

October's Program | Gangs, Opioids, Mental Health | **P. 3**

The 'Future of Transportation' | Self-driving pizza delivery in Ann Arbor and student transport at Clemson University, the latter developed in Gaithersburg | **P. 6**

Heartbreaking: Child Sex Abuse in County School System | The vicious, systemic cycle of abuse by school employees and cover-up for the abuse | **P. 8**

Civic Assns.' Letter to Ike Leggett About Advance Notice of Purple Line Construction | Six Civic Associations in Silver Spring wrote a letter to the County Executive | **P. 11**

Something to Talk About? | Come early to the meeting to talk over your concerns | **P. 13**

Gordie Brenne Testifies on WSSC 2019 Budget | The V.P. of the Mont. Co. Taxpayers League Coalition shares his testimony | **P. 14**

Volunteers Needed for 2018 MCCF Awards Event | **P. 17**

Upcoming Planning Meetings of Interest | **P. 17**

Notes on Autumn Bicycling | It's a great season to try cycling if you've never done it before | **P. 19**

TO PRINT, USE PRINT VERSION

of note

Next MCCF Meeting

Monday, October 9, 2017, 7:45 p.m.
@ the Executive Office Building in Rockville: *Police and Public Safety: Gang Violence/Opioid Epidemic/Hate Crimes*; Speakers: State's Attorney John McCarthy, Police Chief Tom Manger

AGENDA, P.2 • PROGRAM, P.3

Speakers available for your mtgs. **P.10**
Come early to discuss concerns **P.13**

Meeting Minutes

June 12 Meeting #886 **P.20**
September 11 Meeting #887 **P.22**
July Executive Cmte. Meeting **P.26**

Membership Application

5 Reasons to Join MCCF **P.18**
Join or Renew Now **SEE FORM**

Federation Meeting 888

Monday, October 9, 2017

7:45 p.m.

Lobby Level Auditorium
Executive Office Building
101 Monroe Street
Rockville, Maryland

AGENDA

7:00 Social Time **NEW!**
7:45 Call to Order/Introductions
7:50 Approval of Agenda
7:51 Announcements
7:57 Approval of Minutes, June **[P.20]** and Sept. mtgs. **[P.22]**
7:58 Treasurer's Report
8:00 Program: Current Public Safety Issues **P.3**
9:25 Committee Reports
9:35 Old and New Business
9:45 Adjournment

About MCCF Meetings

All monthly MCCF meetings are open to the public. They are held on the second Monday of each month, September through June, at 7:45 p.m.

The October 9th meeting will be held in the **Lobby Level Auditorium of the Executive Office Building at 101 Monroe Street, Rockville, Maryland.**

Walkers can enter by buzzing security at the door. You can park for free either in the lot at E. Jefferson and Monroe Streets or in the lowest level of the EOB. Drive onto the ramp in the front of the building (ignore "permit parking only" sign), turn left at the second, lower level; use the intercom at the gate to the parking garage and at the door to the elevators to inform security you're attending the MCCF Meeting. ■

The **Montgomery County Civic Federation, Inc.**, is a county-wide nonprofit educational and advocacy organization founded in 1925 to serve the public interest. Monthly MCCF meetings are open to the public (agenda and details at left).

The *Civic Federation News* is published monthly except July and August. It is emailed to delegates, associate members, news media, and local, state, and federal officials. **Recipients are encouraged to forward the Civic Federation News to all association members, friends, and neighbors.** Permission is granted to reproduce any article, provided that proper credit is given to the "*Civic Federation News* of the Montgomery County (Md.) Civic Federation."

Civic Federation News

civicednews AT montgomerycivic.org

TO SUBMIT AN ARTICLE, SEE PAGE 27

Montgomery County Police Chief Tom Manger, State's Attorney John McCarthy Discuss Gangs, Opioids, and Mental Health at October 9th MCCF Meeting in Rockville

By Alan Bowser, Board Member

At the October 2017 General Meeting of the Montgomery County Civic Federation, Inc., our guests will be **Montgomery County Police Chief Tom Manger** and **Montgomery County State's Attorney John McCarthy**. The meeting is public and all are welcome to attend. We hope to see you at 7:45 p.m., Monday, October 9, 2017, in the Lobby Auditorium in the Executive Office Building at 101 Monroe Street in Rockville.

In a recent statement, Manger wrote, "We continue to have a very low rate of violent crime for a jurisdiction of our geographic size and population. In 2016, there were 15 homicides in our county. That number is slightly lower than our

10-year average and much lower than the 30 we experienced in 2015. Most homicides in Montgomery County are related to gang activity, illegal drug activity, or domestic violence.

"Detectives from our Special Investigations Division, specifically assigned to target criminal activity associated with gangs, are working with our local, state, and federal law enforcement partners to eliminate gang violence from our county. Gangs do pose a number of threats to public safety," said Manger. "If you look at the numbers of gang crimes that we have, the numbers are still relatively low, but the nature of the violence



has increased, and the age of the perpetrators has decreased."

MCPD says Montgomery County and the D.C. region are not alone in having to deal with escalating violence within gangs. MCPD says that police departments are having to change their approaches as gangs change the way

they operate.

"There was a 9.8 percent increase in reported rapes in 2016," wrote Manger. "We believe that this increase is due to more victims coming forward based on media coverage of high-profile incidents. Only

MORE

October Program, cont.

23 percent of cases are reported on the date of occurrence. Some victims wait years to report a sexual assault. Regardless of when the crime is reported, all of these cases are fully investigated.

"Montgomery County, like many other jurisdictions nationwide, is still struggling to deal with the opioid related overdoses and deaths. We responded to more than 200 opioid overdoses in 2016. Unfortunately, 60 of those resulted in death. We continue to issue Naloxone to our first responders, and to work with law enforcement, judicial, and other governmental agencies to find a solution to the increasing number of heroin-related overdoses.

