



Civic Federation News

May 2014

Serving the Public Interest since 1925

Official Publication of the
Montgomery County Civic
Federation

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Federation Meeting

Session 856

Monday, May 12, 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 April 14 meeting
- 7:55 Treasurer's Report
- 8:00 Community Hero: Erwin Mack, Chair, PBTSAC
- 8:10 Program: OLO Report on MCPS High Schools
- 9:15 Presentation of Slate of MCCF Nominees
- 9:20 Committee Reports
- 9:35 Old Business
- 9:40 New Business
- 9:45 Adjournment

Registrations Must be Received by

Monday, April 28

for the

Montgomery County Civic Federation's

2014 ANNUAL AWARDS

BANQUET

Friday, May 2, 2014

honoring

The Wayne Goldstein Award – Danila Sheveiko

The Sentinel Award – Lyda Astrove

The Star Cup – Carole Ann Barth

use registration form on page 7

May Program: Office of Legislative Oversight Report on the Performance of our Public High Schools

by Paula Bienenfeld, Education Committee Chair

Our program on Monday, May 12 will be an overview and discussion of the Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) report on MCPS high schools released on April 8. This report, an update of the 2009 report, compares performance in the consortia schools, with the non-consortia schools. The report found that since 2011 the economic, racial, and ethnic stratification of students among MCPS high schools has increased. The research found that there is an achievement gap within MCPS when comparing the two different school types. Using seven measures, the achievement gap was found to have widened over the past three to four years for most of the measures,

and for the remainder, the gap has either narrowed or remained the same. The ‘gap’ widened for these measures: AP Performance; SAT/ACT Performance; Academic eligibility; and Out-of-school suspension. The gap either narrowed or stayed the same for these measures: Algebra II by Grade 11; Graduation rates; and Dropout rates.

The OLO authors recommend that the County Council discuss with the Board of Education and MCPS leadership their goals for **improving student integration** and **narrowing the achievement gap**.

The authors also recommend that the Council improve their oversight of MCPS appropriations aimed at narrowing this ‘achievement gap,’ and recommend a review of MCPS’ total \$2.3 Billion budget.

The OLO report is available at: <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OLO/Resources/Files/OLO%20Report%202014-7%20Final.pdf>

Please plan on joining us for what I am sure will be an interesting and thought provoking discussion. As always, questions and comments from the audience are an important part of our program.

May Community Hero: Erwin Mack, Pedestrian Safety Activist by Peggy Dennis, Past President

This May, we will honor one of Montgomery County's leading advocates for pedestrian safety, Erwin Mack. Erwin and his wife, Sylvia, lived and raised four children in California for 27 years. Then, in 1977 they moved to Maryland. In 1982 Erwin bought an existing business in Takoma Park and operated that for 14 years before retiring. During that time he served as President of two Rotary Clubs.

During that period Erwin writes, “I watched as the demographics changed to a majority Latino community where Takoma Park and Langley Park intersect at University Boulevard and New Hampshire Avenue. This was the second major cultural change for that area and it brought folks to the US, many of whom had lived in rural areas in the country of their birth and they were not prepared for the significant challenges to which they were not accustomed.

“Without personal transportation and needing to use the commercial sectors close to where they lived, crossing the streets became a challenge and more often than not, swarms of people crossed wherever they wished. This brought the inevitable, collisions with cars resulting in many injuries and deaths. That intersection, now called the Crossroads, became the 3rd most dangerous intersection in MD, missing being # 2 by only a fraction.

“ In a horrible accident in 1984, two young mothers, one carrying her baby and another pushing a stroller with her baby in it, stepped off the sidewalk without looking and all were hit by a car, with the result that both babies died and the mothers were seriously injured.

“This moved me to say "Enough is enough!" and I formed an organization called Multijurisdictional Pedestrian Safety Committee (MPSC). It took 5 years of meetings to persuade the State Highway Administration (SHA) and the local political structure in both PG & MC Counties to agree to a total restructuring of the entire intersection to include relocating bus stops, crosswalks, signals and installing a median fence to redirect pedestrians, as well as urging the planning for a transit center to coordinate bus service.

“The final cost to reconstruct the intersection was \$7,000,000, plus the additional eventual cost of the transit center finally just now beginning to be constructed. The intersection is no longer on the dangerous list.”

