



Civic Federation News

January 2014
Serving the Public Interest since 1925

Official Publication of the
Montgomery County Civic
Federation
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TRIAL NEW FORMAT

The vast majority of our subscribers now get this newsletter by email or from our web site. To make it easier to read on a screen we have switched to a one-column format. Instead of a table of contents, we have included bookmark links to the articles on the left of the page. Click on a link to get to the right place in the document. If you don't see the bookmarks column, try clicking on the ribbon icon to the left of the page (in Adobe Reader).

As always, recipients of the e-newsletter are encouraged to forward it widely.

January Program: Opening Government – Transparency and Ethics **By Paula Bienenfeld, First Vice President**

Our program on Monday, January 13th will be on Opening Government: Transparency and Ethics. We'll discuss the policies, systems and processes that are in place to ensure compliance with ethics laws and the impartiality of government officials, in the execution of their responsibilities. We'll also discuss improvements that could be made as well as some of the tools that are available for accessing public information. The panel will include speakers from the Maryland State Ethics Commission, the Montgomery County Ethics Commission and the Sunlight Foundation.

The goals of the Maryland State Ethics Commission, as established by the Public Ethics Law (State Government Article, Title 15) are as follows:

- To ensure the public has the highest trust in its State officials and employees and to assure the public that decisions are made impartially and with independence of judgment.
- To ensure State business is conducted free from improper influence, or even the appearance of improper influence.
- To prevent conflicts of interest by administering public disclosure programs and standards of conduct for State employees, officials and lobbyists.

Michael Lord is the Executive Director of the State Ethics Commission. He'll discuss the responsibilities of the Commission as well as common issues related to conflict of interest, financial disclosure and lobbying.

The Maryland Public Ethics Law also requires that each county enact provisions governing the public ethics of local officials relating to conflicts of interest, financial disclosure, and lobbying that are substantially similar to those of the State.

The Montgomery County Ethics Commission administers the Montgomery County Public Ethics Law (Chapter 19A of the Montgomery County Code) by encouraging and enforcing compliance and ensuring the ethical conduct of public officials and employees of the Executive Branch, the Legislative Branch, and certain Boards and Commissions, the Revenue Authority, the

Housing Opportunities Commission, Fire Corporations, and Rescue Squads. The mission of the Ethics Commission is “to promote the public’s trust of County government through the independent administration, including enforcement, of laws designed to ensure the impartiality of County employees, including elected officials, in the execution of their responsibilities.

The Ethics Commission is comprised of five volunteer members who are appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council. Robert Cobb is Chief Counsel and Staff Director for the Commission. He’ll provide an overview of the County Commission and the improvements that have been made to reporting systems in the last several years.

The Sunlight Foundation is a nationally recognized nonpartisan nonprofit organization that has been at the forefront of using the power of the internet to catalyze greater government openness and transparency. The Foundation works with thousands of software developers, local transparency activists, bloggers, citizens and journalists, on distributed research projects and training.

Alisha Green is Sunlight Foundation's Policy Associate working with the local policy team to improve online access to municipal government information. That includes everything from researching and writing about the landscape of municipal data disclosure to providing feedback on proposed open data, open meetings, and open government ordinances at the state and local levels. She’ll discuss the organization’s work in the area of using technology to improve access to government information by making it available online.

Be sure to join us to participate and provide feedback in this important discussion.

January Community Heroes: Karen Devitt and Lindsey Parsons, Founders of Real Food for Kids Montgomery

By Paula Bienenfeld, First Vice President &

We start the New Year by recognizing two members of the Montgomery County civic activist community, Karen Devitt and Lindsey Parsons, who started [Real Food for Kids Montgomery](#) (Real Food) at the proverbial kitchen table in October 2012. Voicing the concerns of many in our community, they began questioning and prodding Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) regarding the quality and health of the food available at the public schools, both at meals and in vending machines. Their mission: advocate for fresh, whole and nutrient-rich foods in MCPS; reduce the availability of foods that are low in nutritional value; and increase the availability of local and sustainable foods. According to Real Food, “wholesome food is an educational investment that leads to academic success, improved behavior, and better health outcomes. Improving students’ food options is a critical part of MCPS’ commitment to support the whole child.”