"We made strides in making our roads safer and keeping traffic flowing with our ever-increasing popula-

tions. Numerous traffic enforcement and education efforts were untaken in 2016. Traffic fatalities fell from 38 in 2015 to 33 in 2016. In July of 2016, we formed our Community Engagement Division (CED) to further our community outreach efforts. From July 1 through December 31, 2016, members of the department attended almost 750 events to meet with our residents. We will continue to work to further our outreach efforts, to ensure that we are accessible and open to every member of our community."

Chief J. Thomas Manger has been the Chief of Police in Montgomery County since February 2004. He began his law enforcement career in 1977 with the Fairfax County (Va.) Police Department. He rose through the ranks to become Chief of Police in 1998. In 2012, Chief Manger was inducted into the Montgomery

County Human Rights Hall of Fame. He is also President of the Major Cities Chiefs Association. You can contact the Chief directly via email at MCPDChief@montgomerycountymd.gov.

Montgomery County State's Attorney John McCarthy has increasingly focused his office's attention on gangs and youth violence in the County.

McCarthy and members of the MCDP recently asked council members for targeted resources to stem the tide of gang violence. A work group in the State's Attorney's Office determined the agency needs three more prosecutors to handle gang-related cases and two paralegals who could track the incidents and keep an eye on social media.

Many gang members use Facebook and other platforms as tools

MORE

October Program, cont.

for recruitment or intimidation, and the social media accounts are gold mines of information for authorities, McCarthy said. The state's attorney said authorities should reach out to students at middle and high schools to prevent criminal organizations from gaining a foothold there and called for changing Maryland statutes that make it difficult to prosecute gang-related crimes.

"We've had 18 dead people in the last two years. We've got a rising gang problem," McCarthy said. "We have to do something now, and what we're doing is not working." [Read more.]

McCarthy has also championed the County's Mental Health Courts. In a recent *Washington Post* opinion piece, he wrote, "It is tragic that our jails have become our nation's

largest mental-health treatment facilities. It's a public policy disaster resulting from a 90 percent reduction in U.S. psychiatric beds since deinstitutionalization began in the 1960s. Clearly, inadequate funding for community-based mental-health services has compounded the crisis. That's why the criminal-justice system is the default valve for many people who have mental illness, and why Montgomery County's new mental-health courts are in high demand. Mental-health courts divert from prosecution to treatment de-



fendants who are accused of low-level crimes such as vandalism, tres-

passing, disorderly conduct, theft or simple assault whose alleged offense is attributed to mental illness." [Read his letter to the editor.](#)

John McCarthy joined the State's Attorney's Office for Prince George's County in 1980 and 18 months later became a Public Defender in Montgomery County. He joined the State's Attorney's Office for Montgomery County in 1982. Before ascending to the position of State's Attorney in 2006, McCarthy served as Deputy State's Attorney in Montgomery County for 10 years. Prior to that, he had headed every major trial division in the office.

For information about crime statistics in Montgomery County, check out the [2016 Montgomery County Police Department Report on Crime and Safety.](#)

See the [online "crime map" for recent crime in Mont. County.](#) ■

The 'Future of Transportation' Comes to Montgomery Co. and Goes to Greenville, S.C.

By Jim Zepp, MCCF President

Much recent news coverage and private investment have involved various aspects of the development of self-driving vehicles. For example, Ford and Domino's Pizza have announced a project for the Ann Arbor area in Michigan to test the use of autonomous vehicles for pizza delivery. The customers will order pizzas that will be delivered via an autonomous vehicle to their location. By entering a PIN code on a keypad, customers unlock a hatch and receive their order.

Remarkably, on Sept. 6th, the U.S. House of Representatives unanimously [passed a bill to speed the development of self-driving vehicles](#) by setting goals for the quick establishment of national regulations and standards for these technolo-

gies. The bipartisan authors of a similar bill have announced their legislation will be introduced in the Senate during the first week of October and quick passage is expected to follow.

Considering the current rancor and divisiveness in Congress concerning the many competing issues for its attention, the display of universal support for hurrying the implementation of self-driving vehicles in this country may only be exceeded by the Congressional enthusiasm for a Happy Mothers' Day proclamation.



With the billions being spent on autonomous vehicle R&D, States and local governments around the country have rushed to promote themselves as sites for self-driving vehicle research and testing. In 2012, D.C. adopted legislation to allow licensing of self-driving vehicles. Florida,

[MORE](#)

Self-Driving Vehicles, cont.

Michigan, and New Jersey have developed or are promoting major national testing facilities. Virginia has been allowing testing on I-66. Maryland has created a commission to study the matter a year ago. On the other hand, Montgomery County has aggressively pursued large buses traveling on fixed routes and trains as its vision of the future for transportation.

Consequently, it was surprising to learn that Greenville County, S.C., (which has about half the population size and the median income level as Montgomery County has) is implementing an autonomous vehicle



project for public use. Starting as a service on the Clemson University campus, it could be expanded to adjacent neighborhoods. Two million dollars in private sector funding is leveraging project costs. A local City Councilman and a County Council Member have led the project's development.

Even more remarkable is that the vehicles being deployed were developed by Robotic Research, a company located here in Gaithersburg. Although looking not much more than a very large golf cart (shown at left), its capabilities are vastly more advanced.

At a Federal Highway Administration's Roadway Safety Peer Exchange program meeting, Rashmi Patel, a Robotic Research Senior Engineer, said the vehicle can adjust to multiple stops, while reading traffic signs, yield the right-of-way to other cars, and react to unpredictable behavior by other vehicles. It can also be programmed to react to a remote request from a potential rider using a smartphone app or kiosk.

