violation of County

rules prohibiting alcohol in County offices, he was (accurately) accused of repeatedly **violating the County's Open Meetings Act**, of **abusing the Planning Board's consent agenda** to exempt specific projects from required scrutiny, and of **failing to require that lobbyists register** as such before doing business with the Planning Board.

Anderson's **grudging and often defiant response to many of these judgments** received little attention before Planning Board misconduct forced the Council to demand their resignation and to quickly appoint a "temporary" planning board a few weeks later. The Council's undue haste to "move on" from this scandal suggested an effort to ignore the extraordinary significance of these violations. As a result, the public will probably never learn who at-

Albornoz Council, cont.

tended Casey Anderson’s after-work happy hours, whether they had financial interests involving the powerful Planning Board, and whether *ex parte* communications may have taken place during these events. The public deserves a full investigation and official report on this matter.

THRIVE MONTGOMERY 2050

It is impossible in an article of this length to document Thrive’s flaws, analyzed in former Minneapolis Planning Commission Vice President Alissa Luepke Pier’s excellent September presentation to the Civic Federation (see [October Newsletter](#), p. 12). The Civic Federation’s many articles and resolutions on Thrive support her view of the plan as a poorly built Trojan horse filled with unpleasant surprises to come.

County Executive Elrich also thoughtfully detailed Thrive’s problems in an October 2022 [memo asking the Council to postpone its passage](#) (because there was no urgency to pass this 30-year plan this year and because “it is impossible to separate the preparation and presentation of Thrive from the Board’s misconduct”).

Elrich then listed four important errors in the Thrive development process and suggested remedies for each. These errors included:

(1) **“Council added three new chapters on Economic Development, Environmental Resilience, and Racial Equity, without any recommendations.”**

These new chapters, written by the Council rather than the Planning Board to replace chapters removed by Casey Anderson in 2020–2021, were written more than a year after

the only two official June 2021 hearings on the document and were not available to the public until a week before the September work session on them. In that session, ***the Council did not review any of the concerns of the public, pro or con, that had been expressed in over 1,500 pages of correspondence but instead included 20 pages written by two pro-Thrive lobbyists.*** Their excuse was that there was not enough time to solicit comments because they were rushing to pass Thrive on October 25.

(2) Throughout the process, ***the Thrive drafts have had the wrong Growth Map in the Compact Growth chapter.*** As a result, “Thrive is misleading on a critical component of the General Plan.” In other words, the use of the

Albornoz Council, cont.

wrong map throughout the process denied residents key information on Thrive's likely impact on their neighborhoods and homes. This map and other key graphics were added only to the staff report for October 25, the day the Council passed Thrive.

(3) **Throughout the Thrive process, County and Planning officials have misled residents and other County officials about the significance of Thrive for rezoning and changes in subdivision and other land use policies.** These County and Planning officials claimed over and over in different forums that “Thrive is a policy document and does not change any zoning in any neighborhood.” (See [Myths vs. Facts](#), Montgomery Planning Department website.) However, the updated staff

report for October 25 stated that Thrive “provides direction for decisions about land use, transportation, and related issues under local government influence, but it does not by itself change zoning or other detailed land use regulations **although implementation of its recommendations may require such changes.**” In other words, after years of denial, the Council finally admitted that implementing Thrive will require zoning changes.

(4) Although Albornoz had courageously decided to hire a racial equity consultant to conduct an independent study before Thrive was passed, **his Council chose to ignore the study's recommendations that far more time and outreach to minority and low income residents were crucial before Thrive was passed.** (See [Elrich's letter on the issue.](#))

In other words, after spending \$100K on a hastily prepared racial equity study, the Council decided to ignore its findings in its rush to pass Thrive.