The top five priorities of Real Food were set through a democratic online voting process, and are these: improving communications with parents on options for children’s lunch accounts; remove the practice of rewarding children with food and ensuring the availability of free water in cafeterias; improving the health value of competitive foods; getting schools to eliminate food/snack items that contain harmful ingredients; getting rid of flavored milks; improving the nutrient content of school meals; and ensuring MCPS is in compliance with their own [wellness policy](#).

Last November they organized the highly successful School Food Forum, with speakers including Marla Caplon, Director of the Division of Food and Nutrition Services, MCPS; Councilmember George Leventhal; and chef and Director of Nutrition Services, Shelby County Schools, Tony Geraci. Chef Geraci showed what is possible with his description of the food-to-farm network, and school food gardens programs he began in the Shelby County, Tennessee public school system. More recently, Real Food succeeded in getting artificial ‘strawberry milk’ removed from MCPS cafeterias beginning in January 2014.

Real Food representatives are wanted for every school in the county. So far, Real Food has parents in 117 of 202 schools, with official representatives in 44 of them. To sign up to represent Real Food at your local school, and work for healthy, nutritious food options in our public schools, email them at realfoodMCPS@gmail.com.

Because of their persistence and hard work and dedication in building Real Food and the greater civic network, and pushing the public school system towards a healthy diet for our children, the Civic Fed is honored to award Karen Devitt and Lindsey Parsons the Community Hero award.

News You Can Use

County storm operations map, useful links

Even though we dodged the bullet recently on heavy snow accumulation, wet and slippery roads can make driving difficult, as can accidents, downed trees and uncleared roads. Remember that the county has a [storm website](#) that provides lots of useful information during any type of storm. It includes road closures, access to traffic cameras, [current snow plow map of locations](#) and much more.

The county's main website also has a [storm page with links](#) to current storm-related delays, closings and other useful information.

WSSC emergency service handles water main breaks/leaks.

Contact by Phone: 301-206-4002, 800-828-6439 (toll Free)

Contact by Email: EmergencyCallCenter@wsscwater.com

Plant a Forest and Reap the Benefits

By President Carole Ann Barth

We all know that trees provide multiple benefits, including: reducing air and stormwater pollution, sequestering carbon, creating wildlife habitat, increasing property values, and cooling. But did you know trees may be able to lower your income taxes?

Maryland's Forest Preservation Act of 2013 provides new incentives to plant trees and better manage forests. Until now, landowners could deduct between 10 and 500 acres worth of forestry expenses from their income tax liability. As of October 1, 2013 this legislation expands that amount to between 3 and 1,000 acres, making more private property owners eligible for these tax credits.

Maryland property owners with as little as three acres can deduct forestry expenses from their income tax liability. In addition to tree planting, forestry expenses include activities that support forest health, such as controlling invasive species, creating or maintaining streamside forests, and installing water quality protection and other best management practices. This is important, because without maintenance, most forest plantings fail.

The Act also requires that the State stay at or above its current tree canopy of 40 percent, and sets two planting goals for the next seven years: 43,000 acres of new forests, and 12.5 million new trees in urban areas.

As $\frac{3}{4}$ of Maryland's forests are privately owned, to meet these goals, private landowners must become involved. Moreover, since 85% of Maryland landowners own less than 10 acres of forest, it's critically important that smaller forest plots remain forested. Over the last 58 years, Maryland lost more than 450,000 acres of forestland, averaging 7,500 acres annually due to development.

To qualify for the tax incentives, you must maintain the land in forest cover for 15 years. You also need to work with a licensed forester to develop a Forest Stewardship Plan on the property, and

coordinate your activities with the Montgomery County DNR Forester to verify the work is correctly accomplished.

For more information, contact the Maryland Forest Service at 410-260-8531 or go to <http://www.dnr.state.md.us/forests/>.

President's Message: Meaningful Citizen Participation

By President Carole Ann Barth

Montgomery County has advisory groups, hearings, open houses, online chats, call-in shows, and public meetings galore. A citizen activist (assuming one didn't need to work or see one's family) could attend multiple meetings day after day and night after night, endlessly offering feedback and testimony and still be only catching a fraction of what's going on. Unfortunately, despite all this activity there's very little actual public participation occurring.

