

December Program: Community Safety | A conversation with County Chief of Police Jones | **P. 3**

MCPD Reports on Crime, Safety | Safety statistics for 2022 | **P. 4**

Resolution to Save Street Trees | MoCo should eliminate vines from the trees in the public ROW | **P. 5**

Karen Cordry: In Memoriam | The civic activist passed away on November 20 | **P. 6**

I-495/I-270 Project | MSHA proposes additional lanes to part of the Beltway and I-270 | **P. 7**

Why the 'New' MDOT-Moore Proposal is 'Smoke and Mirrors'

| Auto and highway safety expert Byron Bloch explains | **P. 8**

American Legion Bridge + I-270 Comments Form | **P. 10**

People's Counsel for Land Use Planning | Cheryl Gannon testifies on Bill PG/MC112-24 | **P. 12**

Public Input Sought on County Charter | Put in your 2¢ | **P. 16**

Volunteers Needed for Civic Fed 2024 Committees | **P. 17**

Hottest 12 Months on Record | You've just lived through the hottest year ever | **P. 22**

TO PRINT, USE **PRINT VERSION**

of note

Next MCCF Meeting #948

December 11, 2023, 7:30 p.m. *online via Zoom*. Topic: "Community Safety: A Conversation with Montgomery County Chief of Police Marcus Jones."

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

AGENDA, P. 2 • PROGRAM, P. 3

Meeting Minutes

November 13 Meeting #947 **P. 18**

Executive Committee Meetings
NOVEMBER P. 20

Membership Application

JOIN ONLINE | MAIL-IN FORM

Federation Meeting #948

Monday, December 11, 2023

7:30 p.m.

Online Zoom Meeting

AGENDA

1. Call to Order/Introductions
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Approval of Minutes: November 13 General Meeting #947 **P.17**
4. Treasurer's Report
5. Announcements
6. December Program: Community Safety **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 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 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 **881 0697 4298**. 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 22

Community Safety: A Conversation with Montgomery County Police Chief Marcus Jones

The Montgomery County Civic Federation's featured guest at the December meeting will be Montgomery County Chief of Police Marcus Jones. Chief Jones is no stranger to the Civic Federation and our delegates. He has been a regular speaker at Federation programs for several years, always offering his valuable, insightful analyses of public safety issues throughout the County.

Chief Marcus Jones grew up in South Boston, Virginia, a major tobacco center 20 miles from the North Carolina border. He joined the Montgomery County Police Department in 1985 after majoring in business administration at the University of Maryland. He's been with the Montgomery County Police Department for 38 years.

After serving as a police officer and detective for 15 years, Jones rose steadily to Sergeant in 2000, Lieutenant in 2004, and Captain in 2011. He also served as the drug enforcement commander, headed up the major crimes division, and was commander of the Silver Spring division. In that capacity, he demonstrated a strong commitment to community engagement. In 2018, he was promoted to assistant chief and supervised all investigation divisions. In November 2019, he was appointed Chief of Police by Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich.

Jones is a former chairman of the National Black Police Association and recently served on the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund's board of directors. Two of



his adult children teach in the Montgomery County school system; the third works in public relations for the National Restaurant Association.

Chief Jones has given high priority to MCPD's engagement with Montgomery County's residents and businesses throughout his tenure. He has worked hard to increase the recruitment of new officers and civilian personnel, supported increased use of innovative technology in law enforcement activities, and urged his officers to be more present in our neighborhoods. ■

Montgomery County Police Department Presents Annual Report on Crime and Safety

The Montgomery County Police Department presents an annual report on crime and safety in the County. The currently available report details public safety statistics for 2022 and is available [here](#).

The report discusses community policing resources, public safety communications, and a comparison of year-end crime statistics for recent years. It also includes information on violent crime, gangs and firearms, property crimes, crimes against society, and traffic safety and enforcement.

In the 2022 Report, Chief Jones wrote: "This report covers 2022, a year that saw the dangers of the pandemic recede, although not disappearing entirely. As people got out more, incidents of crime followed. In that context, Montgomery inci-

dents of crime for 2022, the number of crimes was 48,830, a figure 8% higher than for 2021.

