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TO PRINT, USE PRINT VERSION

of note

Next MCCF Meeting #939

January 9, 2023, 7:30 p.m. *online via Zoom*. Topic: "A Conversation with Montgomery County Council President Evan Glass."

▮ **Join the Zoom Meeting Here**
[See further instructions on page 2. No password is required.]

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Federation Meeting #939

Monday, January 9, 2023

7:30 p.m.

Online Zoom Meeting

AGENDA

1. Call to Order/Introductions
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Approval of Minutes: December General Mtg. **P.15**
4. Treasurer's Report
5. Announcements
6. January Program: Montgomery County Council President Evan Glass **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 January 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/Time: Monday, January 9, 2023/7:30 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 848 1567 8509. No password is required.

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

MCCF Welcomes Montgomery County Council President Evan Glass

The Montgomery County Civic Federation, Inc., is pleased to welcome Montgomery County Council President to our January 9, 2023, meeting.

Evan Glass is President and an At-Large member of the Montgomery County Council. He is the first openly LGBTQ+ individual to serve on the Council and in this role. Now in his second term, Council President Glass is Chair of the Transportation and Environment Committee and a member of the Economic Development Committee.

Council President Glass' priorities for the coming year include addressing housing affordability, striving toward transit equity and achieving Vision Zero, addressing the climate crisis through meaningful environmental legislation and



GLASS

clean energy initiatives, and ensuring that Montgomery County is economically competitive.

Council President Glass has served on the Council since 2018. During that time, he spearheaded the effort to increase the size of the

Council from nine to 11 members, passed legislation to close the gender pay gap, led the effort to create the COVID-19 rental assistance fund, and provided emergency funding for the nonprofit sector during the pandemic. As a former member of the Council's Health and Human Services Committee and the lead for Homelessness and Vulnerable Committees, he has been a champion for ensuring that homelessness is rare, brief, and nonrecurring in Montgomery County.

Prior to joining the Council, Council President Glass spent 12 years as a CNN journalist, where he covered the U.S. Congress, presidential campaigns, and national politics. He also served as the executive director of Gandhi Brigade Youth

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January Program, cont.

Media, an innovative after-school youth development organization dedicated to empowering immigrant and low-income students.

Council President Glass has been a strong supporter of local Montgomery County nonprofit and community organizations. Evan's community service includes serving as cofounder and President of the South Silver Spring Neighborhood, President of the Indian Spring Citizens Association, Chair of the Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board, and as a member of the Board of Directors of Committee for Montgomery, the Montgomery Housing Partnership, Equality Maryland, and Conservation Montgomery. He is also a 2010 graduate of Leadership Montgomery. ■

Testimony on MC/PG 105-23, the Montgomery County Planning Trust and Transparency Act of 2023

[The following testimony on MC/PG 105-23—the Montgomery County Planning Trust and Transparency Act of 2023—was presented by MCCF President Alan Bowser before the Montgomery County State Delegation on December 15, 2022.]

Members of the Montgomery County State Delegation:

My name is Alan Bowser. I am President of the Montgomery County Civic Federation.

Thank you for the opportunity to share the views of the members of the Civic Federation with regard to the bill, MC/PG 105-23, the Montgomery County Planning Trust and Transparency Act of 2023, proposed by Senator Ben

Kramer, chair of the Montgomery County Senate Delegation. We support the bill.

Let me say, at the outset, that the delegates of the Civic Federation have tremendous respect for the work of Senator Kramer, who has consistently done an outstanding job on behalf of all County residents, advocating for more transparency and accountability throughout our public institutions.

Working with the Civic Federation, he has been the prime mover in establishing stronger inspector general functions for Montgomery College, the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission, and the Maryland-National Park and Planning Commission. He knows what

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Bowser Testimony, cont.

he is talking about.

He has been a great partner of the Civic Federation and other organizations that have, as a priority objective, strengthening the structures of accountability and transparency.