In future phases, the vehicle might be used beyond the campus,

MORE

Self-Driving Vehicles, cont.

initially in adjacent neighborhoods and, eventually, in areas of downtown Greenville where the demand for public transportation is higher than the present supply.

"In West Greenville, we have neighborhoods where as many as 40 percent of the residents do not have dependable transportation," said Doug Webster, the chairman of the board at the Carolina Alliance 4 Innovation. "If we can provide a solution for that problem, then the community benefits."

Given the widespread implications for transportation and economic concerns and likely coming of this technology in the next few years, the MCCF will be keeping its members informed of important developments and opportunities for exploring new products and services in the County. ■

Heartbreaking: Child Sex Abuse in County School System

By Danila Sheveiko, Second Vice President

Investigations into numerous cases of child sex abuse in Montgomery County Public Schools are revealing the grim, ugly reality inside one of the nation's largest school districts. The latest case in the news is but one example in a vicious systemic cycle of abuse and cover-up for the abuse—a MCPS school security chief warned of inappropriate conduct, but kept in post, only to offend again—charged with sexually abusing a 17-year-old while working at Richard Montgomery High School, according to details that emerged in court last week. Even *The Washington Post* had to admit the security chief's "case appears to be the latest of several in which a Montgomery County school

system employee was admonished for repeated incidents of inappropriate behavior with students but stayed on the job and allegedly crossed the line again."

Earlier this month, a Circuit Court judge reconsidered the conviction of an Einstein High School teacher that plead guilty to sex abuse of a minor and sentenced on June 6th for using the "school system's computers to send lurid requests" to a teenage girl. The Parents' Coalition obtained audio from the sentencing hearing where the defense "attorney revealed what he considered to be a 'unique' situation in that the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Board of Education allowed Mr. Shemer to resign from his teaching position

MORE

Heartbreaking, cont.

after they completed their internal investigation of the allegations against him. That is, Mr. Shemer was not fired from his MCPS teaching position.”

Last June saw another conviction for sex abuse, this time of a Cloverly Elementary School teacher who was repeatedly caught fondling little girls and reprimanded going back to at least 2008. Top MCPS administrators all the way up to the Superintendent were informed in writing as far back as 2013, but did these mandated reporters call Child Protective Services or Montgomery County Police? Instead, our elected Montgomery County Board of Education members allowed the man to teach until his arrest last year when five former students accused him of touching their private parts

and worse. He was allowed to teach despite warnings from State officials that “teachers should be removed from contact with students after repeated and ‘obvious inappropriate’ behavior.” According to testimony at trial, three of the four victims were abused after the reprimand.

These are just some of the cases that took place in Montgomery County after admonitions by State Board of Education that urged local school officials to comb through their personnel files to identify employees with worrisome patterns of behavior back in 2012, when a Kemp Mill Elementary School teacher was terminated for misconduct, ending a pattern of abuse that “occurred over and over again for seventeen years.”

Five years later—as the examples above painfully illustrate—no lessons have been learned by MCPS and County officials. What hap-

pened to Melissa Brunson, the Cloverly Principal who repeatedly failed to report the abuse to the Department of Social Services and instead assigned the sexual predator to teach even younger students? Ms. Brunson still has her job as Principal. What happened to appointed and elected officials who were covering up the abuse? Superintendent Joshua Starr was allowed to resign and is now “having a lot of fun, writing a lot, speaking a lot.” Superintendent Smith is still at the helm of MCPS, and even got a \$15,000 raise earlier this month above his \$275,000 salary negotiated last year.

The County’s Board of Education, an elected body, failed to act five years ago, just like its currently elected members have been failing to act since then, choosing instead

MORE

Heartbreaking, cont.

to busy themselves with re-election campaign cocktail parties. With no accountability forthcoming from the Board, or the County Council’s Education Committee, a 12-year-old girl is now seeking justice in the courts, alleging that MCPS officials violated federal laws establishing a student’s right to freedom from sexual harassment and abuse.

Repeated failure to report the abuse to County and State authorities, failure to comply with laws and guidelines, inadequate system-wide procedures and repeated failure to follow them paint a picture of blatant MCPS unaccountability reminiscent of the Catholic Church sex abuse scandals still rocking the nation on the sidelines of mass media coverage. Just like the Baltimore Archdiocese that is still declining to

make documents public related to the late priest at the center of “The Keepers” Netflix documentary because “the request wouldn’t provide clarity and closure petitioners are seeking,” Montgomery County’s school system is still refusing to list all known abusers and list every school/program they were involved with.

Last month, the Parents’ Coalition picked up a call to action by child safety advocate Jennifer Alvaro to accomplish just that—make MCPS publish the list. But how do we take to account a quasi-state government agency that routinely stonewalls public information requests and whose employees are not covered by State whistleblower laws? ■

CIVIC FED TONIGHT!

SEEKING POSSIBLE SPEAKERS FOR YOUR CIVIC ASSOCIATION MEETINGS?

Members of the MCCF Executive Committee have extensive experience in issues such as transportation, land use and zoning, schools, parks, environmental concerns, taxes, and public spending. Plus, they have a community-oriented perspective on these matters. If you would like an executive committee member to speak at a meeting, contact President Jim Zepp at [president at montgomerycivic dot org](mailto:president@montgomerycivic.org). Include topics/possible dates.