I have come to know Erwin Mack from his service with the County's Pedestrian Bicycle Traffic Safety Advisory Committee. He has chaired this committee for the past five years running tight but comprehensive meetings, delegating responsibility for different initiatives to those best able to carry out the work, and treating all – committee members and guests – with courtesy and respect. While civic activists are typically drawn into their advocacy work by land use fights, school issues or environmental concerns, Erwin's interest and passion has been focused on a very discreet but important issue of public safety. As the county urbanizes and becomes more densely populated, the need for streets and paths that are safe and inviting for pedestrians and bicyclists grows. We applaud his work in this particular fields and hope that the County will continue to benefit from his experience and wisdom, even as he “retires” from the the PBTSAC.

Slate of Nominees for Elective Officer for 2014-2015 Announced By Jim Zepp, Chair, Nominations Committee

The MCCF Nominations Committee (Jim Zepp, chair; Jean Cavanaugh; Peggy Dennis; Jerry Garson; Harriet Quinn; and Sandy Vogelsegang) through its deliberations has proposed the following slate of nominees for the 2014-2015 year starting July 1st.

President – Paula Bienenfeld

First Vice President – Jim Zepp
Treasurer – Jerry Garson

Second Vice President – Ira Ungar
Secretary – Danila Sheveiko

The MCCF Executive Committee approved the slate at its April 17th meeting. The List of Nominees will be presented at the meeting on May 9 at which time additional nominations may also be made from the floor. The membership will vote on the officers at the June 9th meeting.

HackMontgomery Drop-In April 24th by Paula Bienenfeld, 1st Vice President

HackMontgomery will be holding a hackathon drop-in to continue work on the projects begun at our February Hackathon.

DATE: April 24th

TIME: 7:00 –10:00 p.m.

PLACE: Second Floor, Room D, Bethesda Regional Services Center, Edgemoor Lane, Bethesda

Please bring your laptop if you have one! If you don't know code, that is ok. All civic activists are welcome!

President's Column: When Does Smart Growth Become Stupid? Part 2: When It's Smart Growth for the Other Guy By Carole Ann Barth

In Part one we looked at smart growth and infrastructure. This month, we'll consider whether or not the government agencies pushing smart growth practice what they preach.

As citizens, we are constantly being admonished to give up any notions of human-scaled neighborhoods with treed yards and ample green space. Planners talk about the County's "suburban character" as if it was an embarrassing social disease. We are told that (with the exceptions of the Ag Reserve and multi-million-dollar estate homes) Montgomery County will become one vast high-density mixed use development. Anyone who questions this vision is labeled as a dinosaur that just doesn't get it.

So what does smart growth mean for government facilities? One key aspect is co-location, where different agencies share a building. This is not a new idea. In the 80s, when I lived in Minneapolis, Hennepin County had regional services centers where you could go to get any needed permits, or to sign up for different government programs. (Although MOCO has regional services centers, most of them just house the regional coordinator and meeting rooms.)

There are many benefits to co-location. For example, in Prince George's County, many of the recreation centers are co-located with schools or senior centers. This allows government to save money by building a single facility (like a parking lot, auditorium, or gym) that is shared by both entities. This is also convenient for residents; you don't have to travel out of the neighborhood so people can walk or bike to the rec. center. It also lets you do several things with one stop-- for example; Mom can work out in the gym while Daughter is at soccer practice.

Unfortunately, MOCO seems to have what our Executive Committee member Jim Zepp calls "an edifice complex"--each agency demanding its own free-standing building. In addition, in recent years, many agencies have moved away from small, local facilities to mega-scale regional facilities like recreation centers where the building itself takes over an acre of ground, and the building is surrounded by a 200-400 car parking lot.

So even as residents are scolded for not embracing transit-oriented development, the County is closing walkable neighborhood facilities and investing millions in large drive-to facilities. In Prince George's County, by contrast, there is a mobile recreation program that brings roller skating, skate boarding, and video games right into under-served communities.

Instead of hundreds of people driving to the recreation center, a truck brings the recreation to them. This allows the County to serve many more people than they could with brick and mortar facilities. Prince George's also has other mobile programs such as low-cost health screenings and even mobile vet services.

