



CIVIC FEDERATION NEWS

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Serving the Public Interest Since 1925

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738th and 739th Sessions

www.montgomerycivic.org

June 2002

Transportation Policy Workshop

-by I, Dean Ahmad, President

Evaluating the Transportation Policy Review has been a long, occasionally heated process, and we are not really near the end yet. A workshop has been set for morning of June 15 in the third floor auditorium of the County Council Building to be followed that afternoon by a special delegates meeting to settle or positions and priorities on the proposed transportation projects (see following article), but the ad-hoc committee that arranged the workshop thinks we shall need another workshop in the September to formulate our positions on policy issues. Nonetheless, because of our commitment to making project evaluations in the light of a comprehensive vision of policy, we shall include a session on policy in the June 15 forum. Due to lack of time, however, there will be no general discussion of policy and instead, participants will be asked to submit their views in writing.

Here are the agendas for the meetings.

- 9:00 Opening of forum
- 9:15 Welcoming remarks (Steve Silverman)
- 9:25 Opening remarks (Cary Lamari)
- 9:35 Policy overview (Stan Schiff)
- 9:50 Funding Session (Nelson Castellanos plus two other speakers)
- 10:35 Projects Session (Inner purple line, beltway widening, western connector, Montrose Parkway)
- 11:25 Open discussion
- 12:00 lunch break

Special Delegate's Assembly

- 1:00 p.m. Motions on projects (see p. 2)
- 3:45 p.m. Vote on Priorities (see p. 3)

Special Delegates' Assembly Called for June 15

-by I. Dean Ahmad, President

A special meeting of the Federation has been called for the afternoon of the workshop of June 15 in order to establish our positions on the matters in the Transportation Policy Review. (See agenda in column at left.) That meeting will begin at 1 p.m. and end at 4 p.m. We shall debate and vote on the proposed projects. To save time, we shall simply vote to restate our opposition to the two projects that we have definitively opposed: the ICC, which we have consistently unanimously opposed, and the Techway, which we voted to oppose on Feb. 11 of this year. We shall consider the Montrose Parkway on the grounds that although we have opposed state use of Montrose Parkway land in the area of Rt. 355 to I-270 for a roadway parallel to Montrose Road (1/12/1998), some members would like us to support the parkway as a

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Item	Improvement	Cost (\$M)	Notes
Projects under construction or due to start shortly	three US 29 Interchanges; E-W Intersection Improvements; three I-270 Interchanges; three road widenings in Gaithersburg/Germantown; White Oak Transit Ctr	354	+
4 Interchanges along US29 in Engineering	Fairland, Greencastle, Tech/Industrial Pkwy, Stewart	170	++
2 Interchanges along Georgia in Engineering	Randolph and Norbeck	92	++
3 Interchanges on MD 355 in Rockville finished Planning	Middle Ln, MD 28, MD 586	200	++
Muncaster Mill	Safety Improvements	10	++
Woodfield Road, Engineering starts FY03	Widen Road Midcounty Highway to Warfield Rd & extend to Ridge	170	++
I-270 Interchange finished Planning	Watkins Mill	100	++
Brookeville Bypass	Georgia Ave	33	++
Local Bus	200 buses, 35 transfer stations, many supporting facilities (next 10 years)	230	+
Additional Metro Capacity	Big part is for cars. Entire regional cost	1540	+
Inner Purple Line	Langley Park to White Oak spur	198	?
Inner Purple Line	Gergetown Branch (Bethesda-Silver Spring)	256	?
Inner Purple Line	Silver Spring to New Carrollton	678	?
Outer Purple Line	To New Carrollton	4200	?
Corridor Cities Transitway	Shady Grove to Germantown	700	+
Georgia Ave Busway	Glenmont to Olney	69	+
New Red Line Station	MCPS (Rockville)	40	+
Extend Inner Purple	Bethesda to Tysons	963	?
3 Randolph Road Interchanges	Viers Mill, Connecticut, New Hampshire	78	+
5 MD 355 Interchanges	Cedar, Micholson, Gude, Montgomery Village, Ridge	330	+
5 interchanges in Gaithersburg/Germantown	I-270/Newcut, Key West/Great Seneca, Sam Elg/Great Seneca, Ridge/Observation, Shady Grove/MD 28	268	+
Eastern Connector	US29 to US 1 on ICC ROW	116	?
Norbeck Road & MD 198	Widen to 4 lanes Georgia Ave to US29	113	+
Midcounty & Muncaster Mill (Western Connector)	New 4 lanes Shady Grove to Muncaster Mill; Widen Muncaster Mill to MD 28	77	?
Montrose Parkway	Tilderwood to Viers Mill; Widen Viers Mill - Twinbrook to Randolph	250	?
Widen I-270	Northbound western spur and HOV lanes from MD 121 to I-70	1223	+
River Road	Beltway to DC line	81	+
Great Seneca Hwy.	Widen to 6 lanes Darnestown Rd to Middlebrook	18	+
Darnestown Rd	Widen to 4 lanes Key West to Riffle Ford	40	+
Muddy Branch	Widen 6 lanes West Diamond to Darnestown	60	+
Ridge Rd	MD 355 to MD 108 in Damascus	106	+
Clopper Rd	Richter Farm Road to Quince Orchard Rd	145	+
Eastern Montgomery	4 widening	69	+
Georgia Ave	3 intersection improvements and one widening	39	+
Rockville	2 road extensions and one widening	78	+
Gaithersburg, Germantown, Clarksburg	17 projects, mostly widening, some extensions	411	+
Widen Beltway	Add HOV	578	?

