

**January Program: The County Budget** | Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich, the speaker at our January 13 meeting, will address issues concerning the upcoming County budget and the budget process | **P. 3**

**President’s Letter** | Cheryl Gannon includes a list of MCCF’s newest association and individual members | **P. 4**

**MCCF Testimony on PG/MC 101-25** | Cheryl Gannon testified December 9 in support—with amendments—of this bill to limit requirements that the Planning Board stream live video or audio of its open meetings | **P. 5**

## of note

### Next MCCF Meeting #959

January 13, 2025, 7:00 p.m. *online via Zoom.* Topic: “The County Budget.”

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

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### January Meeting Minutes

General Meeting #958 **P. 7**

Executive Committee Meeting **P. 8**

### Membership Application

**JOIN ONLINE | MAIL-IN FORM**

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## Federation Meeting #959

Monday, January 13, 2025

7:00 p.m.

Online Zoom Meeting

### AGENDA

1. Call to Order/Introductions
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Approval of Minutes: December General Meeting **P.7**
4. Treasurer’s Report
5. Announcements
6. January Program: The County Budget and the Budget Process **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 January meeting will be held online via Zoom** (see page 3 for program) at 7:00 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, January 13, 2025, 7:00 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 **894 0280 8228**. 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 9**

## January Program: The County Budget, with CE Marc Elrich

By Joyce Gwadz, First Vice President

Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich will be the speaker at our January 13 meeting and will address issues concerning the upcoming County budget and the budget process. The County budget impacts many critical programs impacting our neighborhoods, including schools, public safety, recreation, infrastructure, and the environment, among others. Please be sure to join us at 7:00 p.m. for this important discussion.

### BACKGROUND

The County Executive submits proposed capital and operating budgets to the Council by January 15 and March 15, respectively. The capital budget includes spending



for construction projects such as schools and roads and is financed largely through bonds. The operating budget includes expenses for personnel, programs, and capital budget debt service (principal and interest payments on the bonds).

The Council then holds public hearings and deliberates on the spending and revenue proposals. By June 1, the Council must take final action on the budget for the fiscal year that begins July 1. The Executive has an item veto which the Council may override by seven votes. As a result of a 1996 Charter amendment, a six-year CIP (Capital Improvements Program) is prepared every other year in the second and fourth year of an Executive/Council term. ■

## President's Letter

Dear Members,

The strength of the MCCF comes with a strong and active membership and, in our 100th anniversary year, I set an important goal to increase and rebuild the MCCF membership. Working with our 2nd Vice President Elizabeth Joyce, we mapped out a plan, created recruitment materials, and reached out individually to Civic Associations. A special "thank you" to member delegates who helped with identifying contacts and outreach.

I want to take this opportunity to welcome the new members below. Some are new to the MCCF, and some are former members who left for a while and returned this year. We look forward to serving you.

Our membership effort continues. If you can help with mem-

bership, please reach out to me at [president@montgomerycivic.org](mailto:president@montgomerycivic.org).

### NEW CIVIC AND HOA ORGANIZATIONS

Avenel Community Association  
Bradley House Condominiums  
Byeforde-Rock Creek Highlands Citizens Association  
Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights  
Deerfield Weathered Oak Citizens Association  
Devonshire East HOA  
East Bethesda Citizens Association  
Hillandale Citizens Association  
Kensington View Civic Association  
Lyttonsville Community Civic Association  
MoCo Neighborhood Preservation Alliance

Oakview Community Association  
Press Pause  
Rollingwood Citizens Association  
South Four Corners Civic Association  
Village of Drummond  
Wildwood Manor Citizens Association  
Woodmoor Pinecrest Civic Association  
Wyngate Citizens Association

### NEW INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

Amy Waychoff  
Jeff Slavin  
Brooke Thomas  
John Cambridge  
Rob Smith

—Cheryl Gannon ■

## Montgomery County Civic Federation Testimony on PG/MC 101-25

December 9, 2024

*POSITION: Support with amendments*

My name is Cheryl Gannon, and I am President of the Montgomery County Civic Federation (MCCF). For one hundred years, MCCF has represented neighborhood associations and individuals throughout Montgomery County, Maryland, on issues of importance to the County's communities and neighborhoods.

Today, I am providing written testimony on behalf of MCCF regarding Bill PG/MC 101-25, which raises matters of significance to MCCF members that also should be significant to the State and County.

If enacted, the bill would limit requirements that the Montgomery

County Planning Board stream live video or audio of its open meetings. Were it enacted, the Planning Board would only be required to live stream live video or live teleconference audio at open meetings of the Board held at the headquarters of the Board, or at a location where the Board held at least ten meetings during the immediately preceding calendar year.

The MNCPPC performs a central function in land use matters in the County, making far-reaching and consequential decisions in this area. This fact is being demonstrated in real-time by the massive ongoing public attention to the Planning Board's deliberations and recommendations concerning "Attainable Housing," which are now pending before the County Council.

Open meetings of the Planning Board and other County agencies that provide video or audio transmissions make the proceedings more open and transparent to a much wider array of County residents than can participate in person. These media allow those who tune in to the proceedings of government bodies to determine whether they should raise concerns, offer support, and—where warranted—provide additional information to County decision makers.

MCCF does not believe the Planning Board should simply be relieved of requirements to make its meetings accessible, simply based on the Board's choice of a meeting location. If the Board chooses to meet in venues other than its headquarters or a regular meeting location, the statute

[MORE](#)

## PG/MC 101-25, cont.

should at least require a finding and documentation by the Board that the meeting location was necessary.

