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CIVIC FEDERATION NEWS

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY CIVIC FEDERATION, INC.

SEPTEMBER • 2026

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TO PRINT, USE PRINT VERSION

of note

Next MCCF Meeting #977
Monday, September 14, 2026, 7:00 p.m. *online via Zoom.* Topic: "State Housing Legislation."

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

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Membership Application

JOIN ONLINE | MAIL-IN FORM

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Federation Meeting #977

Monday, September 14, 2026
7:00 p.m.
Online Zoom Meeting

AGENDA

1. Call to Order/Introductions
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Approval of Minutes: July General Meeting P.15
4. Treasurer's Report
5. Announcements
6. September Program: State Housing Legislation 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 7:00 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, September 14, 2026, 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 **845 5020 5417**. No password is required.

We hope you will join us!

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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 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
civicfednews AT montgomerycivic.org

TO SUBMIT AN ARTICLE, SEE PAGE 17

State Housing Legislation to be Discussed at the September 14 MCCF Meeting

County Executive Marc Elrich will be the guest speaker at the September 14 MCCF meeting. He will address several housing and land-use bills being considered for the 2027 state legislative session and share his early thoughts, ideas, and concerns. Our goal is to involve our member associations early, incorporate their perspectives into MCCF's advocacy, and communicate our shared concerns to state representatives.

You may have already heard that Maryland Housing and Community Development Secretary Jake Day has announced that the Moore administration intends to bring back the Starter and Silver Homes Act in some form. Starter and Silver Homes was a legislative initiative supported by the Governor last session to create more housing density in neighborhoods by, among other changes, limiting local zoning standards governing lot size and setbacks and allowing multiple townhomes on current single-family lots. The

MARC ELRICH

MCCF and its members identified several concerns about the bill's likely impacts. (For a refresher on last year's bill, see MCCF's February 2026 testimony delivered before State House and Senate Committees here.) This year's bill is expected to include changes that have not yet been finalized.

The Moore administration is reaching out to legislators and other parties to vet their ideas and build support, so the issue is still in flux. There is no bill yet, and no clear idea of how next year's bill might differ from the 2026 bill. MCCF is monitoring and researching the issues now and will be offering timely updates.

Be sure to attend the September 14 meeting as we begin this conversation. ▮

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President's Letter for September 2026

Dear Delegates and Members,

As Montgomery County moves from the primary election toward the general election and a significant leadership transition, MCCF has an important role to play: keeping community voices organized, informed and at the table.

That will require both engagement and independence. MCCF will seek constructive relationships with county leaders, Councilmembers and staff, and our state delegation, while continuing to bring facts, community experience, and practical solutions into the policy process early enough to make a difference.

This issue of the newsletter illustrates why early engagement matters. Our data-center article (see page 6) builds on two recent MCCF programs to explain decisions developing at the county and state levels. Cheryl Gannon's article provides early notice of state housing proposals expected in the 2027 legislative session and previews our September 14 discussion with County Executive Marc Elrich.

These issues differ, but the lesson is similar: community associations need timely, understandable information and meaningful opportunities to participate before major decisions have already been made. With that context, the Executive Committee has identified four broad priorities for the coming year.

GROW MCCF'S REACH AND MEMBERSHIP

For over 100 years, MCCF has brought communities together to share information and strengthen their collective voice. Today, more than 50 associations participate, but many parts of the county remain unrepresented. We are reaching out to former members and to civic, homeowner, and condominium associations that may not know MCCF. We do not have to agree on every issue to benefit from learning from one another and making the case for community priorities.

BUILD EFFECTIVE RELATIONSHIPS WHILE MAINTAINING MCCF'S INDEPENDENT VOICE

MCCF will work to strengthen relationships with public officials and staff at both the county and state levels. We can also help member associations build their own connections with decision-makers. These

MORE

President's Letter, cont.

relationships are most useful when they provide early access, while community knowledge and concerns can still shape the outcome.

MAKE MCCF INFORMATION EASIER TO USE AND SHARE

MCCF already provides members with substantive information and advocacy materials. We are piloting ways to organize that content into shorter, purpose-specific communications—including summaries of MCCF presentations, explainers, early alerts, and listserv posts that associations can adapt for their own communities. The articles in this issue offer early examples: building on MCCF presentations and alerting associations to developing legislation before a bill has been introduced. Not every issue will require every format; the goal is to provide useful information when members need it, while avoiding unnecessary repetition or overload.

