

June Program: Announcing MCCF's 2021 Awardees | Read about each of the winners:

■ Wayne Goldstein Award: *The Montgomery County Climate Action Plan Coalition* | **P. 3**

■ Sentinel Award: *The Thrive Montgomery 2050 Neighborhood Coalition* and *The Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights* | **P. 4**

■ Star Cup: *Louis Wilen* | **P. 6**

MoCo Reopening | Fifty percent of County residents have received all required vaccine doses | **P. 8**

Why Adopt a Road? | Peggy Dennis writes about picking up trash along Falls Road in Potomac and why you should volunteer | **P. 10**

Saving History Before It Crumbles Away | The Montgomery County Historical Society seeks to digitize old issues of the *Gazette* and *Sentinel* newspapers | **P. 11**

County Budget Approved | The County Council approved the FY22 operating budget and amendments to the FY21–26 CIP | **P. 13**

Opinion: Thoughts on Attainable Housing | The substance and the process | **P. 25**

Commission on Redistricting Meets June 9 | Voters amended MoCo Charter to increase council districts to eleven | **P. 30**

TO PRINT, USE PRINT VERSION

of note

Next MCCF Meeting #924

June 14, 2021, 7:30 p.m. *online via Zoom*. Topic: Annual Awards Program

■ **Join the Zoom Meeting Here**
[See further instructions on page 2. No password is required.]

AGENDA, P. 2 • PROGRAM, P. 3

Meeting Minutes

May 10 General Meeting #923 **P. 31**

May 20 Executive Committee **P. 34**

Membership Application

Join or Renew Now **SEE FORM**

Federation Meeting #924

Monday, June 14, 2021

7:30 p.m.

Online Zoom Meeting

AGENDA

1. Call to Order/Introductions
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Approval of Minutes: May 10 General Meeting **P.30**
4. Treasurer's Report
5. Announcements
6. June Program: Annual Awards Celebration **P.3**
7. Committee Reports
8. Old Business
9. New Business
10. 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. **So note time change!**

The June 14 meeting will be held online via Zoom (see page 3 for program) at 7:30 p.m.:

■ To be part of the video conference, download the Zoom **Zoom Client for Meetings here**.

■ Meeting Name: "MCCF Monthly Meeting."

■ Date and Time: June 14, 2021, 7:30 p.m. Eastern Time.

■ To **join the Zoom meeting from your browser, use this link**.

■ To participate by phone (audio only), call 301.715.8592. The meeting ID is 867 9838 7029. No password should be required.

We hope you will join us! ■

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 35

June Program: Announcing This Year's Montgomery County Civic Federation Awardees

The Montgomery County Civic Federation is pleased to announce its 2021 Awardees for the The Wayne Goldstein Award, The Sentinel Award, and The Star Cup. The Awards will be presented on June 14, 2021, at the June General Meeting of the Civic Federation.

THE WAYNE GOLDSTEIN AWARD Montgomery County Climate Action Plan Coalition

The Wayne Goldstein Award (formerly known as the Gazette Award and the Journal Cup) recognizes outstanding public service contributions by an individual or group in Montgomery County. This year, the Wayne Goldstein Award is presented to the Montgomery County's Climate Action Plan Coalition.

The Montgomery County Climate

Action Plan Coalition is a newly formed group of organizations in the County that came together to identify the strengths and challenges in the County's draft Climate Action Plan, and to work collaboratively on the next steps to restore a safe climate for the County's residents.

The Coalition represents organizations and groups with thousands of members in the County, advocating for climate action, racial justice and social equity, environmental protection and conservation, food justice, public health and more. While they represent a diverse set of priorities and expertise, they agree on the central concern that climate change is an emergency and must be addressed immediately with bold action.

In its communications to the

County Executive, the Coalition urged the Elrich Administration to recognize that climate change is an emergency situation that needs urgent action and that the finalized Climate Action Plan needs to be effective, forward-thinking, and nation-leading, calling on the government to lay out an implementation roadmap and a path forward to achieve the goals of the County's Climate Emergency Mobilization Resolution.

The Coalition has emphasized a climate agenda that reduces greenhouse gas emissions from Transportation, buildings, and residences, but also takes effective action on adaptation and the sequestration of carbon. They have also called for an aggressive outreach program to immedi-

MORE

June Awardees, cont.

ately engage Black, indigenous and people of color communities, labor, and other groups as active partners and decision makers in the climate action plan.