Montgomery County is finally taking its first baby steps toward co-location with the new Wheaton library / recreation center and Park & Planning's new headquarters in Wheaton. Some employees from the Department of Permitting Services and the Department of Environmental Protection will also be housed with Planning. Environmentalists and local leaders are telling the agencies that their design needs to go beyond code compliance to embody a community-based green design that honors the diversity of Wheaton's small businesses.

But sadly, we're still a long way from government leading by example. In the Planning Board's discussion of its new headquarters, the board was bemoaning the fact that it would need to give up a couple of staff parking spaces for the Park Police cruisers-- so I'm guessing we're still a long way off from true inter-agency integration or Planning Board members taking transit. (Here too, Prince George's is

ahead of the game with its new one-stop permit and licensing center which, when completed, will house staff from nine different agencies.)

Therefore, until Montgomery County and the Planning Board truly walk their talk, it is unlikely they will be very convincing in selling smart growth to the public.

May News You Can Use

2014 State and County Primary Election: Primary election day is June 24th for state and county elected offices, e.g., Governor, State Attorney General, State Senators and Delegates, County Executive, and County Council. The early voting period is June 12th to 19th and the voter request deadline for electronic absentee ballots is June 15th. Other election information such as the registered candidates for each office and polling locations is available at: www.montgomerycountymd.gov/elections.

Primary elections may not receive as much attention and have as large a voter turnout as general elections. However with many offices only being contested by members of the same political party or are in areas with an overwhelming number of residents affiliated with one party, the primary election can be critical for determining the final winners in many instances.

Emergency Alerts: Have you signed up for your automatic “Alert” notifications yet? Snow season may be past, but you never know when we will be hit by a thunderstorm, or - more scary - a “derecho” or even a tornado. In the event of an ongoing or imminent threat, this alert system administered by the Montgomery County Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security will automatically alert you to the possible danger on your cell phone or via email. Please click [HERE](#) then click on “New User” to begin your registration!

Of course, those who do not pick up text messages and do not live at their computers day and night, will not get the warnings. So, do our old civil defense warning sirens still work? If so, when and under what conditions? Perhaps our Montgomery County Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security could check in and advise us of the full range of possibilities.

Minutes of the April 14 Meeting By Sandy Vogelgesang, Co-Recording Secretary

Call to Order and Introductions: President Carole Ann Barth called the meeting to order at 7:50 PM. Introductions of attendees followed.

Approval of Agenda: Carole Ann called for and received approval of the agenda.

Announcements:

- Peggy Dennis reminded delegates of the upcoming County Executive Candidates’ Forum (April 16) and the Annual Awards Banquet (May 2).
- Jim Zepp noted that the Four Corners area will hold a Candidates’ Forum for County Council District 5 (May 7).

Approval of Minutes of March 10 Meeting: Carole Ann called for and received approval of the minutes as published in the April 2014 newsletter.

Treasurer’s Report: In the absence of the Treasurer, Carole Ann reported that the Federation is “in good shape.”

Program:

Carole Ann introduced the two speakers for the evening’s program on the County’s FY 2015 Operating Budget: Jennifer Hughes, Director of the Montgomery County Office of Management and Budget, and Stephen Farber, Staff Director for the Montgomery County Council.

Ms. Hughes opened the program with an overview of the priorities reflected in the budget introduced by the County Executive: a “re-focus on basics,” a lower growth rate than that of his predecessors, reduced or unchanged tax rates, and emphasis on sound fiscal policy in order to preserve the County’s excellent bond rating. The total recommended budget (including grants and enterprise funds) is \$4.9708 billion, up \$159.6 million (3.3%) from the FY 2014 approved budget. She said that the main proposed increases are for MCPS and Montgomery College. In addition, she noted that, while the County Executive is trying to keep down budget increases, he has proposed some, not only for education, but also for transportation, the police, libraries (hit particularly hard in past budgets), health and human services, the arts and community grants. She reported that, as the budget goes online this year, there will be much more transparency in the budget process.

Mr. Farber provided a comprehensive written overview of the FY 2015 budget for reference during his presentation. (For the full document, see Memorandum to the County Council, dated April 8, 2015, at

<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OMB/FY15/psprec/index.html>.) He launched his presentation with a comparison of the budget situations in Montgomery and Fairfax Counties, with the latter in greater difficulty due to the impact of Federal sequestration and lack of local income tax. He went on to highlight some big changes or issues in the proposed budget: pre-funding of retiree health benefits, proposed extension of the fuel/energy tax increase originally approved for FY 2011-12 only and scheduled to expire in FY 2013, maintenance of effort for MCPS and Montgomery College, and compensation for County employees. A lively Q and A session followed the two presentations.