I'm sure that members of the State Delegation have heard from many of their constituents their concerns about the failure and dysfunction of the Montgomery County Planning Board, the weakness of the accountability mechanisms of M-NCPPC, and the disappointment that many residents have shared about the failure of the Montgomery County Council to address the shortcomings of the Planning Board, highlighted especially over the last several years.

I know from personal experience

as President of the Civic Federation that hundreds of Montgomery County residents have been deeply frustrated—and even shocked—by the acts of commission and omission that the last Planning Board took that brought shame and dishonor to Montgomery County.

And many of these residents have expressed deep concern that that these acts of commission and omission were not quickly and publicly addressed by the Montgomery County Council.

We have known for years, even before the pandemic, that community input into the planning and land use decisions before the Planning Board has not been taken seriously. The failure to take seriously public input into planning and land use decisions was particularly egregious during the period

of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Now is the time for our State Senators and State Delegates—in Montgomery County and Prince George's County—to take seriously their responsibility to oversee the programs and policies of the Commission and the Montgomery County Planning Board by embracing legislation of the type that Senator Kramer is proposing.

This is general “good governance” legislation and it should be “low hanging fruit” for our State Delegation to harvest.

Our Planning Board is broken, the internal policies of the Commission are ineffective, and the County Delegation—and the Maryland General Assembly— need to consider how to fix them.

Currently, there is little trust in the Planning Board—and the

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Bowser Testimony, cont.

Montgomery County Council--and there needs to be much more transparency and accountability.

In that respect, Senator Kramer's bill that would establish a Task Force to review the structure of the Commission and how it does its work is way, way overdue. It's only a task force, its conclusions will not be legislative provisions, and, importantly, it's not a “power grab” as it has been dishonestly described. This proposal needs your serious consideration and your support.

As noted earlier tonight, the population in the territory served by the Commission has grown from tens of thousands to more than a million residents in both Counties, and there has been little review in the policies and pro-

grams of the Commission by State officials in the last century.

And, frankly, there has been little to no accountability of the Commission to State and County elected officials.

The Montgomery County Civic Federation does not see a downside to the provisions of MC/PG 105-23 and we welcome these proposed changes.

We see this legislation as a first step in improving the appointment process for the Commission, ensuring the public is aware and can participate in the appointment process, and increasing the public's access to the Commission's work products.

The provisions of this legislation:

- require the Montgomery County Executive to appoint the Chair of the Board, with the consent of

the Council;

- require public hearings and acceptance of public testimony on each appointment to the Commission from Montgomery County;

- prohibit the Chair of the Planning Board from engaging in certain employment;

- prohibit Commissioners from engaging in certain political activities;

- prohibit a former Commissioner from working on related matters for a certain period of time after the Commissioner leaves office; and

- require the Board to publish agendas of open meetings along with other materials at certain times.

These provisions would go a long way into restoring and increasing community trust and

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Bowser Testimony, cont.

transparency in the work of the Commission.

In fact, we believe that the State could go even further than this with other reforms affecting the Planning Board and Commission, namely enabling the State Ethics Commission to be the primary oversight agency for Commission-related ethical issues and periodic reports; limiting the term of the Planning Board Chairs to two four-year terms, and increasing the compensation of Planning Board members.

The Montgomery County Civic Federation urges favorable consideration of Senator Kramer's important legislation.

Thank you. ■

Testimony to the Montgomery County Delegation Supporting Senator Kramer's Bills MC/PG 104-23 and 105-23

[The following testimony was given by MCCF's Second Vice President on December 15, 2022.]

Good evening. My name is Elizabeth Joyce, and I am a longtime resident and community activist in Silver Spring. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you tonight. I urge the General Assembly issue a favorable report on Senator Ben Kramer's bills: MC/PG 104-23 and 105-23.¹

Senator Kramer's bills provide a solid framework for increasing accountability and appropriate County control over land use functions. The charter of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission is almost 100 years old and is not working. This Charter robs Montgomery County—not just the

County Council or Executive—of much direct control over these functions that profoundly affect our residents, their property, and County economic development. It diffuses responsibility and accountability, leading to undesirable outcomes.