That's because most of what occurs is viewed by elected and appointed officials (and their staff) as just a procedural requirement. In other words, the decision-makers provide an opportunity for citizens to express their approval or outrage, but most of the time it has nothing to do with the actual decision-making process.

Here's how it usually goes. The officials sit up front, trying to look somewhat awake and attentive. The citizens struggle to present (in only 3 minutes) well-researched, nuanced responses to massive staff documents dealing with complex, far-reaching plans and policies. If the citizen manages to hit a sore spot, an official will turn to staff and ask "Is this true? Are we about to make a huge mistake?" Staff reassures them that all is well, the citizen is not allowed a rebuttal, and the dance resumes its familiar steps.

Of course one can always submit detailed written testimony, or organize a grass-roots letter writing campaign. Unfortunately, officials rarely read any of this material. Instead, it is merely reported to them in the form of a score: X total number of emails received, Y in favor, Z against.

In other words, while opportunities to participate abound, they are rarely meaningful. So let's take a closer look at what is (and isn't) meaningful participation.

Participation is meaningful when the public's contribution can influence government's decision. It doesn't matter how useful the input is, if the decision-maker is not open to considering it. Sadly, it seems to me that most officials only respond when what I call "The Frankenstein Threshold" has been crossed. That is, they only respond when there is a mob of villagers with torches and pitchforks beating down the door. (A more subtle variant of this is the "The Oligarchy Threshold", where enough deep-pocketed people express outrage. Unfortunately, the resulting policy change most often simply exempts the posh zip code[s] from the planned action.)

I understand that it's important to know whether 10 people or 100 people wrote in on a given issue, but someone also needs to look at and consider the actual content of the input. A good idea is still a good idea, even when offered by only one citizen. Indeed, research (Dietz and Stern, 2008) has shown that substantive public participation results in better policies.

Participation is meaningful when the public has ready access to the detailed information underpinning the decision. Too often government decisions are based on "black box" calculations, shadowy task forces, or aggregated budget categories. Timing is often a problem as well. Government spends months producing a technical study, draft, plan, or recommendation only to expect citizens to comment in a matter of days. That timeframe is further contracted by requirements to sign up and

submit testimony in advance. Fast turn-arounds also make it well-nigh impossible for communities to meet, deliberate, and come to consensus on a position.

Participation is meaningful when it is both “wide” and “deep”. Government needs to do more than simply provide an input opportunity, it needs to seek out and facilitate the involvement of populations potentially affected by its decisions. While it’s important to contact contiguous property owners, the surrounding and “downstream” communities also need to be approached. In these days of electronic communication, there is no excuse for failing to cast a wide public involvement net.

By depth I mean the opportunity to participate over time in collaborative policy-making. Perhaps the best example of this is the Concordia Process for master planning. Using this process, stakeholders (with staff support) were able to develop practical policy alternatives with broad-based support. Another useful approach for smaller-scale projects is the design charrette. These approaches have fallen out of favor for being “too slow and staff-intensive”, but like crafting fine wine, there is no “quick and dirty” way to achieve a great policy product.

So, my 2014 wish for all citizen activists is a year chock full of meaningful participation opportunities. And for decision-makers that feel such efforts are too costly and time consuming, remember that meaningful participation is the best insurance against village mobs armed with torches and pitchforks!

Affordable Housing Issue Imperils Zoning Code Rewrite **by Jim Humphrey, MCCF Planning & Land Use Chair**

Several times during two rounds of worksessions on the Zoning Code Rewrite, PHED (Planning, Housing and Economic Development) Committee Chair Nancy Floreen stated that the purpose of the project was to reorganize and streamline the existing zoning code and not to make policy-based alterations to that code. But during their final meetings on the project in early December, with the rewrite within sight of the finish line, PHED Committee members offered widely differing proposals for fundamental changes to the CR (Commercial and Residential) mixed use zone, with the aim of encouraging provision of more Moderately Priced Dwelling Units (MPDU) in the county.