Committee Reports: Carole Ann called for committee reports. There were relatively few due to absences for Passover and Spring Break.

- **Planning and Land Use:** Virginia Sheard noted the Wheaton Lot 13 Redevelopment Program. Harriet Quinn reported Planning Department open houses on the MAP amendment rezoning process this month and into early May. Dan Wilhelm urged delegates to write the County Council on desired changes. Peggy Dennis noted that there are many applicants for the position of Planning Board chair. Carole Ann will be checking with Jim Humphrey, PLU Chair, on plans for MCCF to interview candidates.
- **Public Safety:** Jim Zepp, Chair, had nothing new to report.
- **Legislation and Transportation:** Dan Wilhelm, Chair, said there is nothing to report on transportation and that there is nothing new to report on legislation since the Maryland General Assembly has concluded its session. Peggy Dennis reported some progress from the General Assembly on deer management. She noted, in addition, some work on a new “orphan road.”

New Business: None.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 9:30 PM.

Minutes of the April 17 Executive Committee Meeting

By Co-Recording Secretary, Sandy Vogelgesang

The Executive Committee (ExComm) met at the home of Sandy Vogelgesang.

Call to Order. Carole Ann Barth, President, called the meeting to order at 7:50 PM. Present for the meeting: Carole Ann Barth, Paula Bienenfeld, Peggy Dennis, Jerry Garson, Jim Humphrey, Harriet Quinn, Virginia Sheard, Sandy Vogelgesang, Dan Wilhelm and Jim Zepp.

Adoption of Meeting Agenda. Carole Ann called for and received approval of the proposed agenda.

Approval of Minutes for March 20 ExComm Meeting. Carole Ann called for and received approval of the minutes as published in the April 2014 newsletter.

Treasurer’s Report. Jerry Garson, Treasurer, circulated updated report. The current bank balance for the Federation is \$14,378.70. Jerry also reported that he has booked the 2nd floor auditorium in the County Council Office Building for the coming year. After discussion of meeting place options, Paula Bienenfeld agreed to research future possibilities.

Announcements. Carole Ann called for announcements.

- Paula reported that there will be the first of monthly Civic Hackathon drop-ins to work on civic hackathon projects at the Bethesda Chevy Chase Regional Services Center, April 24, 6:30-10:00 PM.
- Jim Humphrey reported that updates to the Federation website have now resumed after the software provider resolved their technical update issues after two weeks. Carole Ann offered to provide website backup for Jim. Jim said that he will provide operating guidelines for the website to each current MCCF president.

Programs. Carole Ann introduced discussion of future programs.

- **May:** Presentation of the Montgomery County Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) report entitled “Performance of Montgomery County Public High Schools – a FY 2014 Update,” released on April 8, 2014. Paula Bienenfeld to arrange the program.
- **June:** Update on transportation issues. Dan Wilhelm to arrange.
- **Other Possibilities:** ExComm agreed to add several program ideas to the “future possibilities” list.

Community Hero

ExComm agreed to nomination by Peggy Dennis for Erwin Mack, Chairman of the Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Transportation Safety Advisory Committee, to be Community Hero for May.

ExComm also agreed to nomination by Paula Bienenfeld for Gordon Brenne, Vice President of the Taxpayers' League, to be Community Hero in June.

Issues to Discuss

- **Videotaping Civic Federation Meetings.** ExComm agreed to Carole Ann's proposal to videotape the presentation of Community Hero Awards and programs at monthly delegates' meetings.
- **Increasing Membership.**
 - Carole Ann noted that one of the ways to help expand Federation membership would be for ExComm members to attend more meetings of local civic associations.
 - Dan Wilhelm agreed to circulate the updated MCCF membership list to facilitate this outreach.
 - Virginia Sheard said that she will produce an updated brochure for use this summer as the Federation ramps up for the new 2014-2015 meeting year.