"That overall figure is an incomplete view of the trends of crime in Montgomery County. Underneath that summary, this report spotlights what crimes are driving the trends and what areas of the county are the most affected by crime. For example, the number of homicides in the County dropped by 37%, down to 22 from 35 in 2021. In large part, what drove the overall increase was the category of crimes classified as "Crime Against Society," which includes drugs and weapons-related violations. The number of drug violations increased almost 50%.

"Within that category, the number of offenses involving controlled dangerous substances—like fentanyl,

cocaine, and heroin—increased 62% from 2021, with most of those related to marijuana. At the same time, we can report some progress stemming the scourge of opioids. The number of opioid overdoses in Montgomery County decreased 22% in 2022. Nonfatal overdoses decreased by 21% and fatal overdoses dropped by 26% from 2021. Yet, while the overall number of overdoses has dropped, sadly overdoses for those under age 21 increased by 78% in 2022.

"Weapons-related violations also were up by 51%, from 335 to 506. The type of weapon we call "Privately Made Firearms"—also known as "ghost guns"—are becoming more frequent. We have seen an increase in violent crimes involving firearms

mccf

Report on Crime, cont.

and the ghost guns played a significant role.

“In addition to the types of crimes, we can also isolate data geographically. For the most serious crimes, the highest total, and greatest percentage increase, came in our Third District (Silver Spring), followed by the Fourth District (Wheaton). The Third District also had the most calls for service in 2022, followed by the Fourth District and Sixth District (Germantown).

“The number of dispatched calls for service for the six MCPD districts increased by 3% from 2021, to 193,305, after decreases for the previous four years. The most calls in 2021 came from the Third District (East County and Silver Spring), 38,575; Fourth District (Wheaton), 36,446; and Sixth District (Gaithers-

burg), 32,123. Calls for service do not necessarily equate to crime data since they include nonemergency, noncriminal, and sometimes nonpolice matters.

“Thank you for looking through our report. I believe we have an

excellent department that provides exemplary service to Montgomery County. We are always trying to improve our methods and procedures, and I look forward to continuing the discussions about how we can make our work even more effective.” ■

Resolution in Support of Funding to Save Street Trees

By Peggy Dennis, Transportation Committee Member and First Vice President

[Please refer back to my article on the proposed program in the November newsletter.]

Whereas trees, particularly mature trees, are vital to a healthy environment and fighting climate change; and

Whereas dead trees along our roads are a public safety hazard; and

Whereas cutting down dead street trees, grinding their stumps,

and planting replacement trees is very costly, making it fiscally prudent to save the trees we already have;

Therefore, be it resolved that the Montgomery County Civic Federation, Inc., supports having additional funding for the Montgomery County Department of Transportation to create a volunteer program to eliminate vines from the trees in the public right-of-way.

[This Resolution will be discussed and voted on at the meeting on Monday, December 11.] ■

mccf

Karen Cordry: In Memoriam

Recently, we received the very sad news that our dear friend, the Secretary of the Montgomery County Civic Federation and the President of the Kensington Heights Civic Association, Karen Cordry had passed away on November 20.

All of us with the Civic Federation were stunned and greatly saddened by the loss of our friend and one of Montgomery County's most accomplished community leaders. It seems impossible to imagine doing this work without her.

We knew Karen as a wonderful, warm, and caring person who would bend over backwards to help all of her neighbors and the greater Montgomery County community in any way that she could. She was a valuable, dedicated, and hardworking member of the Civic Federation



KAREN CORDRY

Executive Committee, offering her insight, clear thinking, and broad experience when addressing all of the many issues the Civic Federation deals with on a day-to-day basis.

She had served as Chair of the Wheaton Redevelopment Advisory Committee and as a member of the County's Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Traffic Safety Advisory Committee and the Montgomery County Planning Department's Advisory Committee on Missing Middle Housing.

Just this past June at the Civic Federation's annual Awards Program in Silver Spring, we presented Karen with the Federation's Star Cup, our award that goes “to the committee or delegate performing the most outstanding public service on behalf of Montgomery County.”

Karen Cordry, cont.

In Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich's weekly update, he stated the following:

"She was pivotal in empowering local communities. One of her most noteworthy successes was in winning a long battle against an attempt to put a mega-gas station at Wheaton Mall, too close to adjacent neighborhoods, schools, and a swimming pool. Her hard work, leadership, and success was also a success for the environment and the community. Recently she was serving as vice chair of the County's Charter Review Commission.