ADVANCE THE PRIORITIES OF MCCF MEMBERS

MCCF has a long history of bringing community perspectives into county and state policy discussions. We will work with members to identify shared priorities, determine where MCCF can lead or support others, and explore practical tools—including legislative tracking or a scorecard—to help associations follow decisions that affect their communities.

Achieving these goals will require a strong membership and more people willing to participate. If your association has not yet renewed its MCCF membership, please do so. We also ask you to tell neighboring associations about MCCF and encourage them to join us.

We particularly need volunteers to help with membership recruitment, database management, and communications. I would also welcome conversations with members interested in working with the Executive Committee on planning and land use, energy and environmental issues, legislation, public safety, or transportation and pedestrian safety. Whether you can lead an effort, contribute occasionally, or bring knowledge of an issue affecting your community, you have a useful role.

MCCF's strength comes from the knowledge, experience, and commitment of its member associations. Thank you for your membership, your participation, and everything you do for your communities.

—Linda Nemec
President, MCCF ▮

Data Centers: The Moratorium Is in Place, but Key Decisions Lie Ahead

By Linda Nemec, President

Montgomery County has enacted an 18-month moratorium on permitting large data centers—defined for this purpose as facilities with projected electricity demand of at least 25 megawatts. The pause gives the County time to consider permanent zoning, environmental, fiscal, and public-safety policies.

Two recent MCCF programs highlighted the work that must be done by the State and County. In May, Caroline Taylor of the Montgomery Countryside Alliance discussed the potential land, water, agricultural, and community effects of the proposed Dickerson data center campus. In July, Maryland People's Counsel David Lapp explained how rapid data-center growth across the regional electricity system can affect electric reliability, infrastructure, and the cost of electricity for households. [View either meeting's recording or presentations here.]

MARYLAND IS DEVELOPING NEW PROTECTIONS

Many electricity decisions are made at the state, regional, or federal level. Decisions about electricity rates and the allocation of generation, capacity, and transmission costs are made primarily through Maryland, PJM, and federal regulatory processes—not by Montgomery County.

Maryland is part of PJM Interconnection, which coordinates the regional electric grid and wholesale electricity markets across all or portions of 13 states and the District of Columbia. This regional system allows Maryland to draw on a larger and more diverse supply of electricity, improving reliability and encouraging competition. It also means that rapidly increasing electricity demand in one part of the region can affect infrastructure needs and costs elsewhere, including Maryland.

Maryland has recently strengthened its policies for large electricity users. As David Lapp explained, the State has:

- Lowered the threshold for its special large-load tariff requirements from 100 megawatts to 25 megawatts, bringing many large data centers under rate schedules designed to make them bear the costs and financial risks of connecting to and using the electric system rather than shifting those costs to other custom-

MORE

Data Centers, cont.

ers;

- Directed the Public Service Commission to determine which transmission and capacity costs are attributable to a data center and, when appropriate, assign those costs to it. Residential and other customers would still bear their share of upgrades already needed to serve ordinary growth in electricity use;
- Required a registry of large-load customers; and
- Established a voluntary clean-capacity program for large electricity users.

The details of implementation will matter. The Public Service Commission's proceedings will help determine how effectively the new requirements protect households and other customers from costs created by individual large-load projects.

Another important state initiative has received less public attention. Under legislation enacted after the General Assembly overrode the Governor's veto in December 2025, a statewide Data Center Impact Analysis and Report is due to the Governor and General Assembly by September 1, 2026.

The report must examine:

- Effects on air and water quality, Chesapeake Bay restoration, and other environmental objectives;
- Technologies that could mitigate environmental impacts;
- Data centers' electricity requirements and effects on energy supply and demand;
- Future energy-infrastructure needs and costs paid by ratepayers;
- Effects on Maryland's greenhouse-gas and clean-energy goals;
- State and local revenues and expenditures; and
- Temporary construction jobs and permanent operating jobs.