River Rd	Beltway to Falls	42?
Red Line extension	Shady Grove to Metropolitan Grove	942?
Midcounty Highway	MD124 to MD 27	207?
Clopper Road	Widen to 6 lanes MD 121 to MD 124	190-
Georgia Ave	widening MD 28 to Howard Co)+B21	304-
Notes: (+) Will move to approve (-) will move to oppose (?) Support or oppose to be moved from floor (*) finished planning and in engineering or ready to start		

whole. By the same token, we shall consider the Inner Purple Line despite the fact we support the Georgetown Branch Interim Trail on the grounds that some members desire that a high-speed light rail be constructed alongside the trail.

The projects that will be up for consideration are listed in the table above. Note that we have already taken positions in favor of two of them: widening Norbeck Road (2/11/02) and local bus service. Dan Wilhelm and I have discussed how to speed up the process, and I the expectation that projects marked with an “+” in the table have string support, Dan will move to have them all approved as a block. In the expectation that those marked with a “-“ have strong opposition, Dan will move to oppose them as a block. The ones marked with a question mark are those on which we expect diverse views and motions will be taken from the floor as to whether to oppose or support them.

To take a position on any issue, including support of or opposition to a transportation project, our bylaws require an Affirmative Vote. This is defined in our bylaws (Article XI, Section 7): **“An Affirmative Vote shall require a three-fifths majority of Delegates voting, but may never be less than a majority of Delegates present.”**

Given the requirement of an affirmative majority, In order to facilitate the discussion and voting on projects, those deemed to be “controversial” (i.e., among our membership) will be voted on individually. Those for which there is strong support or opposition will be voted on collectively. During the discussion of these projects members may make any subsidiary motions that would normally be in order: e.g., dividing the question, or amending the project descriptions to place constraints or revising cost figures that appear unrealistic.

After we have made amendments to the list and decided which projects we support and which we oppose, we shall then prioritize those we support and those on which we have taken no position. To do this, a ballot will be distributed with the names of the projects.

Those which we oppose will be dropped from the ballot and all delegates present will be asked to “grade” the projects remaining with a grade from 0 to 4 (4 being the highest priority) and 0 the lowest. Think of 4 as an “A” rating and 0 as an “F” rating, except there will be no fractional grades. (That is, there will be no A- or 3.5’s). After the meeting has been adjourned, the ratings will be entered into a computer spreadsheet and a priority list consisting of the projects we support in order of average grade followed by the projects we take no position on in order of average grade will be produced. The ad-hoc committee that arranged the morning workshop will then review that list, and they will annotate the list in the light of available state and local funding. The annotations will be presented to the Executive Committee for final approval and propagation. It will be the basis of our discussion with the County Council and the public until the delegates meet again in September.

A final word of warning: Although everyone is welcome to attend both the morning workshop and the afternoon assembly only delegates and federation associates may speak at the delegates assembly and **only paid-up delegates may vote.** My advice is to **pay and go!**

June Awards Ceremony

–by Charles Pritchard

The first item on the agenda of the regular delegates’ meeting on June 10 will be the annual Federation-sponsored awards ceremony. The awards are the Federation Star Cup, which is awarded to a member of the Montgomery county Civic Federation who has provided outstanding contributions to it and advanced its missions. The Gazette Award is given by the Gazette newspapers to a resident of Montgomery County, who has contributed significantly to “community building” in the County. The Sentinel Award is made for advancement of local government in

Montgomery County. Please plan to attend this meeting to learn who the recipients are and cheer them on for their accomplishments.

Delegate Meeting Minutes May 11, 2002

–by Richard Zierdt, Recording Secretary

Meeting is opened by MCCF President, Dean Ahmad at 7:45 PM

Introductions and announcements are made.

Agenda is amended to include an item under new business on forcing summer hires to pay union dues.

Delegates meeting minutes from April 8 are approved as printed.