"Karen's list of accomplishments are too long to list here, but suffice it to say, she was a remarkable, intelligent, kind, generous person and a dear friend. As we remember her tireless advocacy and leadership, her

legacy will continue to inspire our path forward. My deepest condolences to all who knew her and had the pleasure of working with her over her many decades of work for our community. We will miss her dearly."

We agree. She was remarkable, kind, and generous and we will miss her dearly.

May her memory be a blessing and an inspiration to all who serve their communities. ■



CORDRY RIDES WITH JERRY GARSON IN THE SILVER SPRING THANKSGIVING PARADE 11/18

I-495/I-270 Project

By Jerry Garson, Transportation Chair

The Maryland State Highway Administration held public meetings in November to discuss the proposals for adding additional lanes to parts of the Beltway (I-495) and I-270.

They stated that the American Legion Bridge had only six years of additional life before trucks and buses would be restricted from using the bridge.

The initial proposal would be to widen I-495 (the Beltway). Implementation of managed lanes will be phased, with the American Legion Bridge, I-495 to the I-270 West Spur, and the I-270 West Spur being the focus for initial implementation.

The section from the I-270 West Spur to I-370, including through the

MORE

I-495/I-270 Project, cont.

City of Rockville, will be addressed in a later phase. This phasing will allow for a rational and fiscally prudent phased development. The portions North of I-370 will be a later phase.

Maryland Gov. Wes Moore said the state will pursue publicly fund-

ing a multibillion-dollar project to relieve Beltway congestion, breaking off from his predecessor's \$6 billion plan for a public-private partnership.

The Maryland Department of Transportation has applied for a \$2.4 billion federal grant that officials said would help the state realize long-sought improvements at one of

the biggest traffic choke points in the Washington region by 2031.

Moore's plan would rebuild the American Legion Bridge and add managed lanes—such as high-occupancy toll lanes—to parts of the Capital Beltway and Interstate 270, targeting crippling highway congestion at the Virginia state line. ■

Why the 'New' MDOT-Moore Proposal is 'Smoke and Mirrors'

By Byron Bloch, Transportation Committee Member

The "new" MDOT-Moore proposal is a clever repeat of the Hogan scheme to widen I-495 and I-270 and add pricey toll lanes. [Use this link](#) to see MDOT's slides on the proposal.

Much of what you'll find is information about public transit options and bicycle and pedestrian safety improvements, but scroll down to

Stations 4 and 5 to see the particulars about the highway construction.

As you look over the creative 27 color slides of this latest MDOT proposal, here's what MDOT and Governor Wes Moore forgot to tell you:

1. They accepted the inadequate *Environmental Impact Study* even though many issues were *not* addressed, like forestry protection, water runoff, and adding carcinogenic silica construction dust,

and other vehicle-based toxins like asbestos and rubber-tire-based particulates into our breathable air. All of us will be exposed to environmental hazards causing asthma, silicosis, COPD, and lung cancer, and schools may have to cancel outdoor activities.

2. They pretend this is a "multimodal" proposal, including various bus and METRO train

MORE

Smoke and Mirrors, cont.

tie-ins, but fail to show *any* specific plans to actually do so, nor to show commitment of sufficient funds to make it happen. Better to extend METRO and MARC trains and buses into a coordinated and affordable-for-all public transit system!

3. They pretend this will reduce traffic congestion on I-270, but evade explaining how the present five northbound lanes funneling into just two lanes will cope with the insanely jammed bottlenecks when it becomes seven lanes with even more cars and trucks trying to funnel into those same two lanes. Better to widen into four lanes north from Gaithersburg?

4. They fail to explain that the Public-Private option would be a 50-year commitment to repay the private contractor(s) with

toll revenue, plus profit, as a financial burden on all drivers, while forcing the public to make up the difference with much higher toll fees and potential assessments upon us all.

5. They fail to point out that criss-crossing between central toll lanes and getting on and off at exit ramps will cause more lethal crashes, including between tractor-trailer rigs and passenger vehicles. And that the number of *public lanes will be reduced* as at least one lane each way is *stolen* for unwarranted conversion into privatized toll lanes.

6. In this era of climate crisis, it is simply wrong to focus on enabling more fossil-fueled vehicle traffic by paving over and widening our highways, which will encourage more vehicle usage. And sicken us with polluted air, while adding to global warming.