Committee Reports

- **Education:** Paula Bienenfeld, Chair, reported the publication of the OLO report on the achievement gap in Montgomery County public high schools, noted above.
- **Public Safety:** Jim Zepp, Chair, circulated an article on Arlington County, VA pub crawls and the attendant increase in budgeting for police "pub crawl support." He observed that Montgomery County needs to take comparable expenses into account as it proceeds with proposals to boost the County's night-time economy.
- **Planning and Land Use (PLU):** Jim Humphrey, Chair, reported that the draft 2014 Mobility Assessment Report (MAR) was discussed April 17 at the Planning Board. The draft is available on the Federation website. Jim will be preparing an analysis of the report. In addition, Jim urged all to ask candidates in the upcoming local elections about how they plan to help assure adequate infrastructure for new development.
- **Legislation and Transportation:** Dan Wilhelm, Chair, said there is nothing new to report on legislation since the Maryland General Assembly has concluded. He will be covering transportation issues at June program.
- **Parks and Recreation:** Carole Ann Barth, Chair, reported on the recent 15th anniversary celebration of the County Weed Warrior Program at Rockwood Manor. She will be following up on possible MCCF stakeholder participation in the selection process for the new Director of the Department of Parks.

Old Business

- **WSSC Draft Report:** Virginia Sheard, who had served as the only representative of the civic community on the bi-county ad hoc group assessing large diameter pipelines, reported on the latest regarding the revised draft that will go to WSSC Commissioners by April 30. The draft report provides a base-line of data and options for follow-up action by WSSC.
- **Annual Awards Dinner Update:** Peggy Dennis provided update on arrangements for the dinner buffet to be held at the Golden Bull Grand Café in Gaithersburg, May 2.
- **Update from Nomination Committee:** Jim Zepp reported on status of nominations that are to be presented at May delegates' meeting and voted on at the June meeting.
- **Twitter feed update:** Harriet and Paula reported that it is going well and that the Federation has 139 followers.
- **County Executive Candidates' Forum:** Paula Bienenfeld reported that the event, co-sponsored with the Montgomery County Taxpayers' League and the Parents' Coalition on April 16, drew an overflow crowd of over 100.

New Business

- **Newsletter.** Peggy reviewed articles to be submitted for May 2014 newsletter by April 20.
- **Next ExComm Meetings.** The next meeting will be on **May 22** at the Bethesda Chevy Chase Regional Services Center. The following meeting will be held on June 19. Location TBD.
- **July 2014 Potluck.** Peggy Dennis will host the annual social event on July 11.

Adjournment. Carole Ann called for and received unanimous approval for adjournment at 10:15 PM.

Reserve Your Tickets Now For The
 Montgomery County Civic Federation's
2014 ANNUAL AWARDS BANQUET
Friday, May 2, 2014
Reception 6:00 to 7:00 p.m.
Banquet Dinner Buffet 7:00
Awards Presentations 8:15 - 9:30 p.m.
Golden Bull Grand Cafe
 7 Dalamar Street, Gaithersburg 20877

Buffet Menu: Carved Roast Beef Sirloin with Juice & Horseradish Sauce
 Seafood Newburg with Shrimp, Crab & Scallops over Rice Pilaf
 Chicken Piccata with Artichokes & Capers
 Oven Roasted Red Skin Potatoes, Honey Glazed Carrots, Fresh Fruit Salad
 Rolls & Butter, Garden Salad, Coffee, Hot or Iced Tea, Soda
 Chocolate Mousse

\$40 per person includes wine reception (beer & cocktails at cash bar) and dinner.
 \$10 for wine reception only from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Reservations and **payment must be received by Monday, April 28**

Directions: Restaurant is in the center of Gaithersburg. From Route 355/Frederick Avenue, heading north, turn left onto Dalamar. Restaurant has plenty of free parking.

Questions? Call Peggy Dennis: 301-983-9738

Please print or cut off and fill in this stub. Mail with a **check** payable to the **Montgomery County Civic Federation** to:

Mr. Jerry Garson, MCCF Banquet, 8308 Raymond Lane, Potomac MD 20854

I/We will attend the banquet _____

(Please print name(s) as you wish them to be on your name badge at the banquet)

Association or Organization (as applicable) _____

Contact information _____

(Telephone)

(Email)

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, May 25** . 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.

Next Executive Committee Meeting

Thursday May 22, 7:45 p.m.
2nd Floor meeting Room
Bethesda Chevy Chase Regional Services Center
4805 Edgemoor Lane, Bethesda

**Official Publication of the
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First Class Mail