The Montgomery County Civic Federation recognizes the significant collective work of many Montgomery County residents and organizations to highlight the crisis of global climate change and the responsibility of the Montgomery County Government to promote adaptation, environmental sustainability, and the reduction of greenhouse gasses in our communities.

THE SENTINEL AWARD The Thrive 2050 Neighborhood Coalition and The Citizens Coordinating Committee of Friendship Heights

The Sentinel Award is given to an individual or group, typically outside of government, for a significant contribution to "good government" at the local level. While this past year is filled with many inspiring examples of residents coming together and contributing much to their communities, this year, the Sentinel Award is presented to both the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Neighborhood Coalition and the Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights for their work in researching, analyzing, critiquing, and recommending improvements to the Thrive Montgomery 2050 draft General Plan.

The Thrive Montgomery 2050 Neighborhood Coalition (or "Coalition")

What started out as general conversations and questions about

Thrive Montgomery 2050 amongst friends and neighbors led to the connection of 26 incorporated municipalities and community organizations representing over 40,000 voters across Montgomery County. The Coalition's intent was to gather details and share ideas on the draft General Plan's proposed policies. The Coalition supports many of the principles of the draft General Plan, including economic competitiveness and equity, affordable and attainable housing, inclusive and socially connected communities, environmental sustainability and resiliency, and walkable communities. However, as the General Plan will form the basis for long-term large-scale community development and redevelopment, the Coalition has communicated that careful attention should be paid to:

■ Mandating the use of the master

MORE

June Awardees, cont.

and sector planning processes to specify zoning changes in order to achieve public buy-in and to avoid a one-size-fits-all approach;

■ Reinstating the concept and value of compatibility as a means of ensuring that such change enhances community physical characteristics for all residents—new and existing;

■ Including detailed strategies for how affordable and attainable housing can be created through adaptive reuse and other means;

■ Reinstating a chapter on economic competitiveness in recognition that a holistic vision must reverse current shortcomings in jobs and wages;

■ Including more robust funding methods for needed infrastructure;

■ Discussing how the evolution from a car-centric to transit-centric

society will be staged and differentiated across the diverse communities of the county; and

■ Requiring a five-year review to document results and impacts.

The Coalition has thoroughly reviewed materials, gathered feedback, and provided detailed suggestions to the Planning Department, Planning Board, and County Council on the draft General Plan. The Montgomery County Civic Federation commends the valuable work of the Thrive 2050 Neighborhood Coalition and the important contribution it has made to improving the draft Plan on behalf of the County's residents.

The Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights

The Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friendship Heights (CCCFH) is a coalition of 21 neigh-

borhood associations and towns working together on issues affecting its neighborhoods, which are located along Wisconsin Avenue, River Road, and Massachusetts Avenue near its border with the District of Columbia. The CCCFH has reviewed and critiqued Montgomery County's draft General Plan, Thrive Montgomery 2050, and has shared its concerns with residents, neighborhood associations, and elected officials. The CCCFH has had longstanding concerns with the speed with which the draft Plan has been developed and the insufficiency of the government's community engagement process during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A main thrust of the Plan is to increase housing density by allowing construction as of right, without Planning Board review or neigh-

MORE

June Awardees, cont.

borhood input, of buildings—such as duplexes, triplexes, and quadplexes—in neighborhoods zoned for single-family detached homes. Although once proposed as a means to provide more affordable housing, county planning officials have now conceded such housing instead will rent or sell at expensive market rates. There is no requirement or funding for adequate public services that the increased density will require and no requirement for design compatibility with other housing in the neighborhood. CCCFH is also concerned with other aspects of the Plan that are underfunded, impractical, or require more public scrutiny before implementation.

The Montgomery County Civic Federation recognizes the Citizens Coordinating Committee on Friend-

ship Heights for its collaborative community-based approach to considering the County's draft General Plan and sharing its conclusions with other Montgomery County neighborhoods.

THE STAR CUP

Louis Wilen

The Montgomery County Civic Federation Star Cup is awarded to the Federation delegate or committee performing the most outstanding public service on behalf of Montgomery County. This year, the Federation Star Cup is awarded to Louis Wilen of Olney, Maryland.