Recent ethics scandals involving the Montgomery County Planning Board underscore the need for this legislation. Last year, the General Assembly passed **Bicounty Commissions—Ethics—Certification of Compliance**, requiring each bicounty commission to certify compliance with standing ethics laws. **Yet, despite the passage of this law, ethics violations by the Montgomery County Planning Board continued.** In September, after Planning Board

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Joyce Testimony, cont.

infighting followed the exposure of Chair Casey Anderson's keeping a bar in his office against County rules, the Council demanded the resignation of the entire board for the first time in County history. The Council then rushed to appoint a temporary Planning Board and to conduct an investigation behind closed doors, with no clear public accountability for this inquiry.

These sweeping and unprecedented actions penalized (likely) blameless commissioners² along with those who committed offenses. They allowed the Council to evade accountability for its previous lack of oversight of the Planning Board. Well-documented abuses by the Planning Board included:

(1) **Repeated violations of the Open Meetings Act.**

(2) Repeated violations of M-NCPPC's ethics rules **governing the registration of lobbyists. (Incidentally, individuals recruited by these lobbyists—and their subsidiary organization members—are over-represented among those speaking tonight).**

(3) **Abuse of its own consent agenda** to avoid public disclosure of certain projects.

Despite the clear need for Senator Kramer's legislation, the Montgomery County Council is pushing back ferociously, accusing him of orchestrating a "power grab" on behalf of the County Executive. Both Senator Kramer and Marc Elrich have stressed that Senator Kramer, not the County Executive, has initiated these bills. Senator Kramer has noted that, by the time his proposed task force reports its findings, the terms of all these officials will have

expired. So why personalize and misrepresent the rationale for this crucial and long-overdue examination of a key public policy?

Why should the County Council oppose a task force to study possible restructuring and increased accountability? A Council that prioritizes facts and good government should confidently support a reexamination of this M-NCPPC's 100-year old charter and a governance structure that **prevents transparency and encourages Planning Board misconduct.** Montgomery and Prince George's Counties are the only Maryland jurisdictions under the M-NCP-PC structure that largely denies the county executive any power over land use and the hundreds of millions of dollars involved in its management.

There is absolutely no reason to reject the proposal to form a task

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Joyce Testimony, cont.

force to examine how the Charter has failed and how it can be updated and improved, regardless of the task force's ultimate recommendations. Because only the General Assembly has the power and the tools to solve these problems, I hope you will issue a favorable report on these bills and fully support the passage of this legislation.

¹ *The first would study the feasibility of transferring duties of the Montgomery County Planning Board, the Planning Department, and the Parks Department of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission to the Montgomery County government; and make recommendations on restructuring the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission to no longer include Montgomery County. The second would institute several new powers by the executive over the planning board.*

² *See Tina Patterson December 15 testimony.* ■

Garson Testimony on MC/PG 104-23

By Jerry Garson, Member of the MCCF Executive Committee

I spoke on behalf of the Montgomery County Civic Federation, Inc., at the Montgomery County Delegation to the Maryland State Legislature bill hearing on MC/PG 104-23 on December 15, 2022.

The purpose of the bill is for the establishing the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission Restructuring Task Force to study the feasibility of transferring Montgomery County-specific duties of the M-NCPPC to the Montgomery County government; and generally relating to the M-NCPPC Restructuring Task Force.

The current Montgomery County Planning Board's operations have been a concern to MCCF in recent years and its operations should be

reviewed and probably be updated to reflect current times.

The Civic Federation was founded in 1925, which was 2 years before the M-NCPPC was established. One of the main reasons the Civic Federation was founded was because of a major freight rail yard was proposed for the Bethesda area which most residents opposed.