Civic Assns. Letter to Ike Leggett About Advance Notice of Purple Line Construction

September 27, 2017

The Honorable Isiah Leggett
Montgomery County Executive
101 Monroe Street
Rockville, MD 20850
*Re: MTA-PLTP Failure to Provide
Prior Notice of Purple Line-Related
Construction Activities*

Dear County Executive Leggett:

We are writing on behalf of six civic associations in Silver Spring—Sligo Branview, Seven Oaks-Evanwood, Park Hills, Rosemary Hills, Lyttonsville, and North Woodside—which are very concerned about the failure of the Maryland Transit Administration and the Purple Line concessionaire to meet with our neighbors about Purple Line developments and to provide suf-

ficient advance notice of Purple Line construction-related activities that adversely affect our neighborhoods.

This is to request your direct intervention to require that MTA and PLTP timely inform residents in our communities, in advance of planned construction-related actions in those affected neighborhoods.

MTA/PLTP have not done this.

As a result, our neighbors are becoming agitated, anxious, and, for some, hostile to what could otherwise have been a routine, minor annoyance surrounding construction activity.

The Purple Line contractors commenced pre-construction work in earnest almost two months ago. The Purple Line will travel directly through our neighborhoods (often in mixed traffic). As a consequence,

much of the activity is adjacent to residences and on frequently traveled thoroughfares.

The activities to date have involved marking properties for utility repositioning and easements, cutting down trees, demolishing expropriated buildings, altering traffic markings, and additional minor, yet highly visible actions.

While all these activities were expected, we did not foresee the inadequate prior notification and communication with residents. In fact, we had sought and had received assurances that there would be timely advance notification and regular engagement with communities along the alignment.

While, in some instances, PLTP has duly mailed or distributed flyers

MORE

Purple Line Letter, cont.

to residents living directly adjacent to some of these activity locations, it has not done so consistently, nor has it provided advance notice to the communities in which these activities are taking place.

We contacted MTA to request community meetings to make some visible effort to adequately inform residents as to what to expect, where, and when. MTA informed us that neither it nor PLTP would participate in such meetings at this time, while work will proceed “as planned.”

MTA informed us that the CATs (community advisory teams) are to be constituted “soon” and that is to be the forum for two-way exchange of information. Such a response is totally unacceptable.

First, the MTA has had months,

if not years, to stand up the CATs, and they have done nothing in that regard. The latest news is that, while they hope to have the first CAT meetings before November, contractors will continue work in our neighborhoods in the interim.

Second, in East Silver Spring, where a great deal of activity will take place in the center of the neighborhoods, community meetings are essential for residents and business to have their voices heard and listened to.

Third, procedures need to be put in place now for our communities, via their civic associations, to be provided timely information listing all activities to take place in the short term (for example, for the following month or two).

To be clear, we are not demanding a halt or slowdown in implementation of purple line activities.

Rather, we are insisting on prior notice and community meetings, starting now, not at some indeterminate point in the future.

We request your timely intervention with MTA to ensure these requirements are instituted immediately. If you believe a meeting between civic reps and MTA/PLTP would facilitate timely implementation of these measures, we would happily oblige.

Thank you for your immediate assistance in this matter.

■ Rebecca Lavash, President, Sligo Branview Citizens Association

■ Chris Richardson, President, Park Hills Civic Association

■ Michael Bufalini, President, Seven Oaks-Evanwood Citizens Association

■ Charlotte Coffield, President,

MORE

SOMETHING TO TALK ABOUT?

Need to share a community concern?

Want to know how to do something for your association?

Would like to meet your fellow civic activists?

Come early to the October 9th meeting. From 7:00 to 7:45 p.m., members of the MCCF Executive Committee will be available to talk in the EOB Auditorium. Light refreshments will keep you from going hungry. Be social, be a part of the civic movement, and be here.

Purple Line Letter, cont.

Lyttonsville Community Civic Association

■ Geoff Gerhardt, President, North Woodside Citizens Association

■ Mark Mendez, President, Rosemary Hills Neighborhood Association

cc:

■ Hon. Roger Berliner, President, Montgomery County Council

■ Hon. Nancy Floreen, Montgomery County Council

■ Hon. Tom Hucker, Montgomery County Council

■ Hon. George Leventhal, Montgomery County Council

■ Hon. Marc Elrich, Montgomery County Council

■ Hon. Hans Riemer, Montgomery County Council

■ Hon. Jamie Raskin, U.S. Congress

■ Hon. William C. Smith, Jr., Maryland State Senate

■ Hon. David Moon, Maryland House of Delegates

■ Hon. Jheanelle Wilkins, Maryland House of Delegates

■ Hon. Nancy King, Chair, Montgomery County Senate Delegation

■ Hon. Shane Robinson, Chair, Montgomery County House Delegation

■ Casey Anderson, Montgomery County Planning Board

■ Al Roshdieh, Director, Montgomery County Dept. of Transportation

■ Pete Rahn, Secretary, Maryland Dept. of Transportation

■ Mike Madden, Project Director Purple Line

■ Robert Chappell, Project Manager, PLTP LLC

■ Mitch Lester, President, Purple Line Transit Constructors ■

Gordie Brenne Testifies on Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission's 2019 Budget

By Gordie Brenne, V.P. Montgomery County Taxpayers League Coalition

[Brenne testified on behalf of the Coalition about WSSC's looming solvency crisis and budget impacts on September 26, 2017.]

Normally, this hearing would address Spending Affordability Guidelines in the context of operating cost inflation, capital spending plans and associated debt increases, and revenue projections. Our Coalition thinks that WSSC's impending insolvency will require a taxpayer bailout if they don't get the nine percent rate increases calculated by the Cost Service (COS) study consultants, or implement significant cost reductions and new revenue sources. Emergency action by the two Councils is needed.

The pending decision about

WSSC's new rate structure also makes this a special year for decision making. The attached chart (compiled by our coalition partner Sue LaCourse, [next page](#)) shows WSSC rates are the highest in the region, even though many of our neighbors also have old pipes. Rates would remain the highest under either the proposed new revenue-neutral tiered or uniform rates.

