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TO PRINT, USE [PRINT VERSION](#)

of note

Next MCCF Meeting #945

September 11, 2023, 7:30 p.m. *online via Zoom*. Topic: "Land Use and Ethics with Del. Vaughn Stewart."

! [Join the Zoom Meeting Here](#)

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

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Meeting Minutes

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Federation Meeting #945

Monday, September 11, 2023

7:30 p.m.

Online Zoom Meeting

AGENDA

1. Call to Order/Introductions
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Approval of Minutes: No minutes from the June meeting are available
4. Treasurer's Report
5. Announcements
6. September Program: Land Use and Ethics **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.

The September 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, September 11, 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 **865 8835 0537**. 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 16

September Program: Land Use and Ethics with Md. State Delegate Vaughn Stewart

At its September 11, 2023, General Meeting, the Montgomery County Civic Federation is pleased to welcome Maryland State Delegate Vaughn Stewart (D19) as our guest speaker. Delegate Stewart is the Chair of the Land Use and Ethics subcommittee of the Maryland House of Delegates Environment and Transportation Committee.

Delegate Vaughn Stewart represents District 19 (Montgomery County) in the Maryland General Assembly. A graduate of the University of Pennsylvania and New York University School of Law, Delegate Stewart was first elected to the Maryland General Assembly in 2018. In 2023, he was appointed Deputy Majority Whip. Delegate Stewart serves on the Environment and Transportation Committee and is the chair of the



Land Use and Ethics Subcommittee. He is also a member of the Legislative Transit Caucus and an associate member of the Legislative Latino Caucus. Delegate Stewart lives in Rockville with his wife and two sons.

The Land Use and Ethics sub-

committee was formed in 2006 and is one of six current subcommittees under the Environment and Transportation Committee (ENT). Bills assigned to ENT are typically delegated to one of those six subcommittees. Subcommittee is where the work on a bill happens: members are taking stakeholder input, working through the details, adding amendments, and finally holding the first vote on each bill. The Land Use and Ethics subcommittee is assigned bills that—within the context of the environment, housing, and transportation—are about the zoning, ownership, development, and conservation of Maryland's land. This subcommittee is also given ethics bills; this can include legislation on salaries, transparency, reporting, campaign



Sept. Program, cont.

finance, and more.

Among Delegate Stewart's recent legislative initiatives are bills for expedited development review processes for affordable housing, private well safety, housing and community development—adaptive reuse, establishment of an environmental and natural resources crime unit in the Office of the Attorney General, a housing innovation pilot program and housing innovation fund, tenant remedies, and bond funding for Rock Creek Park improvements, among others.

Delegate Stewart has served on the Boards of Action Committee for Transit and the Montgomery County Renters Alliance.

He can be contacted [via email here](#). Learn more on [his Wikipedia entry here](#). ■

Comments on MoCo Development Policies and Practices

By Alan Bowser, MCCF President

The Montgomery County Civic Federation, Inc., is pleased to comment on the ongoing review of County development policies and practices by the Montgomery County Development Review Process Workgroup.

Members of the Montgomery County Civic Federation, Inc. believe very strongly in transparency, accountability, and efficiency when it comes to our public institutions, and especially the Montgomery County Government and the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission. In our work, we will continue to advocate for more attention and additional resources directed to improving these emphases at all levels of government.

There are several areas of concern that we want to highlight in this note.

PLANNING BOARD—AGENDAS—PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

We have a longstanding concern about the integrity of Planning Board agendas. Oftentimes, these agendas have not been timely available to the public, and agenda items have been included or removed without adequate public notice. We believe that the public needs to be properly and timely informed about the schedule and items to be considered at M-NCPPC Board meetings and other meetings. We further believe that there should be sanctions if there are changes in agendas without public notification. As always, we believe that all of these meetings should be open to the public and, to the extent possible, recorded by audio and vi-

MCCF Comments, cont.

sual means and made available to the public as soon as possible. Greater public participation is essential for greater racial equity and social justice in development planning and project implementation.