The Department of Legislative Services will combine assessments by the Maryland Department of the Environment, Maryland Energy Administration, and University of Maryland School of Business. Although Montgomery County controls zoning and local land-use approvals, many other consequential decisions are made elsewhere. Maryland agencies regulate utility rates, air emissions, water withdrawals and state tax incentives; WSSC controls public water and sewer service; and PJM and federal regulators oversee regional electricity markets and transmission planning. The state report could, therefore, shape both Maryland policy and the protections Montgomery County incorporates

MORE

Data Centers, cont.

into its permanent zoning and permitting rules.

WHAT MONTGOMERY COUNTY MUST DECIDE

The county's 18-month moratorium is intended to allow time to study the issues and replace temporary measures with permanent policies. The county's Office of Legislative Oversight is also preparing a report on the potential local effects of data-center development.

The county will not control every decision affecting a data center. It will, however, decide whether and where these facilities are an appropriate land use and what local protections and review requirements must be satisfied. It must also determine how its process will connect with decisions made by Maryland agencies, WSSC Water, PJM and federal regulators.

Among the matters still open to public influence are:

- Whether Montgomery County should permit large data centers at all and, if so, at what scale, in which zones and with what setbacks from homes, schools, parks, agricultural land, and environmentally sensitive areas;
- What local standards should govern noise, lighting, building design, landscaping, construction impacts, roads, fire and emergency response, battery storage, environmental monitoring, and decommissioning;
- What evidence applicants must provide about electricity demand, grid connections, water supply, wastewater, backup generation, and air emissions—even when permits or rates for those matters are controlled by other authorities;
- How projected tax revenue and employment should be weighed against county infrastructure, public-service, environmental-monitoring and emergency-response costs;
- How county reviews will be coordinated with state environmental permits, Public Service Commission proceedings, and WSSC decisions;
- What information developers must disclose, what information must remain publicly available, and how compliance with county conditions will be independently verified; and
- How residents will receive notice and participate before projects and policies are substantially settled.

Residents have already provided testimony on the moratorium and the earlier version of the county's zoning proposal. ***The next public-input opportunities may be***

MORE

Data Centers, cont.

more consequential because they will concern the permanent policies intended to replace the temporary pause.

Public participation will also need to extend beyond county hearings. State legislation, Public Service Commission proceedings, and some environmental-permit reviews may determine protections that the county cannot establish by itself. MCCF will follow both county and state developments and share information about opportunities for residents to participate.

These processes should include publication of the state and county adequate time for public review, and hearings early enough for resident and stakeholder input to shape the resulting policies.

TYPICAL DATA CENTER

LEARN MORE

- MCCF May 11 Program: Data Centers in Montgomery County
- MCCF July 13 program with Maryland People's Counsel David Lapp
- David Lapp's Presentation Slides
- Maryland SB 116: Data Center Impact Analysis and Report
- Maryland HB 1532: Continuing the Next Generation Energy Act

Bus Ridership in Montgomery County

By Jerry Garson, Chair, MCCF Transportation Committee

RideOn buses are free for everyone.

On WMATA (Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority), the buses are free in Montgomery County for seniors age 65 years or older, with Senior SmarTrip® card, or a Medicare Card and Photo ID; and/or persons with disabilities with Metro Disability ID card and their attendants (now called the Reduced Fare SmarTrip Card).

Metrobus Routes included are: M12, M20, M22, M42, M44, M52, M54, M60, M6X, M70, M82, P30, P31. Riders should tap the farebox.

People with disabilities or others can obtain a Senior SmarTrip® card.

MORE

Bus Ridership, cont.

There is no cost of the Senior SmarTrip card. There is no value on the card at the time of purchase. U.S. citizenship is not required. Bring one of these proofs of age: state ID, birth certificate, or passport.

You can obtain the card at these locations: all Montgomery County libraries, the Silver Spring TRiPS or the Mobile Commuter Stores, and the Montgomery County Division of the Treasury in downtown Rockville.

If you are 65 or older, you can get a Senior Smart Trip card that gives you a 50% discount on Metro rail. When you tap that card to pay your fare, you're automatically charged the discounted fare, not the regular fare. The $2 new card fee does not apply to the Senior Smart Trip card.

The discounted fare is about half the regular fair on WMATA rail.