Louis is a member of the Cherrywood Homeowners Association Board of Directors and a delegate to the Greater Olney Civic Association. He has served as a member of the MCCF Executive Committee and Chair of its Public Utilities Commit-

tee.

We recognize Louis Wilen for his tireless advocacy on behalf of the citizens of Montgomery County where he has lived since 1994. A career software developer and technical support specialist for IBM Corporation, Louis has taken special interest in examining complicated public policy issues and identifying the underlying problems that require solutions by elected officials and public sector experts.

One of Louis' more recent analyses revealed that the State of Maryland has been improperly removing millions of dollars (in the aggregate) of property tax credits from homeowners. According to an October 2020 state government audit, Maryland has been miscalculating a tax credit for homeowners for years. In 2019, just in Montgomery County,

MORE

June Awardees, cont.

the error led to thousands of taxpayers losing significant amounts of money. Auditors found Homeowner Tax Credits (HTC) awarded to 5,388 applicants were improperly reduced by \$4.4 million, and that's just in Montgomery County, for fiscal year 2019. The error dates back to at least 2005, according to the report.

Wilen's analysis revealed that the Maryland State Department of Assessment and Taxation (SDAT) has wrongly been deducting other tax credits from the HTC, which benefits low- and moderate-income families, seniors, and people who may have lost their jobs, thereby improperly increasing their tax bills.

His long-standing and continuing efforts to get State and County officials to address the issue were ignored and dismissed for over three

years. Finally, however, after contacting the Maryland State Office of Legislative Audits, the state performed its own audit of SDAT which confirmed the scale of the miscalculations and overcharges to residents.

His work also caught the attention of Montgomery County State Delegate Al Carr, who developed a bill to require the Maryland State Department of Assessments and Taxation to issue refunds for improperly retained property tax credits. Delegate Carr and Senator Craig Zucker, along with numerous co-sponsors, sponsored bills to require



LOUIS WILEN

SDAT to refund the last three years of improperly retained tax credits. The bills passed unanimously in the House and Senate and became law at the end of May 2021.

This is not the first time that Louis has received recognition for his community service. In 2007, Louis received the President's Award from the Greater Olney Civic Association for his work in spurring passage of the Homestead Credit Verification Act of 2007. In 2020, the Civic Federation was proud to recognize Louis Wilen again for his service and advocacy and to honor him as our Community Hero.

Please help us celebrate the achievements of these wonderful resident volunteers at MCCF's Annual Awards Reception on June 14 at 7:30 p.m.. Please see details for the Zoom meeting on pages one and two within the newsletter. ■

Montgomery County Begins Final Phase of Reopening as Pandemic Winds Down

On Friday, May 28, at 6 a.m., Montgomery County moved to its final phase of reopening which eliminated all County COVID-19-related capacity restrictions and social distancing requirements for indoor and outdoor activities and businesses and requires County businesses and residents to follow any orders or directives from the State of Maryland.

On May 14, Montgomery County Health Officer Dr. Travis Gayles certified that 50 percent of Montgomery County residents received all required doses of a COVID-19 vaccine. This was a major milestone because it started the 14-day countdown for these residents to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19. The County's Board of Health regulation, based on public health guidance, moves the County into the final phase of re-

opening on May 28 when 50 percent of the County's population becomes fully vaccinated.

Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) currently showed that more than 56 percent of the County's total population was fully vaccinated, and the County's Department of Health and Human Services reported that nearly 62 percent of residents had received at least one vaccination.

"We are grateful to all our residents who have stepped up to get vaccinated to protect themselves, their loved ones and our community," said Council President Tom Hucker, in a press release. "We are thrilled to be able to restore a sense of normalcy for our business owners and residents who have made tremendous sacrifices for more than 14

months to protect public health. We will continue to support you during this recovery period and want to encourage everyone who hasn't been vaccinated to do so as soon as possible. We are excited to move to the final phase of reopening tomorrow; but there is still more work to do to keep our community healthy."

"We are almost back to normal, but still too early to declare "Mission Accomplished," said County Executive Marc Elrich. "After every holiday during this pandemic we have seen an uptick in cases, and this is the first holiday since the vast increase in vaccinations occurred over the past month. I hope that everyone has a safe weekend and uses common sense based on their own comfort level as they enjoy weekend

MoCo Reopening, cont.

activities.