In response to this important memo from Elrich, [Albornoz sent a surprisingly personal and factually inaccurate letter](#) dismissing Elrich's arguments and accusing him of opposing progress. Four days later, the Council passed Thrive, with Albornoz arguing more time would have not led to a more effective document. Yet as David Lublin's great October 25 blog “[Failure to Thrive](#)” pointed out, Thrive was outdated by the time it limped over the finish line because it ignored pandemic-related work pattern changes (telework) and Metro challenges and relies on the quaint belief that housing, rather than investments in jobs and eco-

Albornoz Council, cont.

conomic development, should precede massive zoning plans. It is tempting to ask how much housing could have been built with the millions the Planning Board and Council spent on Thrive.

The weaknesses of this important plan, the ignoring of thousands of constituent emails opposing it, and the lack of transparency surrounding the Planning Board and Thrive's development raise serious concerns about this Council's view of the public they serve. Let's hope that, despite Albornoz's cringeworthy hints that the public "should be careful what you wish for" from the next Council, the reelected incumbents and their new colleagues can do better in the next four crucial years. ■

Washington Post: Six Women Poised to Change the Face of the Montgomery County Council

By *Katie Shepherd*, The Washington Post, November 13, 2022, 6:00 a.m.

Montgomery County voters elected a historic slate of candidates to the County Council on Tuesday, adding Latina, Asian, and Black representatives to a body that will be majority-female for the first time.

The six incoming members—all women—have their own priorities and beliefs that range from moderate to ultraliberal. On the whole, the changes are expected to shift the body further left in a deep-blue county that already prides itself as a haven for progressive ideas and policymaking.

"I'm really excited that we finally have a council that reflects the rich and beautiful diversity of our county," said Laurie-Anne Sayles,

who was elected to an at-large seat Tuesday.

In interviews, the newcomers cited plans to boost affordable housing and pedestrian safety and road quality, bolster the county's mental and behavioral health resources, restore jobs lost in the pandemic, and improve wages. Several campaigned on promises to improve equity for disenfranchised residents here, in one of the wealthiest counties in a state frequently ranked among the wealthiest in America by median household income.

Similar pledges lifted candidates across the state and nation to "firsts" this cycle: voters elected Maryland's first Black governor, first Black attorney general, and first immigrant and

Six Women, cont.

woman of color to serve as lieutenant governor. Nationally, voters elected the first female governors in Massachusetts and New York, and the first openly lesbian governors in Oregon and Massachusetts. Arkansas also elected its first female governor, Republican Sarah Sanders, though her politics are a stark contrast to the Democrats who made history in other states.

In Montgomery, where people of color make up nearly 6 in 10 of the county's 1.05 million residents, incoming council members said they recognized the significance of representing people who aren't accustomed to seeing themselves in the county's elected leadership.

The new members include an accountant, a mayor, a Venezuelan immigrant and dreamer, an adoptee

who serves as an assistant state attorney general, a first-generation Chinese American born and raised in the county, and a first-generation Jamaican American who works in public health.

In addition to Sayles, also elected Tuesday were Marilyn Balcombe (D-District 2), Kate Stewart (D-District 4), Kristin Mink (D-District 5), Natali Fani-González (D-District 6), and Dawn Luedtke (D-District 7). They will join five incumbents who secured reelection.

The incoming council will be tasked with taking up implementation of the controversial Thrive 2050 plan guiding growth and development that passed last month, appointing a new planning board after the entire body resigned amid scandal earlier this year, and continuing efforts on police reforms and steering Montgomery's coronavirus

recovery.

The council is expanding from nine to 11 members this year under a plan voters backed to alter the body's makeup in 2020. District lines were redrawn to create seats that better represent residents in the eastern reaches of the county. Throughout the campaign cycle, voters and candidates have questioned whether the equity-minded county government has done enough for the county's east side, where immigrant communities and predominantly Black and Latino neighborhoods have for decades gone without investment that helped other parts of the county prosper.

Mink will represent one of the new districts carved out to better represent east county residents, which consolidates Four Corners through Burtonsville. Mink ran on

Six Women, cont.

a liberal platform supporting rent stabilization and eviction protections, free bus rapid transit, and substantial economic investment in White Oak and Burtonsville Crossing, among other progressive issues.

Many of those priorities have been hot-button issues for the council in the past.

