



# CIVIC FEDERATION NEWS

Official Publication of the Montgomery County Civic Federation

Serving the Public Interest Since 1925

724th Session

[www.montgomerycivic.org](http://www.montgomerycivic.org)

December 2000



MCCF President Dean Ahmad and Legislative Committee Chair George Sauer co-chair a panel on the upcoming state legislative session with state delegates Dana Dembrow, P.J. Hogan, and Todd Sher (not shown), as a delegate rises to ask a question.

—Photo by Winifred Klein

## CONTACTING STATE GOVERNMENT BY THE WEB

—by William J. Skinner

Everyone wants to have their say to State Legislators, but looking up information and writing letters is time consuming. Today these citizenship activities are easier than ever. Use the Web. Here are some tips for researching and writing.

First the Maryland Government can be reached by going to [www.mec.state.md.us](http://www.mec.state.md.us). This is the Maryland Electronic Capital site. It will take you to the legislature, or you can go directly to [www.mlis.state.md.us](http://www.mlis.state.md.us) which is the Maryland

Legislature Information Site. Here you can research bills, fiscal notes, and even hear debates made last session. On the legislature's site you can write E-mail to individual legislators. But it is tedious to copy your article and send it to several. An alternative site is the Maryland Taxpayers Association Web where you can send an E-mail to an entire committee with one click. Go to: [www.MDTAXES.ORG](http://www.MDTAXES.ORG) and look for the E-mail

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legislators page. You can also E-mail the Governor, Comptroller, and others from this site, rather than go back and look them up individually.

## Delegate Meeting Minutes Nov. 13, 2000

–by Richard Zierdt, Recording Secretary

Meeting called to order by Dean Ahmad, MCCF President, at 7:50 pm.

Announcements. Steve Howie: is interested in offering alternatives other than those proposed by Marylanders for a Second Crossing. Charles Wolff: asks audience about newsletter mailing efficiency. Myrna Taylor: invitations to the reception have been distributed. Someone announces the death of Helen Bundt.

Approval of addenda. New items: (1) Storm water management facilities. 10 mins. (1) State issue: Municipal annexations. (8 mins). Schools and snow (6 mins): Proposer will meet w/Dean after the meeting. Agenda as amended is approved unanimously.

Approval of minutes. Cary Lamari's name is misspelled. Minutes are approved as corrected unanimously on voice vote.

No reports from officers.

Community Hero Award. Cary Lamari suggests Barney Evans. Barney was not an "activist," he was an "advocate." Memorial services will be held Saturday at St. Peters Catholic Church, 2900 Olney-Sandy Spring Road in Olney.

Old Business. Transfer funds to Legacy Open Space. Issue is somewhat moot since the County's purchase of the Buck Lodge.

New Business. Dean Ahmad appoints Robert Astrove Chair of the Education Committee. Susan Sellars has resigned. Charles Wolfe **moves the confirmation of Mr. Astrove**. Seconded. **Passes** unanimously.

Program. 2001 legislative session hosted by George Sauer. Guests: Senator P.J. Hogan, and Delegate Jean Cryor from Potomac. Ms. Cryor discusses the Thornton Commission–funding for education: full-day kindergarten, school construction, transportation, special



Del. P.J. Hogan (right) listens as Del. Jean Cryor discusses education.  
–Photo by I. Dean Ahmad

education, etc. Promotes early education. Special education requires about twice the funding of mainstream children. State is increasing its special ed contribution. Transportation: Fewer children are taking the bus. Cary Lamari: mental health and schools. What is the Commission doing about it? Cryor: Montgomery has at least looked at it. Funding is crucial. Keep pushing the issue. Richard Zierdt: County needs more local schools. The State has gotten involved in County education policy before, and should take an interest in this. George Sauer: school board has raised the school size standard. Bob Astrove: there is no control of local spending of State allocations. Cryor: this has sometimes been a problem. Elect honest politicians; those with character. Delegate Joan Stern speaks. Environmental policy. Prescription drug coverage. Ms. Stern has introduced a bill to give a \$1000 tax deduction for prescription drug coverage for those without insurance. Promotes health prevention and education program. Sometimes statistics are lacking to study an issue. Some city sewage plants are leaking. Public utilities. Wants to encourage competition in telephone service. Chuck Lapinski: concerned about inefficient funding and mismanaged plants. Bob Jones: Don't forget about men's health. Fifa Northrop: insufficient car emission inspection stations. Stern: State may increase the number of inspection stations. Steve Howie: voices appreciation for Ms. Stern's attendance and comments at MCCF mental health forum. Lamari: HMO's are large campaign contributors. Andy Reed: What about ethics in government? Stern: leadership is introducing legislation. Peggy Dennis: What about unwanted phone solicitations. Any relief? Dean Ahmad: what's happening regarding medical privacy? Stern: there is an opening for a commissioner on the public service