Community Hero Awards are presented to David Brown and Randy Bosin

Program: TPR. Stan Schiff. Introduces Planning Board members present. Program to be presented in three parts: (1) General land use strategy. (2) Transit-oriented development. and (3) Montgomery County's "Main Street." (1) Dan Wilhelm discusses a handout he distributed earlier. A table on the handout shows a wide range of jobs/housing ratios across the county from .067 to 2.34. (2) John Carter, Park and Planning, shows a series of slides showing land usage and metro stations across the County. One slide is entitled "Mixed Use Activity Centers – Principles - Encourage Mixed-Use Development Including Affordable Housing," another is entitled "Focus Communities Toward Transit," and another "Plan for Infill." Metro owns many acres around metro stations. (3) Stan Schiff talks about "Main Street" Maryland Route 355 – Rockville Pike (RP). "It's a monumental mess." There is an imbalance between east-west and north-south policies. Rockville Pike is a main commuting route, a major retail strip, and a major route to the District. Multi-billion infrastructure improvements, either transit or road-oriented, will not solve the expected increase in congestion. Other measures must be considered.

Q/A/C (comments): Luella Mast: Where is the MCCF going with this? Dean: June 15th meeting will be held regarding growth policy. The idea is to adopt priorities.

Cary Lamari: What about the extension of the Red line to points north? Was this discussed? A. Yes, but density would have to be increased to support it. Cary: What about inter-county planning? A. Inter-county planning was not considered. Q: Mark Adelman: What about Maryland State planning regulations? A. Not considered. Q: Charles Pritchard. Compliments the Council, especially Councilmember Ewing, for restoration of funding for trees. Charles supports sidewalks. Q. Concerned about large parking garages – this suggests an over-emphasis on cars. A. John Carter. The idea is to get people to the Metro. Stan: Task force recommended a vast improvement of bus service. C. Richard Zierdt: Notes that single-family detached homes were not mentioned in the slide presentation. Instead, there was "In Fill" which could amount to a policy to pave over what green space is left in the lower County. Q. Charles (last name?): How many people do you expect to walk to Shady Grove? A. John Carter. 3000 people are expected to live in King Farm. Dean: Facts need to be known. Q. Dave (last name?): How can Route 355 support an additional 3000 persons? A. Dick Kauffinger: King Farm is part of Rockville, where another set of planning rules apply. Bill Skinner: Policies always change. Have we studied how other cities have fared with mass transit? A: Stan. Somewhat. ... Stan: From 1980 to 1999, MC population increased 100,000. The increase in the number of vehicles registered: 200,000. This has an impact on transportation. Q. Randy Bosin: Were hi-tech transportation methods besides buses and cars considered? Moving sidewalks, etc.? A. Stan: Yes. C. Pam Lindstrom: Encourages balanced land-use planning.

New Business.

TPR Motions. There will be a workshop on the morning of June 15 as resolved by the membership at the April meeting and it will be followed at 1 p.m. on the afternoon of June 15 by a special delegates' assembly to vote on projects and priorities and that the method of voting will be published in the June newsletter for approval at the regular June 10 delegates' assembly. There is no objection. Dan moves that the **MCCF postpone discussion of the Pew Report until later in the fall.** 5 Seconds. Dan: The Pew Report discussion would be too much for the June 15th seminar. **Motion passes 10-5.**

Nominations of Officers (printed on page 12 of May newsletter). Cari Lamari nominates Stan Schiff for a

Second V.P. slot (There are four second vice presidents).

Bylaw Committee and Recommendations (page 15). Charles Pritchard is chosen to be chairman, and Tom DeGraba and Pat Cummings members of an ad-hoc Bylaw committee. If started now, this committee would disband in June, so the motion is deferred until the June meeting.

Chuck Lapinski. Bill 9-01, was passed by the County Council 8-1, with Councilmember Dacek dissenting. This Bill forces part-time and temporary employees to become union members, but would have no voting rights. Further, such employees will not be given the chance to vote on whether or not to join the union, a violation of federal labor law. Chuck moves that because there was insufficient public notice and participation, the **MCCF requests that the County Executive veto bill 9-01**. Five seconds. Chuck: there were no public hearings. Stan Schiff: This issue may have another side, and moves an amendment that the MCCF should oppose the bill's passage on procedural grounds for now, but get another side. Seconded. Bill Skinner: This was a procedurally-engineered bill, designed to limit public input. Dean asks for unanimous consent that serious questions have been raised and that the public and affected people have not been given a sufficient chance to testify, but no vote is taken. Amendment that the original motion be limited to procedural issues fails 6-12. The original **motion then passes 21-0-0**.

ExComm Meeting Minutes

May 21, 2002

—by Richard Zierdt, Recording secretary

MCCF president Dean Ahmad calls meeting to order at 7:56 PM, when quorum is met.

Announcements. Fred Thomas: The County has backed off of early reassessments of property tax, and refunded the extra amounts it collected.

ExComm minutes from April are approved. No treasurer's report.