Newcomers Balcombe and Luedtke have positioned themselves as fiscal moderates, with major priorities that include fostering economic growth, increasing jobs and supporting small businesses.

Will Jawando (D-At Large), who has endeavored to push the council left since joining the body in 2018, hopes to see the incoming council revisit issues like rent stabilization, public safety reforms, and progressive tax policies—all efforts he

pushed but had to compromise on with the more moderate council of the last four years.

“I am excited that the new council will reflect the dynamism and rich diversity of our county,” Jawando told *The Washington Post*.

A largely new council also presents an opportunity for a reset of the at-times tense relationship between the county’s legislators and County Executive Marc Elrich, who narrowly survived a primary challenge this year. Elrich depends on the council to advance his legislative agenda, but the two branches of government have sometimes been out-of-step, even as they worked toward common goals on issues like economic development and the pandemic. But after Tuesday’s election, Elrich—who championed the effort to add new council districts to better reflect the county—and many of the new coun-

cil members voiced excitement about the opportunity to work together and, hopefully, forge a better relationship moving forward.

“It is not unusual to have differences of opinions between an executive and the council,” Elrich said, adding that he is optimistic about working with new members who have a “more progressive agenda.”

He said he expects his political priorities to align well with those more left-leaning new members and anticipates better success pursuing ideas that hit a dead end with the previous council, like long-term rent stabilization and increasing the number of affordable units attached to new developments.

“If you’re only one voice or two voices, it can be hard to break through the noise,” he said.

Montgomery voters on Tuesday

Six Women, cont.

voiced concerns over investment in east county, protecting abortion access, fixing roads, and funding schools. But no issue animated voters like housing affordability and wages.

Amina Manguera, 28, moved back home with her mother during the pandemic to save money on rent. At the polls on Tuesday, the pair cast votes supporting Stewart because of her positions on keeping housing costs affordable so people do not have to leave Montgomery to find a place to live.

“We like the area,” said her mother, Jennifer Manguera. “But we want it to stay affordable, where we can actually live and do things.”

Creating and maintaining affordable housing was a shared concern among new members, though they

had varying ideas for how to solve the county’s housing woes. Stewart, the outgoing mayor of Takoma Park, emphasized the county’s need to make it easier for renters to become homeowners by funding programs that assist funding down payments and deferred maintenance. Others support adding new units near transit lines and providing legal representation for people facing evictions. Still others favor rent stabilization and expanding tenant associations.

The No. 1 priority for Fani-González, who will represent a new east county district, District 6, is making Wheaton’s streets—especially Georgia Avenue—safer for pedestrians and cyclists.

“That’s the heart of Wheaton, that’s my community,” she said. “We deserve to live in a place that connects streets and parks and libraries and businesses without get-

ting killed just crossing the street.”

A Venezuelan immigrant who moved to the United States with her mother as a child, Fani-González cut her teeth in politics with CASA de Maryland, going door to door to persuade conservative voters to support the Maryland Dream Act. She was an advocate for the development of the Purple Line and served seven years on the Montgomery County Park and Planning Commission.

Most of the new members emphasized the importance of growing jobs within the county to recoup pandemic-era losses and help the region compete with its heavyweight neighbors in northern Virginia.

“My focus is business and jobs and the economy,” Balcombe told *The Post*.

She wants to focus on making it easier for small businesses to navi-

Six Women, cont.

gate the county's regulatory requirements, and favors expanding certificate programs and involving local businesses in the curriculum-development so young workers' skills will match employers' needs.

Balcombe also said she was ready to tackle the thorny issues that are sure to come up as the county implements the Thrive 2050 plan, which recommends zoning changes to allow duplexes, triplexes, and small apartment buildings in areas previously limited to single-family homes. That plan passed last month after three years of contentious public debate over how the county should absorb a growing population and address its housing shortage.

Opponents said adding denser housing to neighborhoods originally designed for single-family homes

would cause traffic congestion, crowded schools, and overtaxed police and emergency response services; supporters said the plan would make the county more walkable, affordable, and transit-oriented.