commission. Senator Hogan speaks. Serves on budget and tax committee. Legislature can only cut the governor's budget, not add to it, nor move funding from one program to another. Maryland budget is \$19.5 billion this year, \$15 billion in 1995. The budget is the only bill that must constitutionally be passed. Aid to local government is the fastest growing component of the budget. Would like to eliminate the inheritance tax. Steve Howie: what about supplemental budgets. The Clarksburg Jail may have been a supplemental appropriation. Hogan: not sure. Local requests are hard to ignore. Cary Lamari: improper land liquidation. General assembly should show more courage. (someone): What about the proposed Second Potomac River crossing? Hogan: believes it should be studied. (someone): There is a problem with land acquisition by local municipalities, often with softer zoning controls. Andy Reed: ICC was originally opposed by Ms. Morella, but she now supports it. Hogan: Ms. Morella would support federal support for an east-west transportation project, be it the ICC or some other solution. Charles Wolff: campaign support. Wants more frequent disclosure of contributions, and more strength in the ethics law. Delegate Dana Dembrow from district 20 speaks: Delegation passed special state resolution for Barney Evans. Lamari: WSCC. Ambiguous law favors the applicant. (someone): Any community involvement regarding court buildings in Silver Spring? Dembrow: yes, the community should be involved. Andy Reed: planning board - what is its role? Zierdt: Conference Center. How did it ever get funded? Hogan: not enough opposition. Lapinski: What will get the State in line, short of a recession? Hogan: too many exceptions are made to the spending affordability guidelines. Delegate Sher from District 14: We sometimes let programs grow without sufficient controls. State largess of tobacco settlement will be spent on tobacco-related issues. Sauer: sale of beer and wine in Fresh Fields? Dembrow: quirk in state law. Ahmad: legalization of medical marijuana. Any MC legislators willing to promote this? Dembrow: he co-sponsored such a bill.

New business. Historic Preservation. Canada Dry building in Silver Spring. Mary Reardon (wrote article in November MCCF newsletter). Building is a candidate for legacy open space. Charles Pritchard moves that the **MCCF support the preservation of the Canada Dry building, the historical designation thereof, and the protection under the Legacy Open Space program as a historical building.** Passes unanimously on voice vote.

Bylaw changes proposed by ExComm as published in the November newsletter:

First, that Article 6, Section 6 be amended by adding the words "Notice of the special election shall be placed in the newsletter one month ahead of the meeting at which the special election is to take place" as a new second sentence as follows:

6. *Vacancies.* The unexpired term of a vacancy in an elected position shall be filled by a special election at a Regular Meeting. **Notice of the special election shall be placed in the newsletter one month ahead of the meeting at which the special election is to take place.** The position will be assumed upon election.

Second, that Article 10, Section 5 be amended by adding the words "in May" as follows:

5. *Membership Committee.* This committee shall conduct membership drives, evaluate eligibility of applicants for membership, bill for **(in May)** and collect membership dues, transmit to the Treasurer all dues collected with identity of member and year, maintain the membership records, prepare Delegate and member mailing labels, and perform such other tasks as may be assigned by the Executive Committee.

Cary Lamari moves **they be presented to the MCCF delegates at its January meeting.** Passes unanimously by voice vote. [Note: This was the last opportunity to offer amendments to the proposed bylaw changes. A vote on the changes will be conducted in January.]

Campaign Law Violations. Dean Ahmad. Campaign literature on county property on county time is illegal. County attorney general does not believe union literature violates this law. Chuck Lapinski moves **that the MCCF send a letter to the county attorney and other agencies that the MCCF ExComm may choose, to review the ethics, legality, and appropriateness of these documents. Wording to be decided by the MCCF ExComm and brought back to the delegates.** Passes on a voice vote.

Ms. Cleo Tavani: Stormwater management legislation. County postponed hearing until November 21 regarding proposed changes to storm drain tax.. Lapinski moves **that changes to storm drain tax be referred to the ExComm for study.** Seconded. Passes unanimously by voice vote.

Municipal annexation. Please keep it on the MCCF's agenda.