19:57 Voting at TPR Workshop, June 15. Dean Ahmad. Affirmative majority rules will apply: Motions must pass by 3/5, and the number of yeas must be greater

than the sum of nays and abstentions. ICC issue will not be reopened. Straw vote: no fractional votes.

20:20 Respect for the Master Plan. Nadia Carrell. Three proposals in Bethesda may violate the Bethesda Master Plan. Cary and Dean will investigate technical issues to determine if the Plan would be violated.

20:33 Charter Review Commission on Charter Amendments. Dick Strombotne. Dick moves that **the MCCF strongly oppose any attempt to amend the Maryland Constitution to increase the number of signatures needed for a charter amendment**. Seconded. Public hearing tentatively scheduled for June 25. Motion passes with one abstention.

20:47 Awards Committee Report. Charles Pritchard. Charles has contacted two County Council members who may attend.

20:53 Montgomery College. Mark Adelman. Mark wrote a letter for Dean to edit. Some ExComm members express dismay by behavior of public education officials of Montgomery College and MCPS. Mark moves that **the MCCF excoriate Montgomery College for its audacious suit against a citizen for "participating extensively in the M-NCPPC's and the HPC's review of the Campus Expansion, providing both written and oral testimony."** Seconded. Passes with one abstention. Dick recommends wide media distribution.

21:09 Candidates Fora. Mark Adelman. Education committee will hold on September 7 (Saturday before the election) a public forum for school board candidates. Crossway Community facility in Wheaton has been suggested as the meeting place.

21:15 Population Limits. Richard Zierdt. Suggests that representatives from a population control advocacy group be invited to give a presentation at an ExCom or delegates meeting. Deferred to programs.

Voting Machines. Fifa Northrop. Distributes an op-ed letter to delegates. Moves that the **MCCF invite an official from the Board of Supervisors**. Jean moves that the MCCF write a letter to the Board of Elections. Passes with two abstentions.

21:42 Programs. June: Awards programs. September. Richard Zierdt moves that the MCCF invite a representative from a group that advocates limited or no growth to give a presentation at the September

delegates meeting. Motion fails 3–5–4. Jason Holstine suggests a program on wind power. Motion to refer this topic to the public utilities committee passes. Cary Lamari moves that **the issue of paved hiker-biker trails be presented for the September program.** Seconded. Passes. Richard moves that someone from Board of Elections be invited to speak at the October program. Seconded. Passes.

22:13 Legislation Committee. George Sauer: Living wage bill passes. Bill to unionize part-time County employees passes. **Motion is made to put “County Campaign Finance by Wage Legislation?” on the June delegates meeting.** Seconded. Motion passes 8-1.

22:22 Membership Committee. Dean Ahmad. Only paid members may vote.

22:32 Organizing standing resolutions. Dean Ahmad has updated and will post soon.

22:34 Meeting is adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Richard Zierdt

The Charter Review Commission - A Threat to Public Participation in Montgomery County

*–by Wayne Goldstein,
Kensington Heights Citizens Association*

The Charter Review Commission was created by Section 509 of the Charter of Montgomery County, Md. Its purpose is to provide reports to the County Council every two years that "shall contain recommendations concerning proposed Charter amendments, if any. I have monitored the activity of this Commission since 2000 and it appears to me that it sees its main purpose as coming up with ways to make it more difficult for citizens to participate in government.

In 2000, the Commission recommended that the County support a state constitutional amendment that would require that the signatures of at least 5% of

registered voters be required to petition to amend the Charter. The law currently requires that no more than 10,000 registered voters sign such a petition. The Commission's recommendation would have raised that number to about 23,000.

In the 2000 Report, it was written: "During the Commission's public hearing, citizens expressed concern that the number of signatures needed to petition a law to referendum is more than the number of signatures required for an amendment to the Charter. Commissioners continue to believe that the numbers of signatures needed to petition a charter amendment should be increased." I was one of those who testified and I said the following: "Rewrite Section 114 [petition a law to referendum] to change the signature requirement to 10,000 [down from 23,000], the same number required to amend the Charter." It was clear to me two years ago that this Commission was willing to twist the truth to suit its own narrow agenda.

This Commission's obsession with thwarting the desire of citizens to exercise direct democracy through a charter amendment has now spiraled to even more bizarre heights. In the 2002 report, it says, "The Commission has considered the disparity in the number of signatures required for these two petitions for more than ten years." This time, the Commission wants the Council and the County's State Delegation to reintroduce legislation to raise the signature requirement to amend the Charter from 10,000 to 20% of registered voters, or 92,000. At this rate, by 2004, the Commission will probably want every registered voter to be required to sign such a petition.

In 1998, four of the five district County Councilmembers won their party primaries with less than 8000 votes each. All five won the general election with less than 37,000 votes each. Even the highest council member vote getter, at 165,000 votes, was only 36% of the eligible voters. Council members can introduce an unlimited number of charter amendments with only 4 other votes. They also get to do many other activities after getting far fewer votes/signatures than what the Charter Review Commission now wants to require for a single charter amendment.