**PLANNING, TRANSPORTATION,
AND ENVIRONMENT EXPERTISE
IN THE EXECUTIVE**

As we understand the process, having redundant transportation and environmental expertise in the Montgomery County Government and the Planning Department seems to be unnecessary, expensive, and inefficient—causing delays in the project application and review process. We believe that these key functions should be the responsibility of the Executive Branch, which has the ultimate responsibility for implementing

transportation and environmental projects.

**PRE-APPLICATION COMMUNITY
MEETINGS**

We think it would be an improvement to the development review process in the County if pre-application community meetings were organized by the Montgomery County Planning Department, rather than by the applicant. The Planning Department has expertise and outreach capacities in this area that are greater than that of project applicants.

BI-COUNTY PLANNING

M-NCPPC is nearly one hundred years old, and needs to be reevaluated in terms of its costs and continuing efficiency. There seems to be little need in 2023 for a bi-county development planning and parks agency when those functions can be

handled more appropriately and efficiently under the executive branch of County government. Created by the State Government as a bi-county organization in the early 20th century, M-NCPPC and its constituent parts are subject to little supervision and accountability. Ethics violations, for example, are generally handled internally and are not subject to the authority of the Maryland Attorney General. The General Assembly has rarely considered issues related to the Commission, and complaints about its activities and decisions are not regularly taken up by higher authorities. We support the establishment of a State-level task force to study the structure of M-NCPPC in 2023 to make recommendations about its structure, costs, efficiencies and accountability. As an example, we think that there is merit in moving



MCCF Comments, cont.

the planners to the County Government. There is the need to assess the continuing viability and overall fairness of a State agency handling development approvals, while separate County agencies are responsible for implementation.

OFFICE OF THE PEOPLE'S COUNSEL

The Montgomery County Civic Federation strongly supports a Montgomery County Office of the People's Counsel, a County government-funded office that can provide advocacy and valuable information to Montgomery County residents about development processes and projects in the County. Funding the OPC has been the highest priority of the MCCF in recent years, and we have been pleased to have the support of the

Montgomery County Executive and many County residents in this regard. Many members of the Montgomery County Council have also expressed support for this agency, and we hope to see this office funded through an upcoming supplemental budget request or in next year's Operating Budget. We believe that OPC can be and will be an important actor in strengthening the County's development policies and practices as it will facilitate greater knowledge of and participation of residents throughout the County in planning and development. Despite its importance, however, some members of the Council Council have strongly opposed the OPC and recently considered a bill to remove it from the county code. If this opposition continues, we hope that our State Delegation would establish such an office for the benefit of Montgomery County residents. ■

Update Your Contact Data

Member associations, do you have new officers taking over? Please remember to update your contact information with us, with your Regional Services Center, and with the M-NCPPC. You can do the last quickly and easily online. On the [MoCo Planning website](#), click on the blue tab marked "Homeowners and Civic Associations Tools." Fill in the necessary information, especially email and snail mail addresses. Without these, M-NCPPC cannot notify you of land use proposals in your neighborhood.

And remember: forward this newsletter to all your members. Together, we are building community, staying connected, and staying informed. Information is like manure: it's only useful when it's spread around. ■



MCCF Executive Committee Nominations

The following individuals have been nominated to serve as Executive Committee Members-at-Large of the Montgomery County Civic Federation.

- Jay Elvove, North Hills of Sligo Creek Civic Association
- Brenda Freeman, Woodside Park Civic Association
- Cheryl Gannon, Woodside Civic Association
- Daniel Meijer, East Silver Spring Civic Association
- Kimblyn Persaud, Wheaton Regional Park Neighborhood Association

According to the Civic Federation by-laws, these nominations must be ratified by the membership at the September 2023 General Meeting. ■

ISO Civic Federation Committee Chairs

The Civic Federation is seeking volunteers to chair and/or co-chair its Standing Committees:

- Education
- Environment
- Legislation/Committee for Montgomery
- Parks and Recreation
- Planning and Land Use
- Public Finance
- Public Safety
- Transportation
- Utilities

If you are interested in any of these topics and willing to share your expertise with the rest of the county via the MCCF, please contact [Peggy Dennis, MCCF First Vice President](#), for more information on how you can serve and what it entails. ■