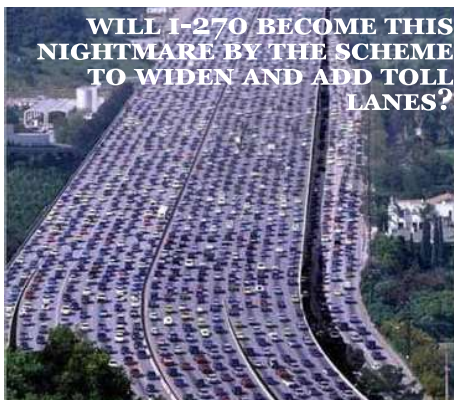
After reading the proposal and my comments, please take the time to fill out **MDOT's ALB+270 Comments section** [questions shown on next page] or email your comments to ALB270@mdot.maryland.gov. [The public opinion survey must be submitted or postmarked by December 15, 2023.]

Let's show Governor Wes Moore that his prior criticism (when he was campaigning for governor) of this "widen and add toll lanes" scheme was correct. Let's support a balanced multimodal transit system with easier access by all citizens, rather than pricey toll lanes with more traffic congestion and bottlenecks and horrendous truck-into-car crashes. Let's show Governor Moore and MDOT that we citizens have deep concerns about the health, safety, environmental, and economic

MORE

Smoke and Mirrors, cont.

impacts of widening our roads and adding toll lanes. Will Montgomery County become known as "Cancer County, Maryland" if this widening scheme gets implemented? Will outdoor activities be banned at nearby schools and in our backyards? We can and must do better than this scheme. ■

**ALB+270 Comments Form Questions**

[Here are the questions on the MDOT American Legion Bridge + 270 Open House Comment Form.]

1. What is your home ZIP code?
2. If you commute to work, what is your work ZIP code?
3. How often do you travel across the American Legion Bridge?
 - Daily
 - Often
 - Sometimes
 - Rarely
 - Never
4. How often do you travel in the I-270 corridor?
 - Daily
 - Often
 - Sometimes
 - Rarely
 - Never
5. Select up to three transportation priorities for the corridor.

- Reduce congestion and travel times
 - Reliable travel options
 - Safety for all travelers
 - Better access to transit
 - Improved pedestrian and bicycle pathways
 - Rideshare and carpooling incentives
 - Economic opportunity
 - Other (please specify)
6. Select up to three near-term strategies to enhance multimodal travel in the corridor.
 - Park-and-ride lots
 - Commuter bus service on I-495 and I-270
 - Support for finding rideshare partners
 - Incentives for telework and flexible work hours
 - Other (please specify) **MORE**

ALB+270 Comments, cont.

7. Select up to three longer-term transportation enhancements in the corridor.

- Add general-purpose lanes
- Add managed lanes
- Park-and-ride facilities
- Commuter bus service
- Improve adjacent roads
- Improve bicycle and pedestrian travel
- Transit adjacent to I-270 (e.g., bus rapid transit, enhanced MARC service)
- Other (please specify)

8. Where do you believe improved bicycle/pedestrian connections are most needed? Please provide specific locations.

9. What destinations do you believe should be better connected via transit? Please provide specific destinations (i.e., commuter bus from

Frederick to location X or Rockville Metro to retail area X).

10. Which three transit stations should be prioritized for transit-oriented development to foster sustainable and inclusive communities nearby?

- Shady Grove
- Rockville
- Twinbrook
- North Bethesda
- Grosvenor-Strathmore
- Medical Center
- Bethesda
- Other (please specify)

11. How do you think that the state should fund improvements in the corridor? Please select the options you prefer.

- Federal grants
- Raise gas taxes
- Raise fees
- Toll lanes
- Other (please specify)

12. What is your preferred method for funding and financing improvements?

- Public funds (grants, bonds, etc.)
- Public-Private Partnership (P3)
- No preference – just fix it
- Do not build the improvements
- Unsure
- Other (please specify)

Additional Information

As Maryland considers improvements to the corridor, what else should we know?

What is the best way for MDOT to communicate with you as this program progresses? Please select all that apply.