Luedtke, who works for the state attorney general, said she wants to work on issues of public safety, education, and health equity. She said she would support expanding the county's diversion courts that allow nonviolent offenders to receive treatment for addiction or mental health issues instead of serving jail time. She also supports community policing and favors a law enforcement strategy that is "not simply being a reactionary force."

As a representative of District 7, which encompasses parts of Up-county and Midcounty, Luedtke also said she will advocate for policies that support the Agricultural Re-

serve in Montgomery, including supporting emergency preparedness and resiliency programs to make sure the county can produce and supply the food it needs.

Sayles also ran on supporting local food production there and backed strengthening education and career-readiness programs, funding rental assistance, and addressing climate change by supporting better transportation infrastructure including the Purple Line and the bus rapid transit system.

Andrew Friedson (D-District 1), often perceived as one of the most moderate members of the council, said he expected the new members to increase debate over policy in a "very productive, constructive, and healthy way."

"I think that there are six new council members who all bring in

Minutes of November 14, 2022, MCCF General Meeting #937, Virtual Zoom Meeting

By Karen Cordry, Recording Secretary

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the General Meeting was held via Zoom as a virtual meeting. A total of 32 persons attended on the Zoom platform.

Call to Order: Alan Bowser, President, called the Meeting to order at

Six Women, cont.

different perspectives,” he said. “Generally, there’s agreement on what we would like to do. I think the question is the approach and how we handle those issues.”

(Shwetha Surendran contributed reporting. [Read the entire article here.](#)) ■

7:35 p.m. The meeting was recorded through the end of the formal program.

Approval of Meeting Agenda: Moved, seconded, and approved by voice vote.

Approval of October General Meeting Minutes: Moved, seconded, and approved by voice vote.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

This year’s Thanksgiving parade is Saturday in downtown Silver Spring. It starts at the Civic Building at Ellsworth Avenue at 10 a.m., travels to Georgia Avenue, and swings back around. We will look to have an MCCF car in the parade.

PROGRAM: CIVIC ASSOCIATION BEST PRACTICES

“Running a Successful Civic Association, A ‘Not So Secret’ Strategy from McKenney Hills-Carroll Knolls Civic Association.”

MH-CK Speakers: Kerry Murray, President; Maggie Flowers, Vice President; David Coyne, Secretary and Membership Chair; and Joshua Montgomery, former MH-CK President, now MCCF First Vice President.

Joshua Montgomery: MH-CK runs from Forest Glen Metro to Plyers Mill and Georgia to Leslie Street, including Capital View-Homewood Park, with 1,100 households. For a long time, it only had about 40 to 60 active households, but in the last few years, they have made some major

November Minutes, cont.

changes and improvements.

Kerry Murray noted she took over from Josh, and learned a lot from him. They have a new, very active set of board members and volunteers and have made very strategic efforts to revitalize by growing membership and holding more activities, etc. MH-CK has been around since 1992 but was quiet with a non-functional website, quarterly meetings with low attendance, winter and block parties that were barely attended or cancelled and many people who didn't know it existed.

The new Board came up with four goals: expand outreach (by fixing the website for instance); increasing paid memberships; reimagining programming, and creating a sponsorship program to help cover expense costs. There were only four

Board members at the time, so they were all wearing more than one hat. They started looking at who they could involve in events to help with sponsorship.

Maggie Flowers noted that MH-CK had gone from just a quarterly printed newsletter, a listserv, and a website, to also being present on Facebook and Nextdoor. They have about 600 names on their listserve so they have been sending emails, an E-newsletter, and putting up signs and flyers for events. They stopped printing the newsletter and, after about a year, started using the E-newsletter which, for now, they are doing about twice a year. As they get more volunteers, they are hoping to make it more frequent and expand the scope of articles. They have mostly used flyers for their events to date to get attendance.

David Coyne stated that in 2021

they did a physical mailing, even though that was expensive, to urge people to become members with an emphasis on signing up for recurring payments. They also used yard signs to encourage joining and got a great result, increasing paid memberships from 60 to 240, of whom about 80% have renewed. Their dues are \$12 per year.