The Commission has another obsession as well. They want to amend Section 109 to perhaps make it easier for the County Council to have closed sessions and to amend Section 505 to perhaps make it more difficult for the public to inspect government documents. They would achieve this by having county law superseded by

the state Open Meetings Act and Public Information Act.

On 8/8/00, the following memo was sent: "The provisions in the Charter that address public access to information have been part of the Charter since its inception. The salutary principles established in the Charter should not be abandoned simply because State law requires a different result... I do not believe we should seek change simply because someone might interpret the Charter in a way different from the course that this government has followed over more than twenty years. I firmly believe we should not abandon the principles of openness established in the Charter..." These words were written by County Executive Duncan.

It is clear that, on certain issues, this unelected group has become ever more imperious and distrustful of the people with each passing year. The Commission did engage in other seemingly harmless activities such as discussing changes in the number of council members as well as how they are elected. One Commissioner noted that "Montgomery County is comfortable with representative democracy because citizens want their elected representatives to have the responsibility for decision making." I would suggest that this Commission intends to do its part to force this county's citizens to passively and gratefully give all decision-making responsibility to their council members.

I hope that Civic Federation delegates will express their displeasure by testifying en masse before the County Council when it holds its public hearing about the Charter Review Commission's report at the end of June.

Charter Review Commission Attacks Grass-Roots Democracy

—by Dick Strombotne, Dist. 2 V.P.

In its 2002 report, the Charter Review Commission (CRC) recommends that the County Council work with the County legislative delegation to put a constitutional amendment on the ballot to make it virtually impossible for grass roots citizens groups to put charter amendments on the ballot. To my knowledge, this is at

least the third time that the Charter Review Commission has made such a recommendation.

For background, the Maryland Constitution, since 1915, has provided that a charter amendment can be put on the ballot by citizens petition with valid signatures totaling the lesser of 10,000 or twenty percent of the number of registered voters. Currently, in Montgomery County, twenty percent of the number of registered voters is about 91,400. So basically, the CRC members have decided that citizens should have no role in putting charter amendments on the ballot. Given their druthers, they would make it nine times more difficult to put a charter amendment on the ballot than is now the case.

Apparently, the CRC and the political establishment in Montgomery County have been so spooked by the successful efforts of one man, Robin Ficker, to put charter amendments on the ballot that they would deny to the rest of us our constitutional rights. Yet, there is little doubt that even if such a constitutional amendment were to pass, it would still be possible for special interests to pay for signature collection and put a charter amendment on the ballot.

By contrast, the group Citizens for Referendum Reform, which I chair, is working to secure the signatures needed for a charter amendment to reduce to 10,000 the number of signatures of registered voters needed to bring a bill passed by the County Council to a referendum vote. This would make it easier for citizens to participate in county governance. At this time, signatures of five percent of the number of registered voters (about 22,900) are needed for a referendum. The numbers may be confusing. The idea is simple. Make it as easy to challenge a bad law passed by the County Council as it is to propose a charter amendment.

The recommendation of the CRC, if put into practice, would make it extremely difficult for grass roots groups, like MCCF and Citizens for Referendum Reform, to successfully propose charter amendments. It is hard to understand why the CRC would make the recommendation that it has made. It is easy to understand why MCCF should strongly oppose that recommendation.

A resolution expressing MCCF's strong opposition to any state constitutional amendment that would make it more difficult for citizens to propose charter amendments will be considered at the June 10

membership meeting. The proposed resolution is printed below. The Executive Board recommends that it be approved.

Whereas: The Maryland Constitution has authorized citizens to petition to put a charter amendment on the ballot since 1915, and

Whereas: The number of petition signatures required by the Maryland Constitution is the lesser of 10,000 or twenty percent of registered voters, currently about 91,400 in Montgomery County, and

Whereas: The 2002 report of the Charter Review Commission recommends that the County Council work with the County legislative delegation to put a constitutional amendment on the ballot to remove the alternative required signature number of 10,000, and

Whereas: An increase in the number of signatures needed for a charter amendment to twenty percent of registered voters (91,400) would effectively prevent grass roots citizens groups from putting charter amendments on the ballot, and

Whereas: Such an increase in the required number of signatures would not deter special interests from putting charter amendments on the ballot by paying for signature collection, and

Whereas: The proposed constitutional amendment would overturn 88 years of precedent, and

Whereas: The current requirement for number of signatures has not presented an overwhelming number of ballot questions to voters in Montgomery county in any recent year, and

Whereas: The Montgomery County Civic Federation has fought for more than 75 years for participation by citizens

in the governance of Montgomery County,

Therefore, be it resolved: The Montgomery County Civic Federation strongly opposes any attempt to amend the Maryland Constitution to increase the number of signatures needed for a charter amendment.