- Email
- Project website
- Social Media
- Other (please specify) ■

Montgomery County People's Counsel for Land Use Planning

[Testimony submitted by Cheryl Gannon on Bill PG/MC 112-24 before the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission.]

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senator Kramer's bill to establish a People's Counsel for residents of Montgomery County.

Land use and Planning for both Montgomery and Prince George's Counties fall under the jurisdiction of the MNCPPC (the Commission), a state created and chartered bicounty agency. Under an agreement with the Commission, Prince George's County receives annual funding to support a People's Counsel for Zoning and Land Use. *The Memorandum of Agreement states that the reimbursement for a People's Counsel is "in furtherance of the Commis-*

sion's obligations and responsibilities under Title 14 through 27 of the Land Use Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland." In other words, the Commission acknowledges obligations and responsibilities for a People's Counsel, although no funding or statutory framework is provided for Montgomery County residents.

The Memorandum of Agreement goes on with a Statement of Mutual Benefits and Interests to note that the Commission expects to benefit from the work of the PG People's Counsel. In addition to funding, Title 25 of the state land use article outlines various functions of the Prince George's County People's Counsel (Land Use Code §25-202 and §25-206). Yet, there is no comparable state statute or funding for

Montgomery County residents. This disparity in treatment of residents of each county must be resolved and the State has a responsibility to step in and establish a People's Counsel and funding for the residents of Montgomery County.

Montgomery County has a People's Counsel statute on the books, but the Council has not funded the position since 2010. Instead, the Council recently considered legislation to remove the most important functions of the position—advocacy in the public interest and participating in certain administrative processes. For over a decade, the residents have been left on their own to navigate a very complex process. The State created this bicounty agency, and I believe the State has a



People's Counsel, cont.

responsibility to provide this important function to Montgomery County residents. It is worth noting that, in addition to Prince George's County, there are People's Counsels for zoning in Baltimore County, Howard County, and Harford County. About 2.5 million state residents are covered by a People's Counsel, yet Montgomery County, the largest in the state, has failed to maintain the program for residents.

Discussion of a People's Counsel for Montgomery County residents should proceed on a factual basis. I will focus my testimony on the most often repeated misunderstandings and misstatements about the statute and the function generally of a People's Counsel. Unfortunately, these erroneous statements have been made in public meetings of the

Council, Planning Board, and Development Review Process Workgroup and have clouded the discussion.

1. "It will be used by rich people to stop projects they don't like."

Both the statute proposed by Senator Kramer and the existing Montgomery County code prohibit the PC from representing any individual party in a proceeding. In fact, an OLO survey noted that residents were often disappointed when they found out that the PC was not their personal lawyer and did not represent them individually. The fact that residents voiced that complaint demonstrates that the People's Counsel, when we had one, did not intervene on behalf of individual parties. "Rich people" hire their own lawyers, which is why, in part, the county RESJ analysis found that economically disadvantaged com-

munities were most harmed by the failure to provide a fully functioning People's Counsel, and recommended funding the existing statute.

The People's Counsel does not have the ability to stop anything. The decision makers remain the same—the Planning Board and the Council. The only way that the direction of a project changes as a result of People's Counsel input is if the Council or Planning Board agrees with the PC position. If you think about it, does it seem credible that the Council and Planning Board are asking you to "Please stop us before we can agree with a People's Counsel position"? Of course not. This argument comes from developers and lobbyists and is echoed by Council and Planning Board and staff on behalf of developers and real estate interests.

MORE



People's Counsel, cont.

2. It is too difficult or "tricky" to define public interest. This statement has been made repeatedly by Council and Planning staff. And yet, last week, right after the Planning staff said it was too "tricky" to determine public interest, the Chair of the Planning Board said, "We act in the public interest." Councilmembers act in the public interest; the Planning Board, state legislators, prosecutors, consumer protection departments, and, frankly, the entire civil service is dedicated to working in the public interest. People's Counsel offices operate in the public interest without controversy in every large jurisdiction in the state except Montgomery County. The stated position of the Council and Planning Board is that *only* in Montgomery County and

only with respect to a People's Counsel is it not possible to define the public interest. This is a profoundly misconceived—not to say specious—argument.