Bowser Elected Secretary, Committee for Montgomery

At the June Annual Meeting of the Committee for Montgomery, Inc., MCCF President Alan Bowser was elected Secretary of the county-wide organization. Committee for Montgomery is a broad coalition of community leaders that advocates to the Maryland State Government for the County's needs through collective action; MCCF is a founding member. Bowser previously served as co-chair of CfM's Nominations Committee and has actively advocated for greater diversity and issue focus for the Committee during his tenure. The 34th CfM Legislative Breakfast will take place on December 15, 2023, at the Rockville Marriott. This annual event, drawing hundreds of attendees, is the signature event of CfM. [Learn more.](#) ■

Effective Principals: How to Eliminate Structural Racism from MoCo Public Schools

By Gordie Brenne, Treasurer, Montgomery County Taxpayers League

Montgomery County Public Schools open in August with a record budget to improve students' reading and math proficiency. Taxpayers will be looking for a return on our record investment made possible by a recent property tax increases and a generous appropriation by county officials of **\$198 million** above the minimum spending level designated by the state for Maintenance of Effort.

The Board of Education questioned the approach MCPS uses to select principals for schools before the current controversy over the principal selected for Paint Branch High School. The Montgomery County principal's contract has work rules that are largely uniform

for all schools, and do not address challenges of **"high needs" schools** with 35% or more students living in poverty. Black and Latino/Hispanic students suffer the most from poor reading and math instruction and limited parent communication. This year's aggregate proficiency targets for academic excellence set forth in the **MCPS strategic plan** (73.9% literacy and 72.7% math) do not target proficiency improvements for Black and Latino/Hispanic students, and will leave too many of them behind until structural racism causes are eliminated.

Structural racism is defined by the Aspen Institute as: "A system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work in various, often reinforcing ways to perpetuate

racial group inequity."

KENNEDY HIGH SCHOOL EXAMPLE

A good example of structural racism's effects is Kennedy High School in Silver Spring. Last year Kennedy experienced an **50% absentee rate**. Equally disturbing, Kennedy's principal was **replaced in June** with one who has no prior experience as a principal, let alone proven success turning around a failing school.

Kennedy is a high-needs school with 84% of its students low-income, 90% Latino/Hispanic and Black, and a very high dropout rate of 9% in the 2022 school year [Source: **Schools at a Glance**].

Kennedy students are struggling academically. This could be

Racism at MCPS, cont.

a **cause** of the high absentee rate. The most recent public **dashboard data** for the school year that ended in 2022 shows Kennedy's 11th grade Hispanic/Latino students had 59.7% literacy proficiency and 36.1% math proficiency, while the smaller cohort of Black students had 76.2% literacy proficiency and 47.6% math proficiency. This performance did not meet the strategic plan's District wide targets for literacy (65.9%) and math (64.1%) for that school year. Performance for grades 9, 10, and 12 are not disclosed to the public and may have been worse, since Kennedy's 11th graders were only 14.3% of its students [Schools at a Glance].

EFFECTIVE PRINCIPALS ARE CRITICAL

We believe having effective principals at Kennedy and other high-needs schools are key to turning academic performance around. Recent **Board of Education concerns**—question A—about novice principals in high-needs schools reinforce this concern, as does a **Council report** from last October about effective principals, citing Wallace Foundation research.

MCPS reported in response to Board concerns (pgs. 7-8 of 15) that a significant number of high-needs schools have novice principals (those with less than 3 years' experience). **40% of high-needs middle schools and 36% of those high schools have novice principals.** Trends show those percentages are

lower than in 2018 for elementary and middle high-needs schools, but the **high school novice percentage jumped from 23% to 36%**. It's counter-intuitive that the percentage of novice principals in high-needs middle and high schools remains far greater than in higher income schools (MS: 40% vs. 11%; HS: 36% vs. 27%). Worse, there could be many more ineffective principals in high-needs schools who are not novices because experience is only a proxy for effectiveness and excludes measures of student performance.

Teachers can only be effective delivering instruction if they are managed by effective principals because individual heroics only go so far and cannot be sustained.

Racism at MCPS, cont.