The CR Zone was created and approved by the County Council in 2011, for initial use in the revision of the White Flint Sector Plan then underway. Since that time, Council has applied CR zoning to properties in seven other planning areas during revision of master plans for those areas.

As it currently exists in law, the CR Zone allows a rather small building to be constructed under Standard Method development, simply by pulling a building permit from the Department of Permitting Services. A larger building, up to the size and height limits assigned to each CR property, can be approved by the Planning Board under Optional Method development, if the developer agrees to provide a package of public benefits chosen from a list included in the law (e.g.; enhanced site or building design, historic resource protection, open space, and environmental protections). One of the benefits is the provision of MPDUs above the 12.5 percent required of all residential projects containing more than 20 total units.

During their December meetings, PHED members George Leventhal and Marc Elrich proposed deleting many of the public benefits from the existing CR Zone public benefits list, such as enhanced recreation facilities, provision of live/work units, or environmental protections, in order to push developers toward providing additional MPDUs in their CR Zone projects.

PHED Chair Nancy Floreen countered with a proposal under which, if a CR project contains more than the required 12.5 percent MPDUs, the building could exceed the height limit recommended in the master plan or allowed by the zone by the number of stories needed to accommodate all of the MPDUs. Also, for CR projects containing more than 12.5 percent MPDUs, the building could exceed the size limit (square footage) recommended in the master plan or allowed by the zone, to

accommodate the additional MPDUs; and if a developer provides more than 15 percent MPDUs then none of the square footage for any MPDU would count against the building size limit.

PHED member Elrich responded to the Floreen proposal by opining that it was a kind of "bait and switch." Developers and county residents alike have been promised that the building height and size limits in the CR Zone could not be exceeded, and she was now proposing the equivalent of phantom square footage and height that would not count against zone limits. Elrich said this seemed unfair, to which Floreen responded that "life is unfair." This does not seem like a wise foundation on which to make decisions about the county zoning code, the basic tenets of which should be fairness, equity and a high degree of reliability.

There is already one payback existing in law for a developer of a CR property who provides more than 12.5 percent MPDUs in their project--it counts as a public benefit toward allowing the full size and height building planned for the site. Is it really necessary to provide a second incentive to developers? CR projects in eight planning areas are being designed or have been approved based on existing zone standards. Is it fair to alter the rules under which they have proceeded? Any change the Council rushes into at this time could have ripple effects and unintended and unforeseen consequences.

The issue of how to encourage provision of affordable housing is an important one, and one which we do not think should be hurried. Therefore, we believe the wisest course the Council could take is to follow PHED Chair Nancy Floreen's advice, which we noted at the start of this piece, and use the zoning code rewrite project to reorganize the existing code, not to make policy related changes to that code. The appropriate time for the Council to debate any zoning changes to promote affordable housing is when they consider the rewrite of the county Housing Policy later in 2014.

NOTE: the full Council will hold worksessions on the Zoning Code Rewrite on January 14, 15, 16 and, if necessary, on the 21st beginning at 9:30 a.m.

Second Annual Budgetpalooza!

By Paula Bienenfeld, Education Chair

Mark your calendars now. The Montgomery County Civic Federation, the Montgomery County Taxpayers League and the Parents' Coalition of Montgomery County, Maryland have teamed up for the Second Annual Budgetpalooza!

DATE: Wednesday, February 5th, 2014

TIME: 7:00 - 9:00 PM

LOCATION: Rockville Memorial Library, 100 Maryland Ave., Rockville

Want to know where so many of our tax dollars go? Help do the research. We are looking for people to analyze the chapters. Please volunteer to analyze and report on a chapter by signing up at <http://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C094CADAC28A3FB6-budgetpalooza>

CIVIC FEDERATION LEADERSHIP, 2014-2015

Nominations Committee

We need volunteers including a chairman to serve on the MCCF Nominating Committee. There is no better way to help highlight shared County concerns and provide a bigger voice for citizens and their civic associations. The Committee is looking to fill the elective positions on the Executive Committee: President, First Vice President, Second Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. No travel! No

meetings! Most of the work will be done by telephone. Please contact President Carole Ann Barth at 301-593-7863 or by email: cbarth@mindspring.com to volunteer to help with this important task.