3. It will slow down the process. The People's Counsel doesn't have the power to delay proceedings. The People's Counsel must work within established timelines and deadlines set by Planning Board and Council and can only show up at scheduled hearings or administrative meetings and state a position. This is just another excuse to deny residents the help that about 2.5 million residents in this state already have. The Office of Legislative Oversight found that many respondents to a survey, including land use attorneys and developers, credited the People's Counsel with making the process more efficient, by working behind the scenes to explain the process and

what is relevant not to residents. It also noted that the Montgomery PC established a mediation function that helped resolve many issues in controversial matters.

4. A People's Counsel duplicates the work of Planning staff and Council. While the Council and Planning Board weigh competing interests of parties involved with or affected by zoning and land use decisions, the People's Counsel's sole focus is articulating a position in the public interest. The Council doesn't have to agree, it only has to *listen*. For example, when a project skips the required environmental impact analysis or waives storm water rules, a People's Counsel could be helpful in flagging the potential harms to the Board or Council. The Downtown Silver Spring tree canopy has been reduced to 8% over the years, the

MORE

People's Counsel, cont.

lowest in the county, due to years of Planning Board and Council neglect of environmental concerns. We never see the Planning Board present in favor of their plans and then switch hats and say, "Ignore us because the proposal harms the environment or other resident interests." What the Planning Board and Council are really saying is that they do not want to give space to competing views. They don't want to hear it, and don't want a People's Counsel position in the public record. This aggressive move to limit meaningful public input must be remedied by the state.

I urge you to enact the bill and, if amendments are considered, you might consider making the position appointed and maintained by the state in the same way that the public utility People's Counsel is

maintained by the state. The state has a successful track record with People's Counsel position for public

utilities and understands the work of a People's Counsel and how to define the role and public interest. ■



The Gift of Mobility
Donate or Receive Durable Medical Equipment

DURABLE MEDICAL EQUIPMENT EXAMPLES:
Wheelchairs, Power Chairs, Rollators, Scooters, Walkers, Shower Chairs, Canes, Crutches, Hospital Beds, "Hoyer" Lifts, Tub Transfer Benches, and Much More!

DONATIONS WILL BE:

- Sanitized
- Repaired
- Provided to adults and children with mobility needs

Please contact us:

aging.maryland.gov
240-230-8000
dme.mdoa@maryland.gov

Mont. County Charter Review Commission Solicits Public Input on County Charter

[November 16, 2023, Press Release]

The Montgomery County Charter Review Commission is soliciting public comments on what matters the Commission should consider for possible revisions to the County's Charter.

The County Charter is the constitutional framework for the County Government. The County Council, in coordination with the County Executive, appoints an eleven-member, bipartisan, Charter Review Commission to study the County Charter and recommend changes. The Council recently appointed new Commission members in July 2023.

The Commission is required to submit a report to the County Council on its activities in every even-numbered year, on or before May 1. The report must include the

Commission's recommendations for possible Charter revisions, if any. Those recommendations can lead to proposed Charter amendments being adopted by the Council and submitted for voter approval at the next election.

The Commission currently is seeking suggestions from the public on the topics it should study, with particular focus on matters that could be the subject of recommendations included in its report due by May 1, 2024. The Commission requests that those comments be submitted before its meeting scheduled for January 10, 2024. Suggestions for other matters that might be appropriate for longer-term study and inclusion in its May 2026 report are also welcomed. Comments received after the January 10 meeting will be

considered in a subsequent report.

Public comments can be submitted by email to charterreview.commission@montgomerycountymd.gov. Comments sent by postal mail should be addressed to:

Charter Review Commission
Council Office Building
100 Maryland Ave., 6th Floor
Rockville, MD 20850

The Commission also expects to hold public listening sessions early in 2024 to receive input on the possible charter revisions being considered by the Commission.

Previous reports of the Charter Review Commission, the minutes and recordings of prior meetings, and a link that can be used to access a copy of the County Charter can be [viewed here](#). ■

Volunteers Needed for Civic Federation 2024 Awards, Nominations Committees

2024 AWARDS COMMITTEE

The Civic Federation's Annual Awards Banquet may seem a long way off, but there is much to be done within the coming months. All of our delegates and members should start thinking about individuals and/or groups to nominate. Here are the descriptions of the awards and the rationale for each award:

I The Wayne Goldstein

Award: awarded to an individual or group for outstanding service to the people of Montgomery County.