“As it is Memorial Day weekend, we encourage everyone to also take a moment to appreciate the military service of the men and women who sacrificed their lives for this country as well as remember the victims of COVID-19 and continue to support their families as they grieve the loss of their loved ones.”

“Friday will mark a historic moment for Montgomery County residents, as half of our population will be fully vaccinated,” said Council Vice President and Chair of the Health and Human Services Committee Gabe Alborno. “This significant accomplishment could not have been possible without the guidance from our public health officials, the dedication of our frontline health-care workers and the resilience of

our County residents. As our County reopens to full capacity, we should not take for granted what we have accomplished so far. Let’s continue this wave of progress by following the ever-evolving public health guidance and encouraging those who are eligible to receive a vaccination.”

In line with public health guidance from the CDC and the State of Maryland, there will no longer be a mandatory masking requirement for most activities; however, face coverings are still required on public transportation, in schools, and in health care settings. Face coverings are also required indoors for youth camps and in child care facilities. In addition, face coverings are still required in County buildings.

The Maryland Department of Health and Montgomery County encourages all individuals who are older than two years of age and not

fully vaccinated to continue to wear face coverings in all public indoor settings and in outdoor settings where physical distancing cannot be maintained.

Businesses and workplaces can implement their own policies requiring that face coverings must be worn on their premises. This is no different than the ability to set a dress code for customers and staff. All residents should respect individuals who choose to continue wearing face coverings and all business owners who require customers to wear masks.

All current COVID-19-related requirements can be found in the Maryland Department of Health’s Amended Directive and Order dated May 14, 2021, [which can be viewed here](#).

Residents who are not yet vacci-

MORE

Why Adopt a Road in Montgomery County?

By Peggy Dennis, Potomac

Remember the old saying, “Golf is a good walk spoiled”? Well, Adopting-a-Road is a good walk made even better. Many of our roadsides cry out to be tidied up on occasion. And who better to do it than the folks who live there?

Why have I adopted a 0.8 mile stretch of Falls Road in Potomac in the name of Common Cause Mary-

land? I don’t feel I need to have my name up there on the post, but I’m glad to do the work in the name of an organization I admire and respect. Anyone can do the same for their church, civic association, or club, or in the memory of someone they cared for.

Why Common Cause Maryland? Because these times are perilous, and our democracy is threatened by forces seeking to restrict voting rights; place candidates in the presidency who have been elected by a minority of the voters; gerrymander districts to insure “safe” districts for their own party; and campaign using funding from undisclosed individuals and companies. The For the People Act 2021 (HR-1) is now before our legislators on Capitol Hill. If it is passed, it will go a long way toward making

our democracy more democratic rather than less. Common Cause Maryland is working hard to see that this bill passes and that the National Popular Election Compact is approved in enough states to insure that the majority of the voters will carry the day in future presidential elections and not the minority reflected in the Electoral College.

Picking up trash while out walking is a great way to support your local neighborhood. It gives me a lift when passing bicyclists and walkers say “thank you.” Are there things I don’t relish? Yes. Of course! Used Covid-19 masks which we didn’t used to see along our roadsides. Things that make me peeved? When a homeowner leaves a large chunk of styrofoam on their grass and their landscaping contractor runs over it leaving 17 pieces to pick up instead of

MORE

MoCo Reopening, cont.

nated should do so as soon as possible. Free and convenient vaccination appointments and walk-in opportunities are available at multiple locations across the County. [Make your appointment or learn more here](#) or call 240.777.2982. ■

Adopt a Road, cont.

one.

If you're adopting a road that has had no TLC for a few years, you'll find the initial cleanup takes several passes. There are plenty of bottles and cans peaking out from their half buried hiding places among the leaves and brush. But as you continue your monthly or bi-monthly rambles, you'll find less and less to collect. Perhaps people are more conscientious about not littering when there is no visible litter to add to. Perhaps during the hot months people have their car windows rolled up and prefer to keep the AC on and the litter inside. Who knows? I only know that joining the Adopt-a-Road program and doing my trash walks make me feel good. You can enjoy the same experience. To check it out, [visit DOT's Adopt-a-Road website.](#) ■

Saving History Before It Crumbles Away

By Carol Ann Barth

If you still get a printed newspaper, what do you do with it once you're done? Put it in your recycling toter, shred it for the cat box, use it for composting? How about papier-mâché, gift wrap, or a drop cloth for messy projects? We recycle the paper because we're pretty sure that somewhere there's an archive preserving all this information. But that is not exactly true for two long-running local papers, *The Montgomery County Gazette* and *The Montgomery County Sentinel*.