Only two counties in Maryland have a bicounty planning commission—Montgomery and Prince George's. When the Commission was formed, Montgomery County had only about 35,000 residents; it now has over 1,050,000 residents.

The planning departments for each County are separate and, in Prince George's County, all members are appointed by the County Executive.

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Garson on 104-23, cont.

tive. In all of the rest of the State, the planning function reports to the County Executive.

In the 1920 census, the population of Montgomery County was 34,921 residents, which grew by 1930 to 49,206 residents. The County is now over 20 times larger and has different problems that it had 100 years ago.

In other parts of the United States, many small individual properties are treated in a more relaxed manner than the formal process before the Montgomery County Planning Board. This is at a lower cost to the residents without the cost of a lawyer; the process in Montgomery County could be changed.

The mission of the MCCF is to preserve and improve the quality of life for all current and future resi-

dents of Montgomery County, Maryland. Since its founding in 1925, the volunteers of the MCCF have committed themselves to providing an effective citizen voice to government policy makers, both elected and appointed.

The Civic Federation is a not-for-profit, county-wide umbrella group designed to promote cooperation, education, and effectiveness of civic and community associations in Montgomery County.

It addresses a wide range of concerns in transportation, land use, environment, education, budget and finance, public safety, and ethics. With its strength of numbers and thoroughness of its deliberations, the Federation influences county policy and balances the activities of vested county pressure groups.

Thank you for considering our views. ■

Garson Testimony on MC/PG 105-23

By Jerry Garson Member of the Executive Committee

I spoke on behalf of my civic association at the Montgomery County Delegation to the Maryland State Legislature bill hearing on MC/PG 105-23 on December 15, 2022, a bill proposed by Senator Benjamin Kramer.

The purpose of the bill is for the altering the appointment process, salary authorization process, and terms for commissioners appointed to the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission from Montgomery County; requiring the County Executive of Montgomery County to appoint one member of the Commission who shall serve as the chair or vice chair of the Com-

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Garson on 105-23, cont.

mission and chair of the Montgomery County Planning Board; requiring certain public hearings and acceptance of public testimony on each appointment to the Commission from Montgomery County; prohibiting the chair of the Board from engaging in certain employment; authorizing and establishing procedures for the Montgomery County Executive or Montgomery County Council to discipline a commissioner from Montgomery County under certain circumstances; prohibiting a commissioner from Montgomery County from engaging in certain political activities while the commissioner serves on the Commission; prohibiting a former commissioner from Montgomery County from working for certain compensation for a certain period

of time after the commissioner leaves office; requiring a commissioner from Montgomery County to complete certain training at certain times; requiring the Board to publish agendas of open meetings along with certain other materials on its website at certain times; requiring the Board to approve meeting minutes in a certain manner under certain circumstances; and generally relating to requirements for the members of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission from Montgomery County and meetings of the Montgomery County Planning Board.

The bill provides for a Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission Commissioner Requirements and Open Meetings. We recommend a favorable report on the legislation for the following reasons:

■ The legislation recognizes the

increase in the number of County Council members to 11 from 9.

■ It will require the County Council to hold public hearings on each appointment to the commission.

■ The bill on page 4 does not change the current language which states the County Council shall make an appointment to the Commission from a list of applicants. The list shall be completed at least 3 weeks before an appointment is made and made available to the public. This was not followed in the last appointment of 5 members to the Commission.

■ An important addition to remove the appearance of conflicts of interest is the language starting on page 11 that states: “A former commissioner from Montgomery County may not assist or represent another party for compensation in a matter

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Garson on 105-23, cont.

that was the subject of action before the Montgomery County Planning Board while the Commissioner served on the Board for 1 calendar year from the date the commissioner leaves office.”