I The Sentinel Award: sponsored by the Montgomery Sentinel newspaper and awarded to an individual or group for a significant

contribution to good government at the local level.

I The Star Cup: sponsored by the Federation and to be awarded to a Delegate or Committee of the Federation for outstanding public service on behalf of Montgomery County.

The work of the Awards Committee—soliciting and accepting nominations for award recipients, evaluating those nominations, and making final recommendations on the awardees—will be carried out during the winter, and much of the work will be done by email and phone. The Awards Committee will be confirmed at the January Executive Committee meeting.

NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE FOR 2024–2025

We need members to serve on the Civic Federation's Nominating Committee. There is no better way to help highlight shared County concerns and provide a bigger voice for residents and their civic associations. The Committee will be responsible for filling the elective positions for the year 2024–2025: President, First Vice President, Second Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Again, most work will be done by email and telephone. No travel! No meetings!

To volunteer to help with either or both of these important groups, please contact our President, Alan Bowser, at president@montgomerycivic.org. ■

Minutes of November 13, 2023, MCCF General Meeting #947, 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 36 persons attended on the Zoom platform.]

Call to Order: Alan Bowser, President, called the Meeting to order at 7:34 p.m.

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

Approval of October Minutes: moved, seconded and approved by voice vote.

Treasurer's Report: Jerry Garson reported that, since July 1, we have

had annual receipts of \$1,387, with \$57 received in the last month and total expenses of \$1,438 for a net balance of -\$51. Current bank balance is \$8,037. Alan notes we have new membership software described in the newsletter and on the website.

PROGRAM

Current Efforts Directed at Preserving Valuable Trees and Dealing with Invasive Species

Caren Madsen, Chair of Conservation Montgomery ("CM") was the speaker. **Her Powerpoint is available here.** It noted about 47% of the County has tree cover but some areas have at little as 8% coverage. The County has had a net loss of 4500+ acres between 2013 and 2018, the second highest of Maryland counties.

CM has produced a Home Tree Care 101 program to help residents preserve/protect trees on their private property where about 80% of all trees are located. **The book is online here** and can be downloaded for anyone seeking its information.

The County also has several free tree planting programs, including Tree Montgomery, Reforest Montgomery, and its Street Tree Planting Program.

Madsen offered a number of suggestions for those interested in protecting trees, including pruning trees to keep them healthy while working to remove invasive species that can choke out the growth of existing and newly-planted trees. She also noted that HOAs or Civic Associations could sponsor a Home Tree Care 101



November Minutes, cont.

class for their community. The PPT also listed several organizations that can help those seeking to identify and remove invasive and nonnative species which can have several adverse effects on both local plants and animals. She ended with noting that for more information, contact Info@ConservationMontgomery.org.

There was discussion about whether the current charges imposed by the Country for being allowed to remove street trees (\$250 per tree) were sufficient. It was noted that there was nothing similar that applied to clear-cutting of trees other than along streets and that that contributed to the overall loss of forested land Montgomery County had been seeing as residential development continued to expand across the county. It was suggested

that higher fees and/or more broadly applicable fees might be needed to provide the necessary protection.

Civic Federation 1st VP Peggy Dennis also spoke about the problems with invasive vines in the County, noting that Takoma Park has trained volunteers to work on trees in its parks and the Montgomery County Parks Department also runs a Weed Warrior program for dealing with the issues in the parks.

Dennis proposed that we need a new program to deal with such problems that were occurring in trees along country roads and streets.

She noted that DOT has an Adopt-a-Road program to deal with picking up litter on such roads and suggested the program should be expanded to deal with these issues which can help save numerous trees, providing benefits to the environment, while reducing the chance of

harm from dead or decaying trees. [Her presentation here](#) (November 2023 program listing) had a number of suggestions about how to run an effective program to deal with these problems.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Legislation

It was noted that several State bills have passed that we supported, including one supported by Del. Ben Kramer that got Inspector Generals set up over the Board of Education. The first report from the IG came out this year with a finding that some teachers had been overcharged for some of their health care costs.

Public Safety

It was noted that there were a number of continuing public safety issues that we have been tracking,

MORE



November Minutes, cont.

including declines in the numbers of police officers due to the high cost of housing and retirements.

There have also been some anti-semitic hate incidents in the Kemp Mill area of Silver Spring, including Nazi posters, yelling at and egging at people at synagogues, etc. Cary Lamari suggested that the Civic Fed comment on these matters.