New Voting Machines

–by *Fifa Northrup*

According to an article in the Washington Post (Outlook section, Sunday, May 12, 2002) about the new voting machines for the state of Maryland, “while they can work well, they need some tinkering.” Two highly respected professionals in their respective fields wrote the article. One is the director of the Human-Computer Interaction Laboratory of University of Maryland. The other is the director of the Center for American Politics and Citizenship, also at U. Maryland.

Besides the obviously important fact of wanting all problems solved by Election Day, millions of dollars have been invested in this project. The federal government is giving the states most of the money to provide this new voting system. In addition, Congress passed another bill last week which gives over eight billion dollars, to train staff and volunteers nationwide who will work with the new voting equipment. So for those who might regard this information as not a big deal, well, think again.

Among other things in this article they point to a “partial list of what needs fixing”. These are some of their findings:

- “The system needs some reprogramming; it currently uses inconsistent terminology that could confuse voters.”
- “The audio version designed for the disabled is confusing and hard to navigate.”
- “The voter identification card that serves as the voters’ ballot needs retooling. It jammed in one of the two machines tested, rendering the machine unusable. Users also struggled with its unusual design.”
- “The screen layout needs to be revised.”

The researchers finish their article urging our state and county officials to “finish the work they have begun so

well”. One wonders (1) if the company which produces these voting machines is responding to those findings and working to make the system more user friendly and reliable and (2) if any elected officials have taken the time to follow up on this report, especially in light of the fact that “...by contract, state officials can refuse delivery if the manufacturer doesn’t make needed charges.”

The Same Old County Budget

—by Chuck Lapinski,
Public Finance Chairman

The dollars aren't the same: they are higher, probably by more than your last increase in total compensation from your employer (approximately 5.6%). And just so that you feel the proper spirit, the new budget provides for an average percentage increase in basic compensation of approximately 7.0 %, with some variation depending on contract terms and conditions. In addition, benefits are increased significantly. Compared with this year, labor costs are increased approximately 9.3% with virtually no change in the number of work years (they are up approximately 40 work years out of 8,594, or 0.5%). What this really means is that the county will pay more money for less services.

What is the same, unfortunately, is the short term perspective and short term solutions that prevail at both the Council and the Executive. In an election year, both entities shamelessly refused to come to grips with the systemic issues that will come back again next year to further erode the quantity and quality of services the county purchases with our tax money. Their answer is always the same: we need more money and we must raise taxes because it is affecting our children etc. and you know the rest of the mantras. Yes, our children are or will be affected as well as the users of libraries and social services etc.

But it is the Council and the Exec who are insensitive to those needs, because they are not spending our tax dollars prudently. They refuse to conduct concerted and constructive program assessments to find out which programs are working, and how well they are working, and then redirect resources. They have refused to even consider doing a thorough review of employee total

compensation. The last time this was done, approximately 12 years ago, the total compensation of County employees ranged from levels similar to that of private-sector employees with the same skills and experience to over 40% higher. On average, county employees were paid about 23% more than comparable private-sector workers.

I even presented the Council and the Exec with the results of an informal survey that I conducted. I contacted and received data from 11 firms (predominantly professional services companies) that do business in the County. For this year the effect of wage increases and promotions in those firms ranged from 3.4% to 4.8%. By contrast, the average general wage adjustment and step increase for a County Government employee totaled 7%, at least 2.2% more than the private sector. That 2.2% is worth approximately \$21 million out of the County Government budget of \$1.1 billion. Without that extra 2.2% in costs, we would not have to cut back hours or services as the current budget calls for, and we would not have to implement the increased recordation tax or other budget contrivances to get a balanced budget. And my calculations do not even include other potential ways to avoid costs in the special budget and the education accounts.

Further, we did not initially budget for the increased cost of converting summer hires and part time casual and occasional labor to union rates. Beginning July 1, this will cost the County approximately \$950,000 in the first year alone. The budget also relies on a new “development-impact tax” which is, at best, anemic: it allows far too many inequitable exemptions.

At the state level it is even worse. Estimates for next year’s budget start in the \$1-2 billion range without any change in quality and quantity of services. The year-over-year budget increases for the last several years have exceeded the increase in revenues from taxes on salaries and wages by 2-4%. Taxes from salaries and wages are one of the most stable sources of tax revenues for the state. There are over 30 special accounts that have targeted purposes, and the surpluses in these were raided to help close the funding gaps in the state budget. One important question remains unanswered. Why have the various legislative oversight committees abrogated their responsibility to provide constant year-to-year oversight on these accounts? Had they been doing the oversight appropriately, there would not have been surpluses to raid. But more on the State budget next time.