2014 Awards Committee

The Civic Federation's Annual Awards Banquet on Friday, May 2, is just around the corner. The work of this committee - accepting nominations for award recipients, evaluating those nominations and making final recommendations on the awardees -- should be of short duration and may be done largely by phone. The committee will be confirmed at the January Executive Committee meeting. Please also start thinking now about individuals and/or groups you would like to nominate. Here are the descriptions of the awards and the rationale for each award:

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

The Sentinel Award - sponsored by the Montgomery Sentinel newspaper and awarded to an individual or group for a significant contribution to good government at the local level.

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

Please contact Carole Ann Barth at 301-593-7863 or by email: cbarth@mindspring.com if you have a nomination or if you are willing to serve on the Awards Committee. We cannot do this without your help!

Submit a Federation Corner Column

By Jim Humphrey

MCCF continues to submit a Federation Corner column each week to be printed in The Montgomery Sentinel (named Best Newspaper of 2012 by the Maryland-Delaware-District of Columbia Press Association). The column is a way of informing our county government officials and other Sentinel readers about the activities of the Civic Federation and the issues of importance to our members.

If you have an issue, a problem or an activity of significance to your community that you want to receive wider exposure, consider writing a Federation Corner column on the topic. Columns must be between 800 and 1000 words in length, in Word document format, and sent as an attachment to an email to: montgomerycivic@yahoo.com. Please use the same email address if you wish to discuss a future submission.

Minutes of the December 2 Meeting

By Sue Schumacher, Co-Recording Secretary

Call to Order: Second Vice President Alan Bowser called the meeting to order at 7:45. Introductions followed.

Agenda: It was moved and seconded to approve the agenda.

Announcements: The Goshen Historic Preservation Society will have a talk on the underground railroad at 7:30pm, Thursday, December 12 at the Church of the Nazarene in Goshen. Peggy Dennis announced the Silver Spring Stage is putting on A Christmas Carol on December 13, 14, 15 and 20, 21, 22. Tickets can be gotten at www.ssstage.org.

Minutes: It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes of the November 11 meeting as they appeared in the Newsletter. The minutes were approved.

Treasurers Report: Jerry Garson reported that the Civic Fed's finances were in good shape.

Program: Jim Zepp, Public Safety Chair, introduced Henriot St. Gerard, the vice chair of the Montgomery County Nighttime Economy Task Force. The Task Force was set up by County Executive Ike Leggett to develop recommendations for a more vibrant nighttime economy to foster future growth. Mr. St. Gerard explained that the county has a great 9:00-5:00 economy, but there was room for growth during the evening hours. Recommendations by the Task Force included changing the ratio of dollars spent on drinks and food from 50/50 to 60/40, and longer hours for places that serve alcoholic beverages to 2:00 a.m. Sunday through Thursday and 4:00 a.m. Friday, Saturday and Sundays before a Monday Holiday. Other suggestions included permitting more food trucks and increasing the noise levels allowed for live entertainment and outdoor events. These recommendations are for the 5 designated urban areas only: Bethesda, Silver Spring, Wheaton, Rockville and Germantown. There was a great deal of discussion in the Q. and A. Members of the audience voiced opposition to much of what was recommended by the Task Force and indicated that the recommendations aimed to bring and keep more young adults in the county after dark would displease and drive away senior citizens looking to downsize and relocate in apartments and condominiums in the CBDs.

Committee Reports:

Education: Paula Bienenfeld, Chair announced that the MCPS Budget Palooza needs individuals to volunteer to review chapters of the budget. In addition, she announced that with the assistance of the Tax Payers' League, the Debate for Candidates running for County Executive will be either April 23 or April 30.

Legislation: Peggy Dennis announced that she gave MCCF's testimony on MC 5-14 on Bow and Arrow Hunters for white tail deer in residential areas.