Additionally, MCCF urges that beyond simply reducing video or audio requirements, legislation should address concerns with the Planning Board's process to facilitate meaningful public involvement.

Changes to the Planning Board's meeting agendas on the day before or the day of a meeting should not be allowed (unless there is a clear need to postpone an item). Legislation could require that agendas be frozen 48 hours before the meeting, which is the same rule that applies to 19 other State agencies. In addition, the Board should be required to post any materials they are considering online along with the agenda, which is also the same rule that applies to

19 State agencies.

Also, there was a recent change by the Planning Board to the long-standing witness signup deadline from Wednesday at noon to Tuesday at noon for Thursday meetings. This was said to be needed to allow the Board more time to read testimony and for the staff to perform outreach to arrange for online testimony. However, if this change is to be made, the staff reports and other materials for public meetings and hearings also should be required to be posted a day earlier to allow the public the same amount of time to review the information.

Finally, we note that, in the Open Meetings Act, General Provisions Article §3-307, there is already a list of 19 State agencies that are required to stream their meetings. Del. Kor-

man and Sen. Kagan built this list over time with a series of bills. The Montgomery Planning Board, and the WSSC, also addressed in the Bill, could be added to this list as agencies #20 and #21. The advantage of this approach is that it would bring Planning Board meetings under an existing set of requirements, including that staff packets be posted and agendas be frozen 48 hours before a meeting. The Act requires timely approval and posting of minutes. It also includes existing language about off-site meetings in which no organizational business is transacted.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. We look forward to working with the Bill's sponsors to improve this legislation. ■

## MCCF General Meeting #958, December 9, 2024, 7:00 pm, Minutes

By Alan Bowser, Secretary

[The December 9, 2024, meeting was held virtually using Zoom.]

**1. Call to Order.** The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by 1st Vice President Joyce Gwadz.

**2. Approval of Agenda.** The agenda was approved.

**3. Approval of Minutes.** The minutes of the November General meeting were approved.

**4. Treasurer's Report.** Treasurer Jerry Garson reported a bank balance of \$6,697.00.

**5. Announcements.** Jerry Garson noted that the Federation would host an online presentation

of the property assessment and appeal process on December 16 at 7:00 p.m. A link to the program is in the newsletter. Joyce Gwadz said that Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich would be the featured speaker at the January Civic Federation General Meeting.

**6. December Program.** Montgomery County Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Thomas Taylor was the featured speaker. A video of the presentation [is available here](#). Dr. Taylor, a graduate of Montgomery County Public Schools and recently the Superintendent of Schools in Stafford County, Virginia, discussed the important relationships between MCPS and the Montgomery County Government and highlighted the challenges facing the school system,

including providing resources for special education and educating students whose native language is not English. He said that his priorities included school safety, improving facilities, and resetting expectations for MCPS students and the school system. He said that he was optimistic about the future, commenting that there had been a decrease in incidents of student misbehavior and a noticeable increase in student attendance. He expressed concern about the sustainability of some of MCPS' financial initiatives that he encountered when joining the school system.

**7. Questions.** Delegates asked a wide range of questions about MCPS challenges and programs, including

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## December Minutes, cont.

prevalence of racism and anti-Semitism in MCPS schools, the role of school resource officers, social grading and promotions, tutoring and mentoring, the achievement gap, disparities in school resources directed to schools in the eastern part of the County, student mobile phone policies, the controversy about the procurement of electric school buses, and the cost of school construction.

**8. New Business.** There was no new business.

**9. Adjournment.** The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m. ■

## Executive Committee December 19, 2024, Minutes

By Alan Bowser Secretary

**1. Call to Order.** The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m. by President Cheryl Gannon.

**2. Members present:** Alan Bowser, Jerry Garson, Elizabeth Joyce, Joyce Gwadz, Brenda Freeman, Jacquie Bokow, Peggy Dennis, and Dan Meijer.

**3. Treasurer's Report.** The Treasurer reported a bank balance of \$6759.

**4. Office of the People's Counsel.** Members discussed ways to bring the refunding of the Office of the People's Counsel back before the Montgomery County Council for its consideration and approval. Several

ideas were suggested and will be discussed further.

**5. PG/MC 101-25 Streaming Bill.** Members discussed a Bill, PG/MC 101-25, to be considered by the Maryland General Assembly regarding limits on the streaming of M-NCPPC meetings that would restrict the public's access. MCCF presented its concerns at a recent public meeting. MCCF will send out a Legislative Alert about the Bill to Federation Delegates.

**6. Feedback on December Meeting.** Members discussed the December General Meeting and the presentation by MCPS Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Thomas Taylor. Members were impressed and en-

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## Dec. ExCom Minutes, cont.

couraged by Dr. Taylor's statements about educational disparities, the need to support special education and students learning English, and financial sustainability.

**7. Feedback on Special Meeting on Property Tax Assessment.** Jerry Garson reported the meeting was well-attended and well-received. The state assessors said that, on average, property assessments would rise 18% for homes in the 2025 cycle, leading to property tax increases.

**8. January General Meeting.** Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich will be the featured speaker at the January 2025 meeting. A program for the February meeting has not yet been determined.

**9. Environmental Legislation.** Peggy Dennis highlighted some important environmental bills that will be before the State and County Government.

**10. Newsletter.** The newsletter deadline is December 29.

**11. Adjournment.** The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m. ■

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### Montgomery County Civic Federation

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## cfn

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

**Send all address corrections to membership AT montgomerycivic.org.**

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