The Montgomery County Historical Society has launched a campaign to digitize part of its physical collection of local *Gazette* papers (1960 onwards) and microfilm collection of *The Sentinel* (1964–69). Digitizing the papers will make them available



through the research library to anyone who wants to access them, allow researchers to search by keyword, and preserve them for posterity.

To the uninitiated, it might seem strange for Montgomery History to save newspapers that were heavy on legal notices and wedding announcements. But Civic Fed members know that these newspapers covered the ins and outs of development issues in a way the bigger papers never have and never will. Still, what's the

MORE

Crumbling History, cont.

value of this “old news”? Sometimes, to understand where we are, we need to look at how we got here. From vintage, inner-ring suburban neighborhoods to far-flung sprawling estates, the planning, land-use, and development decisions of the past have left their stamp upon today's County.

In addition, the Civic Fed had a long-running relationship with *The Sentinel*. One of MCCF's annual awards is the Sentinel Award, given to an individual or group, typically outside government, for a “significant contribution to good government at the local level.” You can see [a list of awardees here.](#)

At our 2008 Annual Awards Banquet, the Civic Federation presented Bernard and Lynn Kapi-loff, Publisher and Chief Executive

Officer of *The Montgomery Sentinel*, with Honorary Membership in the MCCF “in appreciation for their support of the Federation and the civic community.”

MCCF also had a long-running column in *The Sentinel*, the “Federation Corner.” Here is a link to a 2008 column by Wayne Goldstein, [“How American Women Saved Mount Vernon and Democratized Historic Preservation.”](#)

However, information like this could be lost. Montgomery History can't complete the digitization project without financial help. To learn more about their campaign—“New Life for Old News”—and to make a tax deductible contribution, [go to their webpage here.](#) If you give before June 30, your contribution will be matched by the family of former Montgomery History Executive Director Mary Kay Harper. ■

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 Alan Bowser at [president@montgomerycivic.org](#). Include topics/possible dates.

County Council Approves FY22 Operating Budget, Amendments to the FY21–26 CIP

The Montgomery County Council voted unanimously on May 27, 2021, to approve the County’s \$6 billion Fiscal Year 2022 Operating Budget, the FY22 Capital Budget, and the \$4.316 billion Amended FY21-26 Capital Improvements Program (CIP). The following is the text from a press notice released that day.

The Council’s focus throughout its budget deliberations this year was on the County’s recovery and providing relief and direct assistance to residents impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We needed this budget to build a Montgomery County that is stronger, healthier, more prosperous, more equitable, and more sustainable than the one we have today, and that’s exactly what we

did,” Council President Tom Hucker said. “The \$6 billion operating budget doesn’t just give us a roadmap through the next few months of the pandemic. It sets us up for long-term recovery and revitalization that awaits beyond the pandemic.”

Council President Tom Hucker, Vice President Gabe Albornoz, and Councilmembers Andrew Friedson, Evan Glass, Will Jawando, Sidney Katz, Nancy Navarro, Craig Rice, and Hans Riemer all voted to approve the operating and capital budgets. [Council President Tom Hucker’s budget comments can be viewed here.](#)

The FY22 Operating Budget includes assistance for businesses, residents, and students. Some highlights include: providing a \$25 million increase to the Working

Families Income Supplement for a total of \$45 million to provide direct support to the County’s hardest working and neediest residents; allocating nearly \$13.5 million to support residents through the County’s nonprofit partners; increasing support for senior and youth recreational programming; extending the RideOn fare holiday through September and the Seniors Ride Free Program for all hours of operation. The budget also provides \$24 million for rental assistance, more than \$700,000 to support tenants who are facing eviction and need help understanding their rights, as well as a nearly \$500,000 increase for rapid rehousing.