Meeting adjourned 10:12 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Richard Zierdt, MCCF Secretary

## Ex-Comm Meeting Minutes Nov. 16, 2000

—by Richard Zierdt, Recording Secretary

**P**resident Dean Ahmad convened the meeting at 7:46 p.m.

Agenda approved.

ExComm Minutes from October 19 meeting are accepted.

Treasurer's Report: Dean Ahmad proposes an **audit committee comprised of Jean Goldstein, Charles Wolff (chair), and Bob Jones. Approved** unanimously by voice vote. Dean Ahmad offered a list of reimbursements for the Mental Health Forum for inspection. In response to a query from Dean, Steve Howie estimated that donations including outstanding pledges will approximately equal reimbursable expenses. No financial treasurer's report was given.

Directory Request from Delegate Sharon Grossfeld. There was no objection to Dean providing her a copy for the use of the entire legislature.

Stormwater Management. Ahmad reads an email from Cleo Tavani. Ms. Tavani will write an article about this.

Political Campaigning by County employees County Property/Time (Ahmad for whistleblower). **Item is tabled for next ExComm meeting** by voice vote.

Water Pipeline leaks. Ahmad. Should the MCCF publish an article about pinhole leaks found in copper pipes? George Sauer moves **that the MCCF place an article about this in its newsletter.** Seconded. There was concern that the MCCF should not get involved with consumer issues. Motion **fails** by voice vote.

Community Heroes for February. Dean Ahmad **nominates Victim's Assistance Volunteer Services.** Myrna Taylor speaks in favor. Myrna moves **that unframed certificates be given to community heroes.**

**Passes** by voice vote. Dean's **nomination of Victim's Assistance Volunteer Services is approved** by voice vote. Dick Kauffunger is working on a Norman Rockwell reproduction of one of his "Four Freedoms" (free speech) to be hung in the County Office building in appreciation of Frank Vrataric.

Web enhancements. John Nelson, vice president of Community Web, who creates and supports neighborhood web sites. Dan Wilhelm moves **that MCCF maintain a database of community organizations, accessible only by MCCF members, on the MCCF web site.** Seconded. This capability will be provided pro bono. Some privacy concerns are raised. Passes unanimously by voice vote. Dan Wilhelm moves that the **MCCF accept Community Web's offer to jointly maintain a database of variances, special exceptions, and permits on its web site.** Seconded. Passes on voice vote.

Environment Committee. Charles Pritchard testified on Nov 13 before Park and Planning in support of Legacy Open Space. Suggested the creation of some advisory committees. Charles reports that trails have been proposed through Matthew Henson State Park.

Land Use and Planning Committee. Peggy Dennis attended a meeting of the Planning Board regarding Crematoria. Public meeting before Planning Board on Tuesday, November 28, on the third floor conference center.

Legislation. George Sauer, Dick Strombotne. Dick will write an article and draft resolution about referendum reform for the newsletter.

Dick Kauffunger moves that the **MCCF encourage the Montgomery County delegation to the State to perform a comprehensive study on all aspects of alcohol reform.** Seconded. Moved by Jean Goldstein to **table motion until next meeting.** Seconded. **Motion to table passes** by voice vote.

Membership. Jean Goldstein. Jean is contacting various organizations.

Transportation. Dan Wilhelm. John Viner is moving. Steve Howie: Efforts to build a second Potomac River crossing are not genuine. If a "study" is begun, tangible results may occur. Dennis: A town hall meeting was held last night. Council members were against the second crossing. Bill Skinner raises the issue of "prevailing wages" to be paid for the Wilson Bridge project.

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Social Activities. Myrna Taylor. Get your checks in to Myrna for the reception.

Newsletter Layout. Jean Goldstein chairs. Jorge Ribas is willing to do the newsletter when he is available. Dick Kauffunger moves that the **editor have discretion to use whoever (s)he choses for newsletter layout.** Seconded. Dean Ahmad's company charges \$42 - \$56 per issue. Motion **passes** 9 - 3 - 1.

Montrose Parkway. Fifa Northrop. Fifa believes 18,000 people will be adversely affected if it is built. Fifa moves **that a letter be sent to the County Council reminding them of the MCCF's position on the Montrose Parkway.** Seconded. Motion **passes** with one objection.

Historic preservation of the National Dry Cleaning Institute in Downtown Silver Spring. Charles Wolff for Mary Reardon. Ms. Reardon would like the building preserved. Motion is made **to put it on the agenda for January.** **Passes** on voice vote.