■ On page 12 is the addition of the following language: “Publish and maintain on its website the agenda of the open meeting, together with a summary of any finalized documents, written testimony from the public, and other materials that the Board will vote on at the open meeting at least 72 hours before each meeting.” This will permit the public to be aware of the agenda.

Thank you for considering our views. ■

In Memoriam: Remembering Sue Schumacher

We have the sad news that our friend Sue Schumacher passed away on November 21, 2022. Sue was an important member and officer of the Montgomery County Civic Federation, having served as Vice President and as an Executive member-at-large. She served as a delegate from the Kenwood Condominium and was the treasurer of the Citizen’s Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights

Sue’s life was one of extraordinary accomplishment. At 16, Sue was one of the youngest students to enroll at the University of Cincinnati, where they provided an exception for her to enroll. Sue graduated in four years with two bachelor’s degrees—one in art the other in education. After graduation, she was an art teacher for incarcerated young women at

The Girls Industrial School in Ohio. After moving to Washington, D.C., Sue became the head staffer for the National Academy of Sciences Postdoctoral Program, working with some of the world’s most highly regarded scientists and scholars. She provided similar staff responsibilities for the Fulbright Scholarship program.

Sue was a Vice President of the Women’s National Democratic Club, managing its speakers’ program that attracted the highest-ranking politicians and government officials. She was also the Executive Director of the American Foreign Service Association. She was repeatedly elected the Neighborhood Commissioner for Washington, D.C.’s “Foggy Bottom,” the neighborhood where the U.S. Department of State is located. Sue

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Sue Schumacher, cont.

was appointed to the D.C. Police Advisory Board and she was a volunteer leader in Washington, D.C., for the University of Cincinnati Alumni Association. She was a successful real estate agent for over 20 years, specializing in condominium and cooperative sales in D.C., Maryland, and Virginia.

A friend, Maryland State Delegate Marc Korman (D-16), shared this story: “Sue was a real estate agent and I first met her when she regularly attended District 16 town halls and other events to ask about issues of interest to realtors, particularly those focusing on condos. But in 2018 our relationship changed when she came to a District pre-session send-off specifically to let me know that the Washington College student who applied for an intern-



ship in my office was her grandson, Joseph. He was hired—he was going to get the position anyway, but grandma wanted the credit—and I quickly saw that she had helped instill in him an affinity for public service and love of politics. Joseph has served my office and the people of District 16 in all the years since. Of course, for Grandma Sue, that just meant she expected her questions about issues and constituent service requests to be responded to even faster. From my standpoint, she was a terrific advocate and civic leader and an even better grandmother. She will be missed.”

Sue Schumacher, a great community advocate, made many significant contributions to civic life in all the communities she lived. She was an energetic supporter and leader of the Montgomery County Civic Federation and we will miss her so much. ■

The Cost of Providing Free RideOn and WMATA Bus Service in Montgomery County

By Jerry Garson, Chair, Transportation Committee

The D.C. Council has voted unanimously to provide Free WMATA bus service starting July 1, 2023, on all WMATA buses in D.C. The estimated cost to D.C. would be about \$43 million dollars per year. The Metro leaders said fare-free bus service will energize transit usage in the region and potentially lead to more riders.

If Montgomery County provided free RideOn Bus service in Montgomery County, the estimated lost revenue from riders would be \$9,825,033 for the Fiscal Year starting July 1, 2022, and ending June 30, 2023. Currently people over the age of 65, disabled residents, and students in high school and all other people under the age of 18 ride for

free.

The cost of the proposed Bus Rapid Transit route on Viers Mill Road is over \$86,000,000. The cost for part of the 355 Bus Rapid Transit route is over \$358,000,000.

Would the riders prefer free bus service or the major expenses for BRT routes?

Maybe the County should survey the current riders and other residents of the County.



The estimated cost of free WMATA bus service for riders entering in Montgomery County would be less than \$20,000,000 per year.