It's Time for Action on Artificial Turf Fields

By Bailey Condrey, Parkwood Residents Association

[Condrey sent the following letter to the Montgomery County Board of Education, initiated by Montgomery Countryside Alliance through the Action Network, on August 20, 2026.]

The science is in—artificial turf fields are unhealthy for athletes, harmful for water quality, and an irresponsible use of taxpayer funds. They are banned in several states and many cities. The Department of Environmental Medicine at Mt. Sinai [Hospital in New York City] is one of many medical institutions calling for bans on plastic play surfaces, highlighting that there is no "new technology" that makes them safer for children or the environment. Before spending tens of millions on these fields, particularly in areas that rely on wells like Poolesville, the Board should learn the facts.

The Montgomery County Council of PTAs has just held a webinar that explains their position against plastic fields on any school property. Twenty-plus local groups and the thousands of local residents they represent are also part of the coalition seeking real grass fields for public health.

It's time that the BOE stop being a rubber stamp for the ridiculous requests of MCPS. The school system fought previously to defeat legislation that would have created a legitimate chain of custody framework for tracking the components of dismantled ST [synthetic turf] fields. Why would they do this?

MORE

Synthetic Turf, cont.

Activist groups have documented the widespread pollution footprint that these fields create across the county, mid-Atlantic, and eastern seaboard. They are point sources of microplastics pollution for the Chesapeake Bay watershed—both broken plastic grass blades and infill. They off-gas hydrocarbons into player breathing space and the atmosphere. They create intense heat islands. They CANNOT be recycled. Anyone who claims they can be recycled is lying. Student athletes hate them. It's the adults who refuse to accept science that force their use and repeated replacement. It's a socialistic welfare program for the petrochemical industry born on the backs of taxpayers.

Montgomery County is under a self-declared climate emergency.

Residents are suffering from the loss of thousands of jobs in the region. Yet MCPS acts as if they bear no responsibility to either of these challenges. The BOE is on the hook as well. Your unwillingness to say no to ST fields places the massive pollution footprint they create squarely in your laps. In spite of the economic downturn, the BOE and MCPS think that they can just pull another $55 MILLION off the taxpayer money tree in the same year that property taxes have risen. How can you be so ignorant to the realities on the ground?

We know you are receiving a lot of communication on the health impacts of these plastic fields on our student athletes—our children. This, taken with the cost savings, and environmental benefits that top-of-the-line [TOL] grass fields deliver, should compel you to act in the public interest. Please cancel plans for more plastics turf and instead work to better maintain grass fields and actually build top-of-the-line grass fields at county high schools.

TOL grass has been promised for decades by members of county council, the BOE and others, but yet never materializes. It's time for you to act as if you actually understand what the climate crisis means for mankind! ▮

Celebrating National Night Out 2026 Across Montgomery County

By Alan Bowser, Secretary

On Tuesday, August 4, 2026, civic associations and homeowners associations across Montgomery County joined forces with local first responders for the annual National Night Out campaign. Designed to strengthen neighborhood safety, generate support for crime prevention programs, and build vibrant police-community partnerships, the evening featured dynamic block parties, youth activities, and cookouts organized directly by local civic leadership.

Across the region, neighborhood engagement reached record levels as residents stood side-by-side with first responders. Longstanding Downcounty groups—including the McKenny Hills-Carroll Knolls Civic Association, Northwood-Four Corners Civic Association, and Hillandale Civic Association—hosted lively neighborhood gatherings that brought neighbors together with

MORE

2026 NNO, cont.

local officers. Nearby, the Oakview Community Association and the Lyttonsville Community Neighborhood Association held signature neighborhood cookouts, alongside regional involvement from groups like the Montgomery Village Foundation, with additional community events taking place in Bethesda, Olney, Leisure World, and surrounding areas.

The event was made possible through the dedicated participation of local first responder agencies, including the Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD), Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service (MCFRS), the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office, the Maryland State Police (Rockville Barrack), and the Office of the Mary-

MORE

2026 NNO, cont.

land State Fire Marshal. Key public safety leadership supporting these efforts across the county included MCPD Police Chief Marc Yamada and MCFRS Fire Chief Corey Smedley, alongside district commanders and local station personnel who engaged directly with residents to foster trust and community collaboration.