WSSC has tried to justify high rates using a conservation argument. This is nothing more than a fig leaf. No study has been done showing how the price inelasticity of demand and widely different customer marginal costs would change to yield increased conservation. (The national trend of reduced consumption is the consequence of customer conversions to more efficient water

appliances, not lower demand).

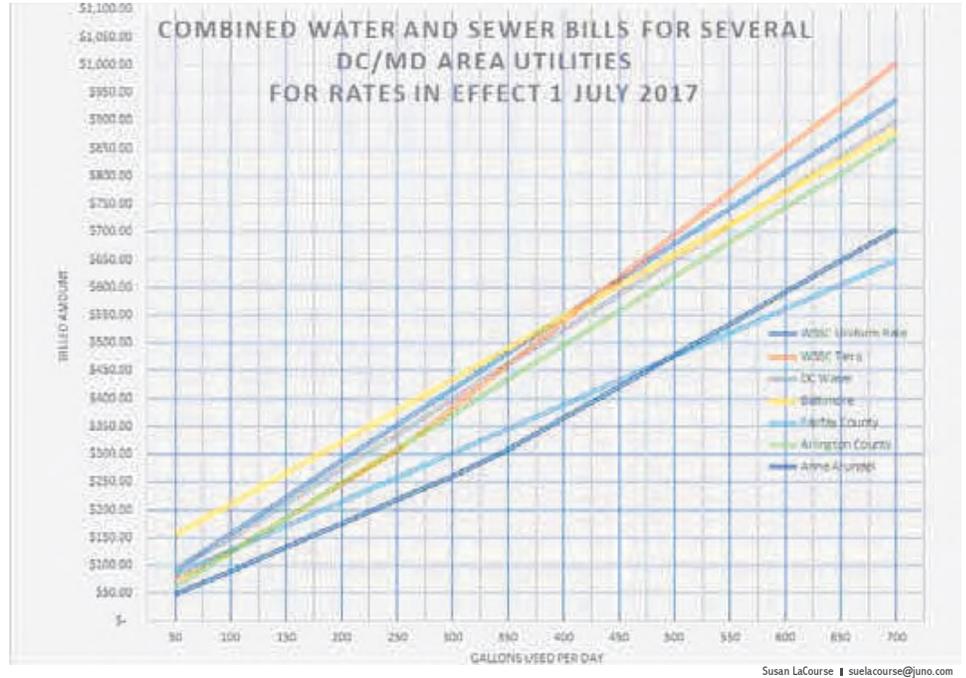
Why are WSSC rates so high? WSSC has been poorly managed, with divided governance, and has bloated costs and weak revenue controls. Think about it: The COS study is a standard practice, yet was only done because of a court order. Last year's decision to limit the rate increase to three percent was a test to see if WSSC could break the cycle of above-inflation rate increases and come up with new cost controls. They didn't, and have yet to announce plans to control operating and debt costs. In our May testimony, we outlined cost and revenue strategies (attached) that would reduce the proposed uniform rate from \$14.23/Kg to a more competitive \$11.53/Kg.

It is time for you to impose

WSSC Testimony, cont.

extraordinary regulatory controls on WSSC. Our analysis (summary follows) uses projections in the COS Study (Tables 11 and 19) to show WSSC will become insolvent by 2023 or sooner, and require a taxpayer bailout (using their ad valorem tax authority) unless nine percent rate increases are approved.

The Taxpayers League recommends the Councils sponsor an independent study to determine how to best address solvency and governance issues before the budget is approved next spring (see attachment). Either do this at the county level or ask our state delegation to convene a task force, as we did in 1998 when WSSCs debt service ratio reached high levels similar to the 45.5 percent we project using COS data. In the meantime, please limit



WSSC to no rate increase until the independent study is completed and

recommendations are adopted.

MORE

WSSC Testimony, cont.

WSSC Solvency and Governance Issues

Montgomery Co. Taxpayers League Coalition [Summary Analysis]

1. SOLVENCY—WEAK CAPITAL INVESTMENT, OPERATING COST AND REVENUE CONTROLS

a. Debt Service. The biggest cost driver of rate increases per COS (Tables 11, 19) and we project the debt service ratio will be 45.5 percent by 2023 unless ROI controls are implemented or excessive rate increases approved. Excessive labor positions in engineering, management, and IT are also a problem according to benchmarking report (pg. 12).

b. Working Capital. Reserves to pay unexpected bills are wiped-out in FY'19 for water, and FY'22 for sewer without nine percent rate

increases based on COS (Tables 11, 19).

c. High Rates Due to Falling Consumption and Falling Developer Revenues Add More Rate Pressure. [This is a] vicious circle with high costs and falling revenues driving rates ever higher (developer revenues drop another 13 percent in FY'18 (Budget Table III, FFBC and hookups).

d. High Nonrevenue Capacity Costs. Only 68 percent of combined water and sewer capacity generates revenue per Water Loss audit (2016, 17.9 percent) and COS sewer I/I @43 percent, (pg. 33). There are no strategies in capital plan to fix this.

2. GOVERNANCE—LIMITED ACCOUNTABILITY AND CONTROL

a. Commission and Council Expertise and Process. Lack of

industry expertise in Commission that approves budget, management, and operating policies; Spending Affordability Guidelines don't evaluate ROI of capital spending, and PSC leaves this up to the Counties.

b. Laws. Current default budget law for WSSC request may conflict with PSC rate decisions; no statutory enforcement standards for working capital and debt service coverage reinforce status quo.

c. Incentives. No management incentives for improved revenues and cost controls.

d. In-Bred Capital Project Consultants. Over-dependence on long standing consultants for evaluating capital projects (e.g., Black and Veatch advised on \$150M water tunnel, but did not update last demand analysis it did in 2001, and curiously was selected to complete recent Cost of Service study). ■

Volunteers Needed for 2018 MCCF Awards Event

The Civic Federation's Annual Awards event will be in May 2018. More details on the event will follow in future newsletters.