Parks and Recreation: Carole Ann Barth announced that she will be testifying on the Bi-County WSSC legislation that would exempt WSSC from Forest Preservation Act. She also announced that that the Farm Road issue still has not been resolved and that Park and Planning continues to refuse to recognize the road. She also discussed potential requirements that plans be signed and certified that all is correct "under penalty of perjury". This is routinely required in other jurisdictions. Alan Bowser announced that he will be giving the MCCF's testimony on 10-Mile Creek in Clarksburg.

Additional Announcements: Harriet Quinn announced that the White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan which the Council returned to the Planning Board, will be taken up by the Planning Board on December 5.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 9:35pm.

Minutes of the December 18 Executive Committee Meeting By Co-Recording Secretary, Sandy Vogelgesang

The Executive Committee (ExComm) met at the Bethesda Chevy-Chase Regional Services Center in Bethesda.

Call to Order. President Carole Ann Barth called the meeting to order at 7:55 PM. with Paula Bienenfeld, Peggy Dennis, Jerry Garson, Jim Humphrey, Harriet Quinn, Sandy Vogelgesang, Dan Wilhelm, and Jim Zepp attending.

Adoption of Meeting Agenda. Carole Ann called for and received unanimous approval of the proposed ExComm agenda as amended.

Approval of Minutes for November 21, 2013 ExComm Meeting. Carole Ann called for and received unanimous approval of the minutes as published in the December 2013 newsletter.

Treasurer's Report. Jerry Garson, Treasurer, circulated updated report. The current bank balance for the Federation is \$14,898.97. Jerry plans to confirm arrangements for the space used for the monthly delegates' meeting for the duration of this fiscal year and then work with Paula Bienenfeld and Alan Bowser on other options for the future.

Announcements. Dan Wilhelm noted that Valerie Ervin has announced her resignation from the County Council. The Council will appoint a replacement to cover District 5 until a new Councilmember is chosen in the 2014 election.

Programs. Carole Ann introduced discussion of future programs.

January: Opening Government: Transparency and Ethics. Speakers: Alisha Green, Policy Associate, Sunlight Foundation, and Robert Cobb, Chief Counsel and Staff Director, Montgomery County Ethics Commission. Discussion to include possible amendments to the County Ethics Law. Paula and Harriet are in charge of the program.

February: Montgomery County Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) report on schools (tentative).

March: County Capital Improvements Program (CIP) budget

April: County Operating Budget

Community Hero. Paula Bienenfeld nominated Karen Devitt and Lindsey Parsons, co-founders and co-directors of "Real Food for Kids" (RFFK), a parent advocacy group promoting fresh and nutrient-rich foods in Montgomery County public schools. ExComm endorsed the nomination unanimously.

Issues for Discussion. Carole Ann led discussion of the following:

Night-time Economy Task Force. Jim Zepp, Public Safety Chair -- having arranged the program on the Task Force report in November -- requested ExComm recommendation on next steps. Given the extensive concerns expressed about the Task Force report, it was agreed unanimously that Jim will prepare a position paper for ExComm review.

Legislation. Dan Wilhelm, Legislation and Committee for Montgomery Chair, said that there will be nothing to review until bills are posted in January 2014. Peggy Dennis updated ExComm on bills concerning artificial turf for school playgrounds and athletic facilities. Carole Ann led discussion on the best approach for dealing with the need for penalty for perjury by officials who knowingly fail to reflect accurate information on plats and other development documents. Paula reported on her effort to ascertain the status of work and enforcement for the review of the County greenhouse gas reduction laws. She found no action to date. Harriet discussed the two proposed County Council bills introduced to eliminate sign-off on final record plats by the Department of Permitting Services (DPS) and the Department of Transportation (DOT). Sign-off would be limited to the Planning Board. She will follow up with additional details to ExComm.

Nominating Committee. Carole Ann led discussion. Jim Zepp and Harriet Quinn have agreed to serve. Others volunteers welcome!

Candidates' Forum. Paula proposed that MCCF work with the Taxpayers' League to sponsor programs for candidates for the County Executive and County Council in 2014. ExComm requested that Paula explore the issue further, particularly with regard to seeking more partners for the programs, and report back to ExComm. Some concern was expressed about the large number of such forums and whether MCCF action is needed.