Cost of Living Just Went Up Again

—by William J. Skinner, Delegate at Large

Only County Councilwoman Nancy Dacek tried to stop the train before it ran off the tracks. She offered two amendments to stop the council from passing a bill that will absorb 2,700 temporary, part-time and seasonal county employees into the county employee unions without a vote by the employees themselves. The other council members, including the bill sponsor, Howard Denis, voted to pass the bill.

The financial aspects include the fact that county taxpayers will spend \$902,350 to finance the general wage adjustments and this change in status.

But the real reason for the passage of this bill is the union endorsement prior to the November election. The unions get \$252,848 from the dues of these new members, annually, according to the county Office of Management and Budget. This is each year, not a one-time payment.

The taxpayers will fund the union's money bags so they can further expand their influence in selecting the so-called leadership of the Montgomery County government.

So relax and accept the royal tax hike every year until this absurd law is repealed by council members who have more sympathy for those who pay the taxes. As inflation goes up, the cost will increase every year. There is no hope that County Executive Douglas Duncan will veto this bill as he is also seeking the union endorsement.

If you are one of those who does not understand or care about this sad state of affairs, you better get organized to do something about it. The cost of living in Montgomery County just went up. And the only purpose for the increase is to give union bosses more say in who runs the county.

[Reprinted with minor editing from a letter published recently in the Gazette newspapers.—Ed.]

Nominees for Federation Office 2001-2002

The following candidates were nominated for the officer positions for the coming year at the May meeting. A final vote will be held at the June meeting.

OFFICE	NOMINEE	TENURE AS OFFICER
President	Cary Lamari	2 yr.
First V.P.	Dan Wilhelm	2 yr.
Second V.P.	Stan Schiff	> 2 yr.
Second V.P.	Pat Cummings	1 yr.
Second V.P.	Mark Adelman	1 yr.
Treasurer	Luella Mast	New
Corresp. Sec.	Fifi Northrup	2 yr.
Rec. Sec.	Richard Zierdt	>2 yr.
District 1 V.P.	Diana Conway	New
District 2 V.P.	Dick Strombotne	2 yr.
District 3 V.P.	Tom DeGraba	New
District 4 V.P.	Bob Abrams	1 yr.
District 5 V.P.	Jim Johnson	New

From the President

The first issue to drop in my lap as Federation President was a major one. The County Attorney had proposed an outrageous plan to dilute Montgomery County's outstanding open government laws until they were reduced to the state's mediocre attempts at laws for open government. It was an issue I was eager to sink my teeth into and we won big. Now, as I am about to leave office almost two years later, the Charter Review Commission (CRC) has resurrected this monstrosity (see articles on pages 6 and 7). In the words of the great songwriter, the late Steve Goodman, "Is this the part where I came in? I've seen this movie before."

Overshadowing our successes in maintaining the quality of life in this county over the past two years has been the lack of respect of the local government for the citizens. The CRC's anti-democratic proposals are only the tip of an ugly iceberg. The issues of this newsletter have documented too many examples of this disrespect—from inadequate notice of hearings, to Montgomery College's disturbing treatment of our inquiries about their expansion plans, to the Council's departures from the master plan, to deafness to the

2001-2002 MCCF Officers					
Office	Name	Home #	Office #	Fax #	e-mail
President:	I. Dean Ahmad	301-951-0539	301-656-4714	301-656-4714	dahmad@speakeasy.net
Past-Pres.:	Jorge L. Ribas	301-258-1910	<not available>	301-258-1909	sfristoe@erols.com
1st Vice-Pres.:	Cary Lamari	301-924-2746	301-924-2558	<none>	carylamar@yahoo.com
2nd Vice-Pres.:	Stanley D. Schiff	301-530-6455	same	<not available>	stanschiff@msn.com
2nd Vice-Pres.:	Jeanne Goldstein	301-652-3064	same	<not available>	<none>
2nd Vice-Pres.:	Dan Wilhelm	301-384-2698	same	<not available>	djwilhelm@erols.com
2nd Vice-Pres.:	Pat Cummings	301-977-6004	301-840-0921	301-840-0967	<call first>
Treasurer:	Chris Suzich	301-417-9522	same	<not available>	jsuzich@erols.com
Rec. Secretary:	Richard Zierdt	301-881-0283	703-464-1617	<not available>	richard.zierdt@landmark.com
Corres. Sec.:	Winifred Klein	301-654-8084	same	<not available>	w-wklein@webtv.net
Dist. 1 V.P.:	Fifa Northrup	301-984-9424	<not available>	301-984-0147	breo@hotmail.com
Dist. 2 V.P.:	Dick Strombotne	301-540-9597	<not available>	301-540-9597	rlstrombotne@ieeee.org
Dist. 3 V.P.:	Myrna Taylor	301-869-4499	202-429-2163	<not available>	MyrnaJT@aol.com
Dist. 4 V.P.:	Bob Abrams	301-946-7291	<not available>	<not available>	robertabr@aol.com
Dist. 5 V.P.:	Mark Adelman	301-942-6893	301-295-3208	301-942-4108	adelman3@erols.com
Historian:	Marcella Petree	301-384-1776	same	<not available>	<none>
Newsletter Ed.:	Peggy Dennis	301-983-9738	same	<not available>	hotyakker@aol.com
Parliamentarian:	William Skinner	301-762-5483	301-762-3784	301-762-3786	wjswtg@aol.com
Public Relations:	Stuart Rochester	301-384-5515	<not available>	<not available>	<not available>
Education:	Mark Adelman	301-942-6893	301-295-3208	301-942-4108	adelman3@erols.com
Environment:	Charlie Pritchard	301-593-1781	same	<not available>	erc69434@aol.com
Legislation:	George Sauer	301-762-7260	same	<not available>	<none>
Membership:	Jeanne Goldstein	301-652-3064	same	<not available>	<none>
Pl. & Land Use.:	Tom DeGraba	301-340-2570	<not available>	<not available>	<none>
Pub. Fin. & Util.:	Chuck Lapinski	301-384-0392	703-506-4600	<not available>	clapinsk@mclean.mcrci.com
Transportation:	Dan Wilhelm	301-384-2698	same	<not available>	djwilhelm@erols.com