We need volunteers to help coordinate the event as well as volunteers to serve on the Awards Selection Committee. The work of the Awards Selection Committee includes accepting nominations for award recipients, evaluating those nominations, and making final recommendations on the awardees. The work should be of short duration and may be done largely by phone. If you would like to help with the event and/or the committee, please let us know. Please also start thinking now about individuals and/or groups you would like to nominate for the following awards:

■ **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 Civic Federation and awarded to a Delegate or Committee of the Federation for outstanding public service on behalf of Montgomery County.

If you can help with the Event and/or Selection Committee or have a award nomination, please contact Jim Zepp: president AT montgomerycivic.org. We cannot do this without your help! ■

Upcoming Planning Meetings of Interest

Public Informational Meeting on Small Cell Towers in Residential Zones Legislation

■ Monday, October 23, 7:00 p.m., County Council Hearing Room, Rockville. [More info here](#) and [here](#).

Veirs Mill Road Corridor Master Plan

■ Wed., October 4, 7:00 p.m. Public Meeting with Planning Department, Newport Mill Middle School

■ Tuesday, October 24, 7:00 p.m. Public Meeting with Planning Department, Newport Mill Middle School

MARC Rail Communities Plan

■ Thursday, October 5, 7:00 p.m. Public Meeting with Planning De-

MORE

Planning Meetings, cont.

partment, Upcounty Regional Services Center

White Flint 2 Sector Plan

■ Monday, October 9, 2:00 p.m. PHED Committee worksession, County Council Office Building

■ Monday, October 23, 2:00 p.m. PHED Committee worksession, County Council Office Building

■ Monday, October 30, 2:00 p.m. PHED Committee worksession, County Council Office Building

Grosvenor-Strathmore Metro Area Minor Master Plan

■ Tuesday, October 24, 7:30 p.m., County Council Public Hearing

■ Monday, November 6, 2:00 p.m., PHED Committee worksession, County Council Office Building

■ Monday, November 13, 2:00 p.m., PHED Committee worksession, County Council Office Building.

Forest Glen and Montgomery Hills Neighborhood Plan

■ Tuesday, October 17, 6:30 p.m., First Public Kickoff meeting. Planning Department, 8787 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring.

Master Plan of Highways and Transitways

■ Tuesday, October 10, 7:00 p.m. Public Meeting with Planning Department, Marilyn Praisner Library, Burtonsville. ■

Five Reasons to Join (or Re-join) the Civic Federation

There are lots of reasons for your HOA or Civic Association to join (or rejoin) the Montgomery County Civic Federation. Here are five of them:

1. There is strength in numbers. When neighbors contest plans or projects that would negatively impact their community, their input is often disparaged as merely "Nimbyism." When the Civic Federation comments on proposed plans or regulations, we do so representing communities across the County, clearly demonstrating that the issues are of countywide significance.

2. Knowledge. Federation delegates and Executive Committee

MORE

Five Reasons to Join, cont.

members have an unparalleled breadth and depth of knowledge about issues and County government. Trying to understand arcane zoning regulations? We have folks that can help with that. Need to file a Maryland Public Information Act request but don't know how to get started? Civic Fed has plenty of example requests.

3. Information. Civic Federation monthly programs feature experts discussing critical issues and provide successful policy examples from other jurisdictions. Our web page and newsletter help you and your community to stay on top of current policy debates.

4. Impactful Ideas. Civic Federation proposals have an impact.

For example, we called for increased legislative oversight of independent agencies, and new state legislation was passed creating an Office of the Inspector General in the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC).

5. Wisdom of the Crowd. Most civics and homeowner associations experience similar organizational issues, such as "How can we get better attendance at our meetings?" and "What should our bylaws cover?" The Federation membership is a rich resource of tips and tricks that have worked for other communities. ■



Notes on Autumn Bicycling

By Peggy Dennis, Transportation Committee Member

Autumn is a great time to try bicycling if you've never done it, or take it up again if it's been too long and you feel anxious about getting out on our trails and roads.

The Washington Area Bicyclist Association runs classes for adults who have never ridden a bike and want to start now. "Learn to Ride" takes students through a progressive curriculum, with the goal of riding with two pedals by the end of the session. A bike and helmet are included with your registration. October classes are mostly in D.C. and Arlington, but there is one on Saturday, October 22, in Greenbelt. WABA also conducts Everyday Biking Seminars, City Cycling, Family

MORE

Bicycling, cont.

Bicycling, and Community Rides. Complete information and class schedules are on [the WABA website](#).

A wonderful way to test your skills and enjoy a couple hours stress-free in our own C&O Canal National Historic Park is to stop by the Bike Loaner Program at the Old Tavern at Great Falls. You can have your pick of a variety of different bikes and helmets to ride along the tow path for two hours at no charge. The mechanics at the BLP will also do a safety check and repairs on your bike if you just take it to them. The volunteers are a wonderful bunch!

BICYCLE MASTER PLAN STATUS

Planning staff have reviewed more than 1,500 comments and have made changes to the preliminary bikeway network that was available

for comment in June and July. The draft plan should be presented to the Planning Board by the end of the year. At that point, it will be neces-

sary for each neighborhood to see what recommendations are made and how those changes will affect the neighborhood. ■

Minutes of the June 12th, 2017, Meeting #886

By Danila Sheveiko, Recording Secretary

Call to Order: President Jim Zepp called the 886th session to order at 7:48 p.m. Introductions followed.