Richard Zierdt / Bill Skinner will list Maryland's web site for legislation in the newsletter: [www.mec.state.md.us](http://www.mec.state.md.us) and [www.mlis.state.md.us](http://www.mlis.state.md.us). mec = Maryland Electronic Capital; mlis = Maryland Legislative Information System.

Meeting adjourned 10:23 pm.  
Respectfully submitted,  
Richard Zierdt, MCCF Secretary

## Renew Now!

Please help us to have a successful year by renewing your association's membership now. Use the application form enclosed in last month's newsletter (or download a copy from [www.montgomerycivic.org](http://www.montgomerycivic.org)) to renew your association's membership to the Civic Federation. The Civic Federation is your means to effectively enhance and protect the quality of life in Montgomery County. Send you renewal to: Steve Howie, P.O.Box 325, Clarksburg, MD 20871.

# HEALTHCARE ISSUE COMING TO 2001 MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

*by William J. Skinner*

**E**ight hundred and fifty two Maryland organizations, including a large number of organizations in Montgomery County, have signed on as supporters of a single-payer government-run health plan for all people in Maryland. These organizations have reserved the right to look at the legislation, but they are now listed as supporters on literature put out by the "Maryland Citizens Health Initiative" (MCHI) with offices in Baltimore City. Even the Montgomery County Council is considering support for this plan. The Civic Federation has also been approached as a possible supporting organization.

This is an issue with several sides—not just a "for" and "against." Accusations and claims are beginning to surface, and alternate plans are likely to be introduced in January. There are so many issues that the subject could take several Saturday Forums just to hear the view points of all who wish to speak. George Sauer, Legislative Committee Chairman, is considering organizing one such forum. This article is a heads-up notice to members who have information to get in touch with the MCCF officers if you want to share what you know with others.

Here is a brief summary of what is going on. MCHI advocates a single-payer or multi-payer health insurance plan that has only one qualifying factor—a one month residency in Maryland. This health plan would be funded by a number of new taxes, including a 9.5% payroll deduction (one third of which is paid by the employee and two thirds by the employer), about a 10% increase in income taxes, an increase in tobacco and alcohol taxes, and a lot of changes in the current financial backdrop of healthcare. For example, people now on Medicaid and Medicare, CHAMPUS, Federal Employees Health Benefit Plans, and private employer sponsored insurance would have to switch to the new MCHI plan. With these adjustments, Maryland would become the showplace for a new approach to health care.

The state medical association (MEDCHI) is monitoring this development and refusing to support the MCHI plan, saying that since the early 1990s the number of

uninsured in Maryland has grown from around 500,000 to 835,000. Analysts say one reason for the growth in the numbers is the growing number of mandates placed on insurance policies by the Maryland General Assembly—now reaching toward 1,000 separate provisions. These mandates make insurance more costly, so employers are no longer able to afford insurance and some insurance companies are looking at other markets. Recently, your author asked the Insurance Commissioner's Office for a list of insurance companies with approved policies and the list was only 35 companies.

The MCHI plan itself is still under development, but the group submitted what they had to The Lewin Group, Inc. (LG) last Spring for an analysis of the economics. The 85-page report produced by LG is available on the MCHI website at [www.healthcareforall.com](http://www.healthcareforall.com). The LG Report has been analyzed by economics professor Thomas DiLorenzo of the Sellinger School of Business in Baltimore in a recent 60-page report for the Maryland Foundation for Research and Economic Education (FREE). That report will soon be available on the Maryland Taxpayers Association (MTA) website at <[www.MDTAXES.ORG](http://www.MDTAXES.ORG)>.

And there is more. The Heritage Foundation is working on another report for Maryland that will be available from Heritage and the MTA Websites. But currently there are earlier reports about Maryland health care already available. For example, Robert Moffit of Heritage wrote a paper "Why the Maryland Consumer Choice Health Plan Could be a Model for Health Care Reform" in 1992. You can get this at: [www.heritage.org/library/categories/healthwel/bg902.htm](http://www.heritage.org/library/categories/healthwel/bg902.htm). There is another report by Dale Snyder, a healthcare insurance consultant, titled "Building Bureaucracy and Invading Patient Privacy: Maryland's Health Care Regulations" from 1998 at: [www.heritage.org/library/backgrounder/bg1168es.html](http://www.heritage.org/library/backgrounder/bg1168es.html). And there is a third paper available from Heritage titled "How the Maryland Health Plan is a Model for the Nation" by Carl J. Sardegna, #392 in the Heritage Lecture Series.