CONTRACT TERMS SUPPORT STRUCTURAL RACISM

The Administrators and Principals union **contract terms** made public this spring don't address the unique challenges of high-needs schools and, thus, perpetuate racial inequities. Work rules in two areas need to be changed to increase reading and math proficiency in high-needs schools:

1. Missing Effectiveness Evaluation Criteria for Principals. **Principals** have no evaluation criteria specifically tied to improving proficiency in math and reading, or reaching all parents whose kids need tutoring and intervention help. Principals basically serve at the pleasure of the Superintendent (**Board questions D and E**) after passing ten generic standards, but are they



capable of leading without extra central office supervision? Stronger criteria would provide an objective way to assure high-needs schools get effective principals and teachers, help rotate out principals who don't measure up, and target incentives to recruit and retain the best.

2. Unrestricted Free Agency for Teachers. Teachers are free

to move out of high-needs schools if they are tenured or after two years through **job fairs**. Who can blame them? They may be seeking shorter work days, fewer classroom disruptions, and easier parent communications in a higher-income school. But this undermines principals' efforts to attract and retain quality teachers.

Structural racism is cheating kids in over half our schools out of a better future (123 high needs schools out of 210 total schools). Significantly reducing the achievement gap next year requires immediate action to strengthen the effectiveness of high-needs school principals. A **separate article** (17) was just published that addresses how the teacher's contract creates proficiency barriers. Changes are needed for both the ways MCPS manages teachers and how teachers instruct kids in our high-needs schools. ■

New Online Software to Streamline MCCF Dues Payments, Member Communications

By Liz Joyce, Second Vice President

We are so proud to announce our new membership software, SimpliDues. Joining or renewing your membership is now easier than ever.

On our new online membership portal, the confidential information you provide will enable you to get automatic dues renewal reminders and online meeting notices and alerts from the Montgomery County Civic Federation, Inc.

To pay or renew annual Civic Federation dues, [use this link](#). (There's also a link to this from the [MCCF website](#), of course!)

■ You'll see MAKE A PAYMENT.

■ Check the PAY DUES box. A drop-down menu will appear listing the amount of annual dues that correspond to the number of households in your civic association or

homeowners' association. OR you can register as an individual. CLICK the appropriate level.

■ **SELECT YOUR ORGANIZATION:** A drop-down menu will appear listing the names of many civic and homeowners' associations.

■ **I DON'T SEE MY ORGANIZATION IN THE LIST.** If you don't see your association in the list, ADD IT, by listing your organization's (1) name, (2) type, and (3) website address (if you have one).

■ **Click CHECKOUT.** On the next page, you list the primary contact for billing and communications AND your designated Delegates to the Montgomery County Civic Federation. You can list 1–4 Delegates as appropriate for the size of your association.

■ At the bottom of this page,

please PROVIDE YOUR CREDIT OR DEBIT CARD INFORMATION, then click PAY.

■ You will receive a receipt for the transaction by email. The link in this email will give you access to edit your entries at any time, so it's a good idea to bookmark it.

If you prefer to pay by check, please make checks payable to "Montgomery County Civic Federation." Mail to Montgomery County Civic Federation, Inc., P.O. Box 1123, Bethesda, MD 20827-1123.

If you mailed in your renewal, we will enter your information into the system, and you will receive future emails and renewal reminders from SimpliDues.

We thank you for supporting the Montgomery County Civic Federation! ■



Update on PEPCO's Shared Use Path

By Peggy Dennis, Transportation Committee

Some years ago, the Civic Federation played an instrumental role in getting PEPCO to agree to having a shared-use recreational path in its transmission corridor in the western county. Mike Zelaski from the Parks Department has provided this update on the progress of this initiative. Progress to date includes:

- Topographic survey is complete from Westlake to Tuckerman and near complete from Tuckerman to St. James.

- The field work for forest stand delineations is near completion.

- The stream stabilization for Cabin John Creek is at 30 percent complete.

- Alignment from Westlake to Tuckerman is close to 30 percent

design.

- Trailheads within Cabin John Regional Park are at 30 percent for the north side and concept level for the south side.

- Stormwater management for the trail from Westlake to St. James is under design.

- Subsurface investigation plan was submitted to PEPCO for review prior to getting borings.

- Conceptual bridge location over Cabin John Creek is being developed.