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

Minutes: The May 8, 2017, general meeting minutes were approved by affirmation.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Jerry Garson reported net loss for

period of \$986.73 and a bank balance of \$10,535.13. Copies of the Treasurer's report are available upon request.

PROGRAM

The June program focused on the Council's proposal to eliminate public notice and hearings for placement of "small" cell towers in residential zones. Zoning Text Amendment 16-05 would eliminate public hearings for these towers in 11 residential zones and allow the cell towers in six residential zones where they are not currently permit-

MORE

June Minutes, cont.

ted at all. These new poles would be placed in the right-of-way in front of residences; setbacks from residences were proposed to decrease from 60 to 30 feet. “Small” cell towers are not very small since they can be anywhere from 30–40 feet when including the multiple antennas, so preservation of due process for residents is important. In addition, there is no requirement that the tower applicant demonstrate that a significant gap in the coverage or capacity exists such that users are regularly unable to connect to the service network or are regularly unable to maintain a connection.

The program featured a discussion with the County’s point person for these issues, Mitsuko Herrera. Ms. Herrera is the Program Director for ultraMontgomery in the Mont-

gomery County Department of Technology Services. She also serves on the FCC Consumer Advisory Committee representing the National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors. Why do we need more antennas? Improved stream of video on mobile devices. 4G requires densification. 5G antennas need to be closer to devices. What is a “small” cell? The Federal Communications Commission has not updated the rules since 1996. County cannot prohibit service.

There is a lot of opposition to the bill. This is not just a zoning problem. Application fees are subsidized by the taxpayer. AT&T is ripping out the land lines ahead of schedule.

Disconnect: The Truth about Cell Phone Radiation, by Dr. Devra Lee Davis forms the foundation for policy changes in Canada, Israel, and elsewhere.

County resident Sue Present, who has been tracking these issues and wrote a four-part series in the MCCF newsletter, discussed how the process and the proposed ZTA should be improved.

Theodora Scarato from the Environmental Health Trust presented information about the health effects of the towers.

All of the presentations and information on the County’s proposals are on [the MCCF Website](#).

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Transportation

■ The County’s proposals for BRT continue with Route 29 and Route 355. Residents have requested limited stop services which provide the same level of service at much less impact and cost than the BRT proposals. The County will imple-

MORE

June Minutes, cont.

ment such a service on Route 355 in October.

■ Labor Day set mid-day traffic records.

■ WMATA is cutting services.

■ The Civic Federation has proposed to make Ride On bus service free, as it would only cost \$23 million and provide equal access for all, decrease boarding time, and reduce maintenance costs.

■ WMATA has been accused of falsifying maintenance reports. [See the June 2017 newsletter for a detailed report from the Transportation Committee.](#)

Planning and Land Use

■ County Council hearing for the Short-Term Rentals “Airbnb” bills set for July 18th.

Public Finance

■ An update to the MCCF online tax calculator has not been released this year because, for the first time ever, the SDAT mailed notices to property owners whose income was low enough to potentially qualify them for the Homeowner’s Tax Credit. Unfortunately, due to a quirk in the new law that required this notification, the notices were sent only to moderate- and low-income homeowners whose houses were assessed at under \$300,000, even though higher-valued properties would qualify. This will hopefully be fixed in the next legislative session.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 9:50 p.m. ■

Minutes of the September 11th, 2017, Meeting #887

By Danila Sheveiko, 2nd Vice President

Call to Order: President Jim Zepp called the 887th session to order at 7:46 p.m. Introductions followed.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

■ **Free Shredding and Electronic Recycling** on Saturday, October 14 at McEneaney Associates, 4315 50th St., NW, Washington, DC 20016.

■ **Turning A New Leaf Conservation Landscaping Conference** on November 3rd at Dulles Hilton—Presentations from industry leaders, innovators, and experts; Eco-

MORE

September Minutes, cont.

Marketplace where businesses can market their products and services; and multiple networking opportunities for attendees to discuss current projects and new ideas.

■ **Public hearing for the “Airbnb” bills** [Zoning Text Amendment 17-03, Accessory Residential Uses—Short-term Rentals, and Bill 2-16, Transient Housing—Licensing and Registration] will be held on Sept. 12th at 7:30 p.m. at the County Council Building in Rockville.

■ The Planning Department is launching a series of public meetings on the County Master Plan of Highways and Transitways. Stay up-to-date by [signing up for their newsletter here](#).

■ **Equifax credit reporting agency data breach may have affected 143 million customers.**

■ Marian Fryer, the unofficial “Mayor of Wheaton” and leader of the Wheaton Citizen’s Coalition, passed away after prolonged illness.

Treasurer’s Report: Treasurer Jerry Garson reported net income for period of \$375.00 and a bank balance of \$11,125.00. Copies of the Treasurer’s report are available upon request.

PROGRAM

The **September program** focused on possible changes to the Montgomery County Charter and a preview of the 2018 Legislative Session of the Maryland General Assembly in Annapolis, and featured guests Dr. Sharon T. Freeman, Vice Chair of the County’s Charter Review Commission, Maryland State Senator Will Smith (D20), and Maryland State Delegate Marc Korman (D16).

The Charter Review Commission will meet on September 20th to discuss possible changes to the make-up of the County Council and easing of requirements to raise taxes beyond the limit currently specified in the Charter. It is unclear how these items of discussion made it to the Commission’s agenda.