Besides all of this information, a program was held November 17 by the Progressive Policy Institute (associated with the Democratic Leadership Conference) and Maryland Business for Responsive Government. At that program a Consumer Choice Plan was discussed that had support of both groups. Maryland House Speaker Casper Taylor who in 1992 was chairman of the Economic Matters Committee and the chief sponsor at that time of the Consumer Choice Plan, has directed the

leadership of his party to prepare to hold hearings and study health care plans again in 2001.

The Consumer Choice Plan is one that provides basic insurance without the frills and details of invitro fertilization, abortion, extended stays, and treatment for various problems. It would be available through tax credits for those who pay taxes or by vouchers for those who do not pay taxes. Importantly, it would provide some insurance for the 835,000 uninsured and allow them to chose their own doctor.

If you have an interest in health care plans and what the Maryland General Assembly could do to change the current system, let's talk soon.

## From the President

Under a By-laws change introduced by our previous president, we have no regularly scheduled meeting in December. Federation activists will, therefore, get a few hours of free time during the holiday season. I hope many of you will have spent this time attending our annual reception for our elected officials, as once again Myrna Taylor has gone to great lengths to make this event a festive and pleasurable one. This newsletter goes to press before the reception takes place, so my report on the Holiday Celebration will have to wait until next month's Newsletter.

This year's reception will be all the more memorable for the very special Community Hero Award to be presented at the Holiday Celebration to the inimitable Frank Vratavic. Everybody knows Frank, so explaining why he was selected for this recognition seems superfluous. Nonetheless, I want to say a few words. Frank is more than just a hero to this community. He is one of my personal heroes. He has weighed in on such a diversity of issues – from sidewalks and the ICC to the illegal sale of County property, from illegal and unethical actions by the County government to the spurious "emergency funding" referendum issue on our November ballots – and in every case he has argued the matter not only with keen and flawless logic, but with humor. His talks would be worth hearing for their entertainment value alone, even if they did not deal with profound issues. But the fact is, Frank is never trivial. He is always insightful and thoroughly grounded. If he doesn't always win, it is only because the issues he takes on are the big ones. And if he doesn't always slay the dragons, he at least cripples them so they have to limp their way across the finish line. While his audacity at taking on such

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2000-2001 MCCF Officers					
Office	Name	home	office	fax	email
<b>President:</b>	I. Dean Ahmad	301-951-0539	301-656-4714	301-656-4714	deanahmad@yahoo.com
<b>Past-Pres.:</b>	Jorge L. Ribas	301-258-1910	<not available>	301-258-1909	sfristoe@erols.com
<b>1st Vice-Pres.:</b>	Peggy Dennis	301-983-9738	same	<not available>	hotyakker@aol.com
<b>2nd Vice-Pres.:</b>	Stanley D. Schiff	301-530-6455	same	<not available>	<none>
<b>2nd Vice-Pres.:</b>	Jeanne Goldstein	301-652-3064	same	<not available>	<none>
<b>2nd Vice-Pres.:</b>	Steve Howie	301-972-2736	same	<not available>	stevehowie@aol.com
<b>2nd Vice-Pres.:</b>	Dan Wilhem	301-384-2698	same	<not available>	djwilhelm@erols.com
<b>Treasurer:</b>	Chris Suzich	301-417-9522	same	<not available>	jcsuzich@juno.com
<b>Rec. Secretary:</b>	Richard Zierdt	301-881-0283	703-464-1617	<not available>	richard.zierdt@landmark.com
<b>Corres. Sec.:</b>	Winnifred Klein	301-654-8084	same	<not available>	w-wklein@webtv.net
<b>Dist. 1 V.P.:</b>	Fifa Northrup	301-984-9424	<not available>	<not available>	<not available>
<b>Dist. 2 V.P.:</b>	Dick Strombotne	301-540-9597	<not available>	<not available>	<not available>
<b>Dist. 3 V.P.:</b>	Myrna Taylor	301-869-4499	same	<not available>	<not available>
<b>Dist. 4 V.P.:</b>	Robert Creager	301-890-4326	301-918-9226	<not available>	<not available>
<b>Dist. 5 V.P.:</b>	<Vacant>				
<b>Historian:</b>	Marcella Petree	301-384-1776	same	<not available>	<none>
<b>Newsletter Ed.:</b>	Peggy Dennis	301-983-9738	same	<not available>	hotyakker@aol.com
<b>Parliamentarian:</b>	George Sauer	301-762-7260	same	<not available>	<none>
<b>Public Relations:</b>	Robert Creager	301-890-4326	<not available>	<not available>	<not available>

powerful adversaries has resulted in more than one scurrilous epithet being hurled at him, the fact is that everyone who knows Frank personally knows that he above such things. Hence, we add our deep and common affection for him with our respect and appreciation of all he has done for us. I was distressed to learn that Frank's health problems are serious. Well, I'm sure I'm not alone in praying for you, Frank. May God lengthen your life and keep you at our side for the battles to come.