Community engagement was further highlighted by the active participation of Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich, members of the Montgomery County Council, and Maryland State Representatives, all joining residents and first responders on the ground to demonstrate unified civic support for local safety and neighborhood partnerships. ▮

Minutes for MCCF General Meeting #976 on July 13, 2026, 7pm via Zoom

By Alan Bowser, Secretary

[View meeting video here.]

1. Call to Order. The meeting was called to order by President Linda Nemec at 7:05 p.m.

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

3. Approval of the Minutes. The minutes of the June 7, 2026, Annual Meeting were approved.

4. Treasurer's Report. Treasurer Jerry Garson reported a bank balance of $4,437.00.

5. Announcements. Members were encouraged to support the National Night Out on August 4, 2026, and the many community celebrations throughout the County.

6. Update on Data Centers. 1st Vice President Cheryl Gannon provided an update on a County Council proposal for a Zoning Text Amendment to facilitate a new data center in Dickerson. She discussed the possibility of a moratorium on construction of new Montgomery County data centers, and the work that needed to be done related to tax regimes and environmental issues. The Council's Planning, Housing, and Parks Committee will meet on July 22 at 1:30 p.m. to discuss the Zoning Text Amendment 26-01.

7. July Program. The Maryland People's Counsel, David Lapp, Office of People's Counsel, shared a PowerPoint presentation highlighting issues related to the impact of data center power demands on electricity rates in Maryland. He emphasized that the upward pressure on electricity rates was largely due to demand in other States and federal energy regulations. He commented that the significantly increased demand for electric power was a relatively new phenomenon, and that utilities and legislatures were working hard to deal with complex issues of new capacity, transmission and regulation.

8. Questions. Delegates asked a range of questions, commenting on reliability issues; the role of the State, County, and community organizations; the impact on water

MORE

July Mtg. Minutes, cont.

resources; and new taxing frameworks for data centers.

9. 2026 MCCF Awards Dinner. President Nemec thanked everybody who made the Annual Awards Dinner a great success and congratulated past Civic Federation President Cheryl Gannon on receiving the Federation's Star Cup.

10. Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m. ∎

MCCF Exec. Committee July 30, 2026, Meeting Minutes

By Alan Bowser, Secretary

1. Call to Order. The meeting was called to order by President Linda Nemec at 7:05 p.m.

2. Members present: Linda Nemec, Cheryl Gannon, Jerry Garson, Brenda Freeman, Jacquie Bokow, Joe Harkins, Alan Bowser, Elizabeth Joyce.

3. Treasurer's Report. The Treasurer Jerry Garson reported a bank balance of $4,625.00.

4. Coalition-Building. Members discussed ways to increase MCCF membership and outreach to interested civic associations.

5. Legislative Update. 1st Vice President Cheryl Gannon reported on State and Local legislative proposals of interest to the Federation, notably a new State law on accessory dwelling units, the reintroduction of the State Starter & Silver Home proposal, the elimination of the County homeowner tax credit in the 2026-2027 budget, and the recently approved County 18-month moratorium on data centers.

She explained that the Starter & Silver Homes legislation was expected to be nearly identical to legislation that failed in the General Assembly last year, with several amendments that addressed its application to municipalities, historic districts and housing targets. She expressed the view that MCCF should oppose expected exemptions

MORE

July ExCom Minutes, cont.

in the legislation as they would disadvantage unincorporated areas of Montgomery County.

6. Upcoming Ballot Initiative on County Spending. Members discussed "Question A," a likely County ballot initiative that would require unanimous County Council support for any spending increase that exceeded the annual CPI. Members concluded that the proposed initiative could result in legislative gridlock, and negatively affect the County's financial rating and County services to neighborhoods. The Executive Committee voted unanimously to draft a Resolution for the MCCF membership opposing Question A and to send the draft Resolution and accompany analysis to Delegates for their support in advance of the September General Meeting.

7. September General Meeting. Members discussed topics for discussion at the next General Meeting and concluded that the State's Starter & Silver Homes proposal would be of interest to the membership.

8. Newsletter Deadline. The deadline for the September newsletter is August 26.

9. Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 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*.

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

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