County residents are represented by 24 State Delegates and eight State Senators, but only nine County Councilmembers. How can we improve referendum access to the ballot line? **Question C on the November 2nd, 2004, election ballot** asked to amend the Charter to eliminate at-large Council seats and was defeated. The Charter Review Commission was asked to go beyond personal opinions and base their decisions on experience from other jurisdictions, especially those that

MORE

September Minutes, cont.

have both at-large seats and a public election financing system similar to the one recently instituted in Montgomery County. Civic Federation Delegates voiced concerns about the property tax limit and the Commission’s meeting times of 8:00 a.m. that make it hard for the public to participate. The Commission will be holding a public hearing on October 18th at 7:00 p.m. where residents can share their thoughts with the Commission on the composition of the County Council or any other **Charter issues**.

Senator Smith and Delegate Korman updated the Federation on legislative accomplishments and priorities in Annapolis, including the **Trust Act**, the **Truth in Sentencing legislation**, and the need to override **Governor Hogan’s veto of paid sick**

leave legislation.

Maryland faces a potential shortfall of \$742 million for next year’s budget. The Maryland House of Delegates has six committees and the Senate five. The State is dependent on federal spending.

Maryland’s Renewable Portfolio Standard needs to be responsibly updated.

Legislation to end rapists’ parental rights died for the ninth time.

Why is Maryland behind West Virginia and Kentucky on industrial hemp legalization? Where is the accountability in the public sector?

Why is the State of Maryland paying \$320 million a year in fees to manage pension funds that underperform the market?

A lot of taxpayer money is spent by **special districts**, a type of government agency that exist outside of traditional forms of general purpose

local or state governments, and serve key governmental functions such as public transit, education, or housing. Nationwide, there are more than 38,000 special districts, many of them charged with fulfilling key government functions, that spend more than \$200 billion annually.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Planning and Land Use

■ **Public hearing for the “Airbnb” bills** set for September 12th.

■ County is holding community meetings to discuss the **proposed small cell phone tower ZTA** on September 18th at the Silver Spring Civic Center and September 19th at the Montgomery College Germantown Campus. Neighborhood streetlights and telephone poles could have mini cell towers added to them without public notice and public hearing.

MORE

September Minutes, cont.

See [articles in our September newsletter](#) for more information.

Transportation:

█ **Ride On extRa** to start on Route 355 Rockville Pike on October 2nd, providing express service between the Lakeforest Transit Center and the Medical Center Metro Station. Ride On extRa will be free for all riders during the month of October.

█ State begins the **\$100 million I-270 project to relieve congestion**.

█ WMATA establishes **Metrobus service between Alexandria, Va., and National Harbor, Md.**, with developers contributing \$500,000 annually to maintain the route.

█ **Montgomery County is allocating millions for the Bus Rapid Transit system.**

Public Finance

█ County economic growth has been flat over 11 years with loss of private sector jobs offset by government sector expansion.

Utilities

█ Civic Federation should encourage WSSC to ask for a direct drinking water pipeline from the Randolph Jennings Reservoir in West Virginia.

Education

█ Child safety advocate Jennifer Alvaro and the Parents' Coalition are calling for the Montgomery County Board of Education to add a **Web page that lists all known abusers and lists every school and program that each were involved with.**

█ **A \$15,000 salary bump has been approved for the Superintendent of Montgomery County Public Schools,**

increasing annual compensation to \$290,000.

Environment

█ Join the **UDC Justice Café** on October 2nd, 6–10 p.m. at the Firebird Inn to support environmental and social justice activists and organizations.

█ The 2012 International Green Construction Code is being adopted by the County Council claiming sustainability gains like water conservation and energy use reduction **while deleting those chapters from the base Code.**

█ After a year of stonewalling the Civic Federation's MPIA requests for documents affirming the safety of artificial turf fields at County high schools, MCPS did admit in writing in response to a letter from Councilmember Marc Elrich, admitting that

MORE

Minutes of the July 27th, 2017, Executive Committee Meeting, MCCF

By Danila Sheveiko, Second Vice President

The Executive Committee (Ex-Comm) convened at the home of MCCF Treasurer Jerry Garson.

Call to Order: Jim Zepp, President, called the meeting to order at 7:55 p.m. Present (left to right in photo): Harriet Quinn, Jerry Gar-



son, Danila Sheveiko, Bailey Con-drey, Jacquie Bokow, Alan Bowser, Carole Ann Barth, and Jim Zepp. Shruti Bhatnagar took the photo.

Adoption of Meeting Agenda:

Jim Zepp called for and received unanimous approval of the proposed agenda.

Approval of Minutes for May 18th ExComm Meeting: Jim

Zepp called for and received unanimous approval of the minutes.

Treasurer's Report: Jerry Garson reported a net loss of \$771.41 for the period, and a bank balance of \$10,880.45.

ISSUES DISCUSSED

The meeting focused on planning of general session programs

MORE

September Minutes, cont.

they “do not have detailed, consistent testing practices or records” for the mandatory annual concussion safety tests.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 9:52 p.m. █

July ExComm Mtg., cont.

for the upcoming membership year. The following tentative program topics have been agreed upon for the calendar:

■ September: Annapolis Legislative Update and the County Charter Review Commission.

■ October: Public Safety

■ November: Transportation

■ December: Planning/Growth

■ January: Education and MCPS Budget

■ February: Government Transparency and Accountability

■ March: State of the County's Environment

■ April: County Budget

■ May: Annual Awards Ceremony

■ June: The unPROGRAM.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Nominations

■ MCCF is still looking for a Recording Secretary to serve the 2017-2018 year term.

NEW BUSINESS

■ Newsletter deadline and articles Saturday, August 26th at 6:00 p.m. to Jacquie Bokow at civicednews@montgomerycivic.org.

■ Date and location of next ExComm meeting: September 21st via teleconference 7:45 p.m.–9:45 p.m.

Adjournment: Jim called for and received unanimous approval for adjournment at 9:58 p.m. ■

Montgomery County Civic Federation

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Send all address corrections to membership AT montgomerycivic.org.

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