Those of you who read our minutes will notice that there is a move to look at alcohol legislation reform. There is no longer any doubt that Montgomery County has been too soft on drunk drivers. This is an extremely important issue, but one with many complex aspects to it. The question is, what remedies can we propose that will be just, effective, and not Draconian. We must try to come up with a proposal with broad support among our membership. We will discuss this issue at the December 14 ExComm meeting. I hope that anyone with ideas and concerns on this issue will contact a member of the ExComm and make your views known in advance of the meeting to help us formulate a first rate proposal.

A novel issue has arisen in connection with the redevelopment of the site in Bethesda on which O'Donnell's Seafood Restaurant and its parking lot now sit. The developers want to lease the land for a mixed-use high rise that would include residential apartments directly over an existing public street. They are proposing that the County abandon the street and allow the adjacent landowners to dedicate the street to public

use but retain private ownership and responsibility. This would be a first in Montgomery County. I have no prejudice against privately owned streets, but I think that citizens throughout the county will want to look at this closely to see what it means and what are its larger implications. If it goes through, a similar development may be coming soon near you.

I have appointed Charles Wolff, Jean Goldstein and Robert Jones to constitute the Audit Committee required by our Bylaws to audit the books. If any of you have any concerns, including whether your organization's dues have been properly credited, please contact any of the members of this committee. Their phone numbers are: Charles, 301-585-9744; Jean, 301-652-3064; and Bob 301-229-3616.

I remind you again that we have an election scheduled in January to fill the vacancy for the District 5 Vice Presidency. I have heard neither from anyone who wants the position nor anyone who knows someone who definitely wants the position. I've called over a dozen people who have declined, many of whom have recommended others who were not interested either. Come on folks! The Civic Fed needs you. Please volunteer before the meeting. If you just show up at the January meeting and volunteer out of the clear blue, you will still be eligible for consideration. But please! Give us a break and volunteer now. Less ruffled feathers that way!

–I. Dean Ahmad, Ph.D.

## *Delegates Meeting*

***There will be no delegates meeting in  
December!***

***Next Regular Delegates Meeting:  
Monday, January 8–7:45 p.m.***

**First Floor Auditorium  
County Council Office Building, Rockville, MD**

**For pictures  
of our December reception  
Go to our website:**

**[www.montgomerycivic.org](http://www.montgomerycivic.org)**

The **Montgomery County Civic Federation**, a nonprofit, educational, and advocacy countywide group, was founded in 1925 to serve the public interest. The monthly Delegates Meeting is open to the public and it is held on the second Monday of each month (except for holidays, July, August and December) at 8:00 p.m. in the First Floor Auditorium, County Office Building, Rockville, MD.

The **Civic Federation News** is published monthly. It is mailed to Delegates; associate members; news media, and local, state, and federal officials. Permission is granted to reprint any article provided proper credit is given to the "*Civic Federation News* of the Montgomery County Civic Federation." Deadline for submissions is the last Monday of the month before publication. Attach submission to e-mail to: deanahmad@yahoo.com

**Please send all address corrections to Steve Howie**, P.O.Box 325, Clarksburg, MD 20871, 301-972-2736, [stevehowie@aol.com](mailto:stevehowie@aol.com).

## **Next Executive Committee Meeting**

Thursday, Dec. 14, 2000, 7:45 p.m.

### **Bethesda-Chevy Chase Services Center**

4805 Edgemoor Lane in downtown Bethesda

(Note: there are two entrances to the parking garage—one on Edgemoor Lane and another on Woodmont Avenue.)

## **Montgomery County Civic Federation**

**Peggy Dennis, Newsletter Editor**

**1111 Fawcett Road**

**Potomac, MD 20854**

**Phone: 301-983-9738**

**Email: [hotyakker@aol.com](mailto:hotyakker@aol.com)**

**Web: [www.montgomerycivic.org](http://www.montgomerycivic.org)**

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