They also promote membership through the listserv and recognize joiners in the newsletter. In 2022, they did a postcard mailing sending people to the website and now have 246 members. They email members to let them know when to renew. They are also trying a “get a member” campaign to get existing members to recruit someone to join in.

Kerry Murray noted that, in 2020, the chairperson ran all of the events, as well as being responsible

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for the listserv, the committees, etc., which was too much and caused burn-out. They are now working to have a separate chairperson for each event to be responsible for that work. They are working on using the list-serve to recruit people to get involved on that and are keeping a list of people with interest in such events.

In terms of increasing attendance at membership meetings, they are working on trying to set them up as more in the nature of a social event. They held one outside in a back yard and are looking at a Saturday morning coffee meeting. They will buy some pastries to help interest folks. They did a membership survey to see what members would be interested in attending. Some of the ideas were for an Easter

egg hunt and a Halloween parade/party at the neighborhood pool lot. They held a National Night Out with invited law enforcement and fire trucks, and ended up with 200–300 people attending. They also hold a block party at Capital View park as their big event, including renting the building there so it can go forward rain or shine. They have hired an ice cream truck to hand out cones.

Sponsorship: their goal in obtaining sponsorships is to let them move away from potluck events, so they have food/treats at events without people having to deal with bringing food. They used the Internet to find businesses in the area and cold-emailed them to see who would like to join in. They charge a flat cost of \$200/\$300 for inside/outside the MH-CK boundaries. Sponsors are highlighted in the newsletter, on the website, and in quarterly emails.

They currently have eight sponsors, one of whom supplies a food product rather than money.

There was open discussion among attendees. Peggy Dennis noted that the County had put together a Community Toolkit noting resources for associations and we should make sure it's up on the Civic Fed website. She also noted that information on activities could be sent for posting on the MCCF website, and that a further source of influence for associations was to try to be appointed to the relevant regional Citizens Advisory Board or at least listen in on those meetings.

They were asked what website program they were using—it's Wix.com—and they had been lucky enough to have an internal volunteer who was a graphic designer to run the site. Maggie is doing it now but

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she is training people to take it over. They noted that website functionality was very important in terms of conveying information and being able to take RSVPs, memberships, etc., and it could be worth paying to have help if necessary.

Another person, whose area was near the Sligo Golf Course, noted that they had been able to get a grant from the county to help build a pollinator/community garden that was a real draw and they are looking to put two more in place. They have a blueprint that CAs can use to create their own gardens. They have a weekly food truck program at the (unused) Parkside building and they do a fall/Halloween festival and in December will have an arts festival there.

It was noted that we should set

up a section on the website to discuss these various types of projects and ideas and to post resources such as the community garden plan. Others agreed that the idea of a space for resources such as the Community Toolkit and articles about best practices and event ideas would be very useful for those trying to revitalize their CAs. Alan Bowser stated that the MH-CK PowerPoint presentation would be posted on the MCCF website and we would look into working on the website to put together the dedicated space.

It was noted that, if one wanted to provide SSL hours for high/school college students to work on events, one had to be a registered nonprofit.

National Night Out was noted several times as a great project and one that could be worked on collectively by a number of communities

to have a larger event.

David Coyne said that Josh's legacy as President was to keep the group moving and to recruit all of them into the association and the programs.

DECEMBER PROGRAM

Alan Bowser noted that we were planning on inviting the Montgomery County Police Chief as our speaker for the December program.

Video recording ended at 8:45 p.m.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Alan Bowser noted that we needed new Environmental and Education Chairs and would welcome volunteers. He also noted the Council was considering a bill to require that all new construction in County use electrification for utilities.

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Land Use and Planning

■ Liz Joyce noted that the Council had passed Thrive 2050 unanimously despite objections by many and lack of fully developed racial/social equity analysis. Some suggestions that they may try to move quickly on zoning changes in the new Council but don't know anything for sure yet.