This estimate is based on the data reported by WMATA for October 2022, the latest ridership data that is available. The ridership for the following routes were used: C2, C4, C8, J1, J2, K6, K9, L8, Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, Q5, Q6, T2, Y2, Y7, Y8, Z2, Z6, Z7, and Z8.

The fares collected in Montgomery County are not available from WMATA and the estimates include Senior Riders who pay half-fare and some people who start their trips in Prince George’s County or D.C.

The Montgomery County Civic Federation, Inc., has supported free RideOn bus service in Montgomery County. ■

Minutes of the December 12, 2022, MCCF General Meeting #938, 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 81 persons attended on the Zoom platform.]

Call to Order: Alan Bowser, President, called the Meeting to order at 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 November General Meeting Minutes: Moved, seconded and approved by voice vote.

Treasurer's Report: Jerry Garson reported income of \$686 for the first six months and expenses of \$651, for a net positive balances of \$35. Of the total, \$285 was received in the last 30 days.

Alan noted the excellent newsletter last month, including the article about the Albornoz Council.

PROGRAM

The primary speaker was MoCo Police Chief Marcus Jones. We also had a briefing from Sen. Ben Kramer on his proposed legislation regarding the M-NCPPC.

Chief of Police

Chief Jones began by discussing crime trends in the County. There's been a large drop in homicides from

last year (from 35 to 21 at mid-December) but other serious crimes—such as robberies and car-jackings—have ticked up about 25% across the region. A lot may be just for the thrill since many cars are picked up and dumped and many juveniles are involved. Burglaries are up in part due to people going back to work and leaving homes empty but thefts from autos are decreasing. Remember to lock doors and hide packages.

Guns are still a major problem, with more than 180 ghost guns seized this year, more than double last year. That ties in with an increased number of shootings with people just seeming to grab for a gun in any sort of dispute. They are working on enforcing limits against repeat offenders who have been

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December Minutes, cont.

barred from possessing guns.

These are all regional problems at least in part because all departments are (and have been) struggling to fill jobs. They had only 11 in the last class, the lowest ever. They did get a bump for starting salaries, though, and the current class has 29, with 50% women. They hope to graduate them all and will start working them earlier in an intern-type role.

Retention has been a big issue but they have been getting improved pay scales improved which has helped. Some went to greener grass but have come back, which says we are in the market. The increased budget gives us more room for promotions, specialized units, etc. The Chief noted we could all help by sharing tonight's information and

let people know they are looking for great recruits for all levels of the 700 authorized department positions.

An "Effective Law Enforcement for All" audit done recently to get an outside look at how they could improve delivery of services. Some recommendations had to do with data collection and they are revamping the procurement process to be up and running by January 2024. They are also looking at mental health issues to decide when police aren't the right folks to bring in, i.e., using "mobile crisis teams" and de-escalation techniques instead. Working on crisis intervention training for existing force plus additional counselors.

They are seeing a significant increase in hate crimes in Jewish communities—vandalism, swastikas, etc.—with numbers at an all time high. They take them seriously, investigate every event, and are ask-

ing the community to help them and provide any information they have. They have also had some vandalism of other types of churches, including in Bethesda. In one instance, they did pick up a juvenile who was responsible but in other cases they don't have much and could use any public help. There is a reward for information.

Chief Jones then responded to a number of questions. He noted they did a lot out of outreach to communities to try to reduce crimes of all types. Their overall officer strength is about 125 below authorized levels but they are trying to keep the numbers up, particularly in the highest crime areas. They have been leaving some positions in the specialized divisions unfilled in order not to move too many people out of the patrol positions.

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December Minutes, cont.

He was asked about the increase in drug-related crimes and he noted that, while there was more use of cannabis since it was decriminalized, the bigger problem was with fentanyl, which was very dangerous and killing way too many people. With respect to cannabis, it's still illegal to smoke in public but they are trying to determine whether that limit is being disproportionately enforced against people of color. If it is fully legalized, they will still need to deal with public use and driving under the influence. In further discussion on the fentanyl issue, there was information on how to access the crisis centers: [24-Hour Crisis Center website](#) or call 240.777.4000.