Farm Road. Carole Ann provided update on the independent study issued on December 5. ExComm agreed that Jim Humphrey will draft a response to the report.

Ethics Commission Authority. Harriet discussed which agencies are under jurisdiction of the County and State Ethics Commissions. These commissions have authority over the agencies in the County and State executive and legislative branches, as well as over some boards and commissions. MCPS; the bi-county park and planning agency, M-NCPPC; and the bi-county utility, WSSC, have their own ethics review procedures and are not accountable to the County or State Ethics Commissions.

Committee Reports.

Planning and Land Use (PLU). Jim Humphrey, Chair, discussed the CR zone under the Zoning Code Rewrite. Given some proposed changes introduced at the Planning, Housing and Economic Development (PHED) Committee hearing on December 9, Jim proposed that the Council keep the CR zone clean for now and then come back later to address proposed changes of MPDU (moderately priced dwelling units) law. ExComm endorsed the PLU recommendation.

Legislation and Transportation. Dan Wilhelm, Chair, nothing further to report.

Education. Paula Bienenfeld, Chair, reported that the financial issue at Rock Terrace Elementary School has gone to the grand jury and that the School Board has asked the Superintendent for a plan to reimburse students and parents. Paula reported that Superintendent Starr has proposed to the County School Board a \$2.28 billion Operating Budget for FY 2015. That proposal represents a \$56.4 million increase over this fiscal year's budget and an amount \$17 million over what Montgomery County is required to provide under Maryland state law for "maintenance of effort" (MOE) spending per pupil.

Old Business

Hack-a-Thon. Paula continues to seek venue for the event.

Budgetpalooza. Paula is proceeding with arrangements for review of the MCPS budget. See separate story.

Equipment. Paula and Jim are proceeding with purchase of equipment (projector and sound system) for MCCF meetings.

New Business

Newsletter. Peggy reviewed articles to be submitted for January 2014 newsletter.

New Twitter Account. ExComm concurred with recommendation from Harriet Quinn that she set up twitter account.

Awards Committee. Carole Ann will seek volunteers.

Bylaws. Peggy, Dan and Luella Mast (former MCCF treasurer) will meet in early 2014 to review bylaws.

Next ExComm Meeting. The next meeting will be on January 16 at the home of Sandy Vogelgesang. The following meeting will be held on February 20 (location TBD).

Adjournment. Carole Ann called for and received unanimous approval for adjournment at 9:45 PM.

Upcoming Meetings

The **Montgomery County Civic Federation** is a county-wide nonprofit educational and advocacy organization. It was founded in 1925 to serve the public interest. Monthly Federation meetings are open to the public and are held on the second Monday of each month September through June at 7:45 p.m. in the First Floor Auditorium, County Council Office Building, 100 Maryland Avenue, Rockville, MD. Free parking in garage accessed from Monroe St. or from Jefferson St. heading east from I-270.

The **Civic Federation News** is published monthly, except in July and August. It is mailed or emailed 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.**"

Submit contributions for the next issue by: **Sunday, January 26** . Prepare submission as an MS Word, Word Perfect or text document, **attach** it to an e-mail, and send to **hotyakker@gmail.com**

Please send all **address corrections** to Dan Wilhelm, 904 Cannon Road, Silver Spring, MD 20904, 301-384-2698, or djwilhelm@verizon.net.

Federation Meeting

Session 852

Monday, January 13, 2014
7:45 1st Floor Auditorium
County Council Office Building,
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD

Agenda:

- 7:45 Call to Order & Introductions
- 7:50 Approval of Agenda
- 7:51 Announcements
- 7:54 Approval of Minutes of December 2 meeting
- 7:55 Treasurer's Report
- 8:00 Community Heroes: Real Food for Kids; Devitt and Parsons
- 8:00 Program: Opening Government: Transparency & Ethics
- 9:15 Committee Reports
- 9:45 Adjournment

Next Executive Committee Meeting

Thursday January 23, 7.45 pm
at the home of
Sandy Vogelgesang
9009 Charred Oak Drive
Bethesda 20817

**Official Publication of the
Montgomery County Civic
Federation**

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Address service requested

First Class Mail