There's been a significant volume of administrative work as well, like meeting with review agencies, but that's not as glamorous. An interesting side note is that a couple of other jurisdictions have expressed interest in developing trails in utility properties/rights of way. ■

CIVIC FED TONIGHT!

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

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

Photos from MCCF's Annual Awards Celebration in June



**CHERYL
GANNON**

**MARC
ELRICH**



**ERIC
CATHCART**

**EVAN
GLASS**

June Awards Pix, cont.



Executive Committee Meeting Minutes, August 24, 2023, 7:00 pm, Zoom

By Karen Cordry, Secretary

Attendees: Bowser, Cordry, Garson, Meijer, Elvove, Freeman, Dennis, Joyce, Persaud

INTRODUCTIONS OF CURRENT AND NEW MEMBERS

■ **Dan Meijer**, East Silver Spring; past Board member for Allied Civic Association

■ **Jay Elvove**, member, Presidents' Council of SS Civic Associations (PREZCO); past President, North Hills of Sligo Creek Civic Association

■ **Karen Cordry**, President of Kensington Heights Civic Association; MCCF Secretary

■ **Liz Joyce**, East Silver Spring; Sarasota Village Neighbors; 2nd MCCF VP

■ **Peggy Dennis**, Potomac; 1st MCCF VP.; Past Pres, MCCF: Legislation Cmte. Chair

■ **Brenda Freeman**, Woodside Park Civic Association VP, working on housing and zoning issues

■ **Kim Persaud**, past President, Wheaton Regional Park Neighborhood Association; founder, EPIC of MoCo

■ **Cheryl Gannon**, Woodside Civic Association

■ **Jacquie Bokow**, Northwood-Four Corners Civic Association; MCCF newsletter editor and webmaster

■ **Jerry Garson**, Regency Estates Civic Association; MCCF Treasurer

■ **Alan Bowser**, President, Park Hills Civic Association; MCCF President.

Cheryl Gannon and Kim Persaud

were joint recipients of the MCCF Wayne Goldstein award this year.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Jerry Garson said that MCCF is now receiving membership dues through the new online system, SimpliDues.com, and by mail. He recommended that MCCF authorize its annual \$300 dues payment to the Committee for Montgomery. Motion by Liz Joyce; seconded by Peggy Dennis; motion passed unanimously.

RATIFICATION OF NEW EXECUTIVE BOARD POSITIONS

Proposed new members for the MCCF Executive Committee—Elvove, Freeman, Gannon, Meijer, and Persaud—need to be ratified by the membership at the September meeting.

Aug. ExComm Mtg., cont.

COMMITTEE CHAIR VACANCIES

Members highlighted the need to recruit new Committee Chairs and co-Chairs, for Education, Environment, Parks & Recreation, Public Finance, Public Safety, and Utilities.

NEW MEMBERSHIP SOFTWARE

MCCF is now using SimpliDues.com for its membership software. There will be a guide to its use in the September newsletter.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

For 2023-24, MCCF General Meetings will be virtual, via Zoom. We will arrange in-person social events during the year.

September 2023 General Meeting will be Sept. 11, 7:30, on Zoom. Maryland State Delegate Vaughn Stewart (D19) will be the featured

speaker. He is Chair of the Land Use and Ethics Subcommittee of the House of Delegates Environment and Transportation Committee.

Members expressed interest in inviting Planning Board Chair Artie Harris and acting Planning Director Tanya Stern to an upcoming MCCF meeting.

In October, the meeting topic will focus on County tree canopy and invasive plants.

2023-24 Programming. Other tentative meeting topics/speakers include: November—2024 legislation preview; December—Police Chief Marcus Jones; January—County Executive Marc Elrich; Feb.—housing issues, Office of Legislative Oversight; March—County budget; April—Transportation and Pedestrian Safety; May—Elections, public schools/education.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m. ■

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Submit contributions for the next issue by the 26th of the current month. Send to CFN at [civicfednews AT montgomerycivic.org](mailto:civicfednews@montgomerycivic.org).

Send all address corrections to membership AT montgomerycivic.org.

VIEW PAST ISSUES ONLINE [HERE](#)