significance of the distinction between inherent and non-inherent consequences of special exceptions raised before the Planning Board and Board of Appeals.

The Inner Purple Line is a telling example of the contempt we have had to face. With not even one month's notice, the Council wanted citizens to choose between an inner and outer purple line. (What if we wanted both? Or none? Both proponents and opponents of the Inner Purple Line voted for the MCCF to urge the Council to delay any decision on the Purple Line until proper citizen input is heard.) The County had to be forced by the state legislature to include a double tracking option.

A dog and pony show held the week before this newsletter went to press showed a pathetic state of preparation. They still hadn't answered the most pressing questions: How much will it cost to double-track? How much will it cost to place a graded crossing at Connecticut Avenue? How much would it cost to place the track underground? Even the question of how much will it cost to purchase as yet un-obtained right-of-way in Silver Spring was skirted by the assertion that the land would be purchased separately as part of some other project. Why bother to pretend to offer information when you have nothing new, unless you have no respect for the public you putatively serve?

Actually, Stan Schiff uncovered one piece of new information at the exhibit: the Inner Purple Line will confront some of the same environmental objections that have been raised against previous development in the Paint Branch Area.

Thank God for the term limit on the MCCF Presidency. Two years is long enough to be at the center of the storm. But that doesn't mean I'm going away. No, sir! The proponents of tougher ballot access laws and secret government aren't going to wear me down. As long as I'm a living resident of Montgomery County, I'll still be around to help MCCF fight the good fight against the enemies of liberty that continue to threaten our civil society. Thanks to all of you who have fought so hard that "government of the people, by the people and for the people" should not perish from Montgomery County. The struggle will continue.

Despite these ongoing challenges, the Federation had a number of noteworthy achievements in the past two years, and I'd like the opportunity to personally thank everyone who has helped in those successes. Everyone come and join us for the Awards Ceremony (see p. 3) at the June 10 meeting.

–I. Dean Ahmad, Ph.D.

Delegates Meetings

Monday, June 10–7:45 p.m.

1st fl. Audit., County Co. Office Bldg., Rockville, MD

AGENDA:

7:45 Call to Order, I. Dean Ahmad presiding

7:46 Announcements, Introductions

7:52 Adoption of Agenda

7:55 Approval of Minutes, Officers' Reports

8:00 **Program: Annual Awards** (p. 3)

- Star Cup to a Federation Delegate or Committee
- Gazette Award for Outstanding Service to County's people
- Sentinel Award for Contribution to Good Government

8:30 Refreshments

9:00 Old Business

- Voting system on TPR Motions (p. 1)

9:15 New Business

- Oppose CRC proposal to increase signature requirement for charter amendments (pp. 5, 6, 7)
- Oppose CRC plan against open government (pp. 5, 6, 10)
- County Campaign Finance by Wage Legislation? (p. 6)
- Montgomery College Lawsuit (p. 5)
- Election of Officers (p. 10)

10:00 Adjourn

Saturday, June 15–1:00 p.m.

3rd fl. Audit., County Co. Office Bldg., Rockville, MD

[See page 1 for agenda.]

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 for the next issue: 5 p.m. Saturday, August 24 Attach submission to e-mail to: Hotyakker@aol.com file in fully justified 11-point Times Roman font (preferably as a Word document.) Send editorial content to Dean Ahmad, 4323 Rosedale Ave., Bethesda, MD 20814, deanahmad@yahoo.com.

Please send all address corrections to Steve Howie, P.O.Box 325, Clarksburg, MD 20871, 301-972-2736, stevehowie@aol.com.

Next Executive Committee Meeting

Thursday, June 21, 2002, 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

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Address Service Requested