School violence was a big issue at the beginning of the year but has decreased considerably with the school

Community Engagement Officers working well with regular officers. The police had been being seen more and that is helping.

A question was asked about shootings in Silver Spring and Chief Jones noted that they are looking at whether earlier closing hours are needed or, if not, whether businesses need more security planning for late hours. They are working with business owners in that regard. They have a median camera on Georgia Avenue doing continuous filming and are working on that in other areas including the Pike and Rose area in N. Bethesda.

With respect to gangs, Chief Jones stated that there were some still around, including some MS-13, but it's not a huge problem at the moment and tends to be localized in certain areas. They are still on top of this so if you do hear random

gunshots for instance, let them know. They collect shell casings, for instance, for regional databases for crime solving.

Senator Kramer

Alan Bowser noted that Civic Fed has worked with Sen. Kramer on transportation and accountability issues over the years and there have been a lot of controversies as to the Planning Board and Council discussions over Thrive 2050 and related issues in recent years. Kramer will be filing a bill in that regard so he was invited to discuss what he's proposed.

Senator Kramer noted that a lot of his legislative efforts have come from concerns raised by this group and that includes the current proposal. The current concerns start with the recent development where

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December Minutes, cont.

the full Planning Board was told resign or be fired. The M-NCPPC was formed back in 1920s when MoCo had about 35,000 residents compared to the present 1.2 million and it's time to take another look to see if the current structure is the best setup.

The bill would create a task force to look at the feasibility of transferring the Planning Board to MoCo government generally and how that would be implemented. The County Executive has agreed that it is worth examining the issues to tie the Planning Board more closely to county government rather than being a quasi-state entity that does really answer to anyone else. A number of Council members have suggested the proposal is a power grab by the Executive, although the task force

proposal doesn't actually determine any of those issues.

Senator Kramer discussed the Council meeting where he presented the bill and noted that they were concerned because the task force had more members from the Executive side which he explained was because he was thinking about the sort of agencies and offices that might have responsibilities under a reshaped board. He noted that the structure he was saying should be considered was what was used elsewhere in the state except for MoCo/PGCo. The bill number is MC/PG 104-23 (see articles on pages 4 through 12). Its recommendations would come out in 2024 and wouldn't be effective until 2026 so there would be another election by then for those now in office.

A companion bill, MC/PG 105-23 (see articles on pages 4 through 12), would impose more transparency

requirements such as barring members from participating in political campaigns to keep them out of the process of fundraising and working with developers who may be supporting one candidate or another. It would also put limits on going straight from a government position to one working in the area and would allow the County Executive to appoint the Chair while the Council would appoint the rest. Each would have some veto power over the other's appointment and there would be a two consecutive term limit on serving on the Commission. (He also noted that, in PG County, the Executive makes all the appointments.) It would also include some procedural protections with respect to removing Commissioners and other measures, such as a duty to post minutes, etc. As he noted, the

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December Minutes, cont.

current structure has been there for a very long time and the County and issues have changed dramatically so the issue is whether we react to that. [Sign up to testify at a hearing by the County delegation on these and other bills here.](#)

Senator Kramer noted that he had heard from numerous people who were dissatisfied with the current structure. The state delegation will obviously look at what Council says but, in the end, they are the current ones who will decide whether to proceed. He did feel as if the Council already had a view on the bill before they had him in to discuss it, as was reflected in their unanimous vote against even doing a study. [Here is a link to the Council session.](#) He noted that one of the State delegation hearings would be held virtually on

December 15 and people could sign up to testify about the bills. He also noted that if people were interested/supportive they could contact their Council members and/or the State delegation directly to state their opinions.