Legislation

■ Alan Bowser reported that we have been trying to get a meeting set up with the newly elected group to see what we want them to sponsor. Beverage deposit legislation is one possibility, as is revised oversight of MNC-PPC. Anyone with thoughts should let Alan know so we can get timely discussions set with the officials.

FINAL POINTS

Alan again noted that local associations should check that their dues for the 2022–2023 year have been paid (since July 2022) and that we can

always use more volunteers for committees and other MCCF activities.

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 9:03 p.m.

Minutes of the November 17 Executive Cmte. Meeting

By Karen Cordry, Recording Secretary

Attendance: Alan Bowser, Jerry Garson, Karen Cordry, Jacquie Bowk, Peggy Dennis, and Liz Joyce.

1. Discussion of Thanksgiving parade and potential for Civic Fed to participate.

2. Review of general meeting; topic was “Community Associations Best Practices.” It was reasonably well-attended and there was a lot of

good participation by the audience with a lot of useful ideas circulated. A consensus view was that we should set up space on the website to have these “best practices” posted for use by all and to have information about local events that could be open to other groups. One of the major points that the primary presenter, McKenney Hills-Carroll Knolls Civic Association, made in their presentations was that they invested in spending money on events to build up attendance and it seemed to work

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in ramping up continuing membership.

3. Discussion of December meeting. It will be with the MoCo Chief of Police. There have been a number of serious incidents recently that he can comment on.

4. Discussion of upcoming legislative issues. Alan Bowser has asked Sen. Ben Kramer for a meeting to talk about issues we will want to have brought up in the next session, including specifically with respect to the M-NCPPC functioning and structure. We would also like to see CE Elrich push for a supplemental authorization for the Office of the People's Counsel. There was a MoCo Delegation priorities hearing earlier this week but we weren't on that.

The video of that session is posted on the Civic Fed website so we can see what others raised. Peggy Dennis has been trying to connect with the delegates to talk to us but haven't heard back yet from them yet.

5. Treasurer's Report: Jerry Garson said we had \$8,503 in the bank account as of Nov. 4. At least one check for \$50 hasn't cleared yet and we have received some other notices of people joining. There is an added \$227 in the Paypal account and Jacquie Bokow transferred those funds during the meeting.

6. Discussion of articles for the newsletter; Jacquie will need them by November 27th.

Peggy Dennis suggested covering legislation. A number of topics are below. We can consult with Sen. Kramer on his priorities and also ask

for people who would like to work on particular matters:

- Bottle bill,
- M-NCPPC restructuring,
- Requiring developer testimony to be filed under pain of perjury,
- Ranked choice voting,
- Lemon law extension to fridges and freezers due to risks of economic loss if they fail,
- Banning diesel trucks over a period of time (relevant to racial equity concerns),
- Bow hunting bill for deer, and
- Pedestrian refuge requirements for main roads.

McKinney Hills will be asked to put their discussion together into an article. One thing to add on the MCCF website is the current version of the Community Toolkit prepared by the County. It appears the most recent versions were done in 2014

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(and are tied to the various County Service centers, including Bethesda-Chevy Chase, Eastern Region, and MCCAB). We will put links to them on the MCCF webpage.

Alan Bowser suggested a discussion of the new County Council membership and its historic changes; comparisons to prior Council and what it did (and did not) get done.

Jerry Garson will cover transportation issues.

A discussion of Elrich's plans for economic developments in the White Flint sort of area and continued reporting on Thrive are possible.

Pictures/article on the Thanksgiving parade would be included.

7. January meeting: We will invite CE Elrich. If he is unavailable, we will ask Evan Glass.

8. Legislative breakfast by the Committee for Montgomery will be held at the Rockville Marriott on Dec. 16 at 8 a.m.; Wes Moore will speak. Individual ticket is \$150. Motion by Karen, seconded by Peggy, to authorize payment for Liz and Alan to attend. Agreed to unanimously.

9. Review of bylaws: We will check on what the bylaws actually require and Jacquie Bokow will work up article for newsletter so we can pass on it at the next meeting.

10. The meeting adjourned at 7:52 p.m. ■

Montgomery County Civic Federation

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