Land Use

It was noted that implementation of Thrive and certain ZTAs is currently in stasis due to an ongoing Racial Justice and Social Equity study on its effects. That study is not due until the end of August 2024.

Transportation

Transportation levels are getting back to pre-Covid levels.

The Purple Line is still delayed and is now planned to be done in about 3 years.

As to the P3 project (covering the added lanes near and on the American Legion Bridge), Maryland hasn't started its study yet, but Virginia is working on its portion.

Ride-on buses will go back to charging the \$1 fare starting in July.

Studies are being done on more BRT routes in several areas.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

MCCF Executive Committee Minutes November 19, 2023

Call to Order: The online meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by Alan Bowser, President.

Members Present: Alan Bowser, Karen Cordry, Elizabeth Joyce, Peggy Dennis, Daniel Meijer, Jerry Garson

December 2023 Program: The featured speaker of the December program will be Montgomery County

Police Chief Marcus Jones. Alan Bowser will write the program article for the December newsletter. County Executive Marc Elrich will be the speaker in January 2024.

Budget Letter: Alan Bowser suggested that the Executive Committee send a letter to the County Executive and the County Council with its list of budget priorities, to include

MORE

November ExCom, cont.

the Office of the People's Counsel, support of pedestrian safety initiatives; affordable housing initiatives, and new environmental programs such as a MoCo DOT Weed Warrior program for County roads.

Resolution on MDOT Volunteer Weed Warriors Program:

Members discussed ways to express Federation support for a new MoCo DOT volunteer program to remove invasive vines along County Roads. There was support for drafting a Resolution for consideration by Federation delegates at the December 2023 meeting.

Charter Commission and

People's Counsel: Karen Cordry reported that the Charter Commission was soliciting input from resi-

dents about topics to be considered by the Commission. She noted that some residents had expressed interest in the Commission evaluating the possibility of recommending that an Office of the People's Counsel be included in the Montgomery County Charter.

Treasurer's Report: Jerry Garson reported on current MCCF income and expenditures.

December Newsletter: Members discussed content for the December 2023 newsletter. In addition to the program articles, members proposed articles on:

- transit and technology;
- legislation proposed by Senator Ben Kramer regarding the structure of MNCPPC and MNCPPC ethics;

■ information on the Montgomery County Charter Commission;

■ information on where residents can comment on plans for the replacement of the American Legion Bridge and proposed toll lanes on I-270; and

■ a Resolution expressing the sense of the Federation that MoCo DOT create a volunteer weed warrior program to remove invasive vines from County Roads.

Newsletter content should be forwarded to Jacquie Bokow by November 26, 2023.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m. ■

Hottest 12 Months on Record, Says Climate Analysis

You've just lived through Earth's hottest year on record, wrote Scott Dance in the November 9, 2023, *Washington Post*. "The Earth just endured its hottest 12 months in the modern era, and probably the hottest in 125,000 years," according to an analysis published by scientists at Climate Central, a nonprofit climate science and news organization.

The analysis "focused on temperatures so extreme, they are at least three times more likely today than they were before the Industrial Revolution," wrote Dance. "During the past year, nine in 10 people experienced at least 10 days of such heat, the analysis found. Nearly three in four people endured it for 30 days or more."

"And it means that the planet is closer than ever to a global warm-

ing benchmark that scientists have predicted could irreversibly damage, if not destroy, entire ecosystems: 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) above preindustrial norms. Data shows a surge of warming this year has pushed average planetary temperatures 1.3 to 1.4 degrees Celsius above 19th-century levels.

"In sharing the analysis, scientists professed hopes it would spur action and underscore its urgency as global leaders ... convene an annual United Nations climate change conference, COP 28." ■

Montgomery County Civic Federation

www.montgomerycivic.org
info AT montgomerycivic.org
Twitter Feed @mccivicfed
[MCCF Facebook Page](#)

The *Civic Federation News* is published monthly except July and August by the Montgomery County Civic Federation, Inc. 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."

Submit contributions for the next issue by the 26th of the current month. Send to CFN at civiefednews@montgomerycivic.org.

Send all address corrections to membership AT montgomerycivic.org.

VIEW PAST ISSUES ONLINE [HERE](#)