Alan Bowser noted that, with respect to accountability, it was unclear if anyone had oversight on ethics issues. Senator Kramer noted he thought that the state ethics boards could look at violations but only in a very narrow scope of issues. Cary Lamari noted that the state ethics board person, Katherine Thompson, had indicated they had little if any authority, which is another reason to warrant review and analysis of the current structure. Senator Kramer also noted that the bill would require public hearings on appointments to the Commission, while the recent demand for resignations and new

appointments took place behind closed doors.

Some other concerns expressed had to do with the low number of persons (six) who had ever registered as lobbyists for MNC-PPC. It was noted that some Council members ran on a platform of being more open and accountable but now are fighting these proposals. President Bowser thanked Senator Kramer for joining us on short notice, noting that this was an issue the Civic Fed has been looking at for a long time in a variety of ways.

ELECTIONS

Peggy Dennis noted that we need to take action on the Presidential tenure structure. The by-laws set the normal limit at two terms. The last time we left the by-laws intact but agreed to waive them in the absence

MORE

December Minutes, cont.

of an alternative candidate to Alan Bowser. The time is here again so we need to either do that again or else find a new candidate.

JANUARY PROGRAM

Alan Bowser noted that we were planning on inviting County Executive Marc Elrich.

ASSOCIATION REPORTS

Eric Cathcart, President of North Hills of Sligo Creek Civic Association, reported that they worked with another CA and did an event to benefit 30 local artists who got to keep the proceeds of the sale. It was a four-hour event for the artists to display their works with food and other goods. They sold out even before the time was up.

They also had a holiday artist event at Parkside HQ with four musical acts that they are going to try to make even bigger next year.

LEGISLATION

■ In state bills, Del. Love has a bill on requiring zero-emission trucks that would require manufacturers to start offering electric trucks over time, particularly for low-income areas.

■ There is also a beverage deposit bill and a lemon law requirement for freezer/refrigerators to make sure they cover loss of food.

■ Another bill would deal with issues relating to plastic grass fields and their disposal.

■ Alan Bowser noted that we would be working with the County Council again to try to get them to establish an Office of the People's Counsel.

MCCF BUSINESS

Alan Bowser noted that we had done some effective outreach and had a meeting tonight with 80 people because it's a lot easier to pull people into a meeting when they can attend virtually. That said, we do still need to translate those numbers into people moving into leadership roles.

He noted that Civic Fed will be having people at the Committee for Montgomery legislative breakfast in Rockville on Friday, Dec. 16, to be able to share our views. And, as usual, we're always looking for people to do newsletter articles.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting and video recording ended at 9:51 p.m. ■

Executive Committee Minutes, December 18, 2022

By Alan Bowser, President

Members Present: Alan Bowser, Jerry Garson, Liz Joyce, Peggy Dennis, Elizabeth Joyce, Jacquie Bokow.

Treasurer's Report: Jerry Garson presented the Treasurer's Report.

In Memoriam: Members noted that MCCF ExCom member and former MCCF VP Sue Schumacher passed away on Nov. 21. Members shared memories of Sue and decided to include a tribute to her in the Jan. CFN.

January 2023 Program: Alan Bowser reported that the Montgomery Co. Exec. would not be the featured speaker for the January 9, 2023, general meeting due to a conflict. Members made suggestions for another speaker. Members were encouraged by the large online

audience for the December meeting which featured Montgomery County Police Chief Marcus Jones and Maryland State Senator Ben Kramer.

Newsletter Articles: Members discussed possible articles for the January 2023 newsletter, to include the testimony recently provided by ExCom members at the State Delegation's online public hearing for Delegation bills.

Legislation: Peggy Dennis reported on proposed State legislation by the MoCo Delegation and made suggestions about several bills to support. Members agreed to reengage the Co. Council and Co. Exec. on legislation to refund the Office of the People's Counsel.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m. ■

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