The budget includes essential funding for public health and

MORE

MoCo FY22 Budget, cont.

human services that were critical lifelines for residents during the pandemic. For example, \$3.6 million is allocated for the eight Service Consolidation Hubs which have been providing food, diapers, and other critical goods and connecting those in needs with other County services. More than \$230,000 was added to the budget for the Care for Kids program and over \$228,000 was added to the Montgomery Cares program which provides healthcare to the uninsured. The budget also includes an increase of \$1.6 million for the Office of Community Partnerships to expand outreach activities and establish a permanent translation unit.

The budget continues Montgomery County’s strong and steadfast commitment to education.

The County ranks near the top of all Maryland jurisdictions for total per pupil funding for Montgomery County Public Schools. In FY22 \$2.78 billion, or more than half of the County’s tax-supported budget, is allocated to the school system. The budget also fully funds Montgomery College at \$312.6 million and provides resources to maintain the tuition rates with no increases.

The Montgomery County Council voted unanimously to keep the County’s effective property tax rate flat and continue to provide a property tax credit of \$692 for homeowners.

The budget also funds the FY22 County’s reserve at 9.6 percent of adjusted governmental revenues and provides \$92.1 million in additional resources for Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB). Funding for these fiscal obligation

helps the County retain its triple-A bond rating.

The budgets will go into effect on July 1.

CARES ACT AND AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT FUNDING

Montgomery County, like other local jurisdictions, received significant federal and state support to respond to the pandemic, which the Council approved to provide direct assistance to its residents. Most notably, the Council allocated \$183.3 million from the CARES Act through FY21 to support businesses and residents. The County will receive another \$204.1 million from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

The funding that flows from ARPA provides flexibility for the County to meet community needs

MORE

MoCo FY22 Budget, cont.

including support for families, small businesses, essential workers, and residents who have been the hardest hit by the pandemic. Nonprofit and community partners are essential to this work.

A significant portion of ARPA funds are needed to offset County revenue losses due to the pandemic and has enabled critical government services for residents to continue uninterrupted.

As part of the FY22 budget process, the Council developed a list (referred to as “Category 1”) for potential ARPA funding as well as a separate list (referred to as “Category 2”) of items that the Council may consider funding if additional resources become available during the year. The Council will be formalizing a process for reviewing

these lists immediately following today’s budget vote and will review ARPA funding this summer.

Inclusion on either of these lists does not mean that these programs, services, or items will be funded in FY22 or in future years. Moreover, consideration for future funding through ARPA or another source is not limited to the programs, services, or items on either list. Also, funding amounts on these lists may change.

The County also anticipates receiving ARPA funding for targeted areas including Montgomery County Public Schools, Montgomery College, and Transit Services separate from the existing ARPA allocation, and these items will also be reviewed by the Council this summer.

Below are some of the key funding areas in the budget.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

More than half of the County’s tax supported budget, \$2.78 billion, funds Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). This amount funds MCPS at \$40.4 million above the Maintenance of Effort level, which is mandated by the State of Maryland. This represents an increase of \$24.2 million and includes a local contribution of more than \$1.75 billion. The County continues to rank near the top of all Maryland jurisdictions for total per pupil funding.

The Council approved more than \$822.2 million in federal and state aid for MCPS, which is approximately \$23.9 million more than last year due to increases in The Blueprint for Maryland’s Future funding, Hold Harmless

MORE

MoCo FY22 Budget, cont.

Grants, and a Supplemental Instruction/Tutoring grant.

MCPS is also expected to receive a total of \$422 million in COVID-19 relief funding. The Education and Culture Committee will hold a future meeting with a detailed briefing on the utilization of this relief funding.

MONTGOMERY COLLEGE

The Council fully funded a total of \$312.6 million for Montgomery College, which is a decrease of \$5.7 million or 1.8 percent from last year’s budget. This includes a local contribution of more than \$145.6 million.

The County’s contribution increased by \$500,000 over the required Maintenance of Effort Level from FY21 to support two County-

led initiatives—Montgomery Can Code and the Innovation Hub Initiative. Each project is expected to receive \$250,000. Both efforts work toward advancing innovation and early access to STEM disciplines. The College budget includes no increase in tuition rates or fees paid by students for FY22.

The Council also approved more than \$52.2 million in federal and state aid for Montgomery College and it’s expected to receive approximately \$45 million in COVID-19 relief funding.

PUBLIC SAFETY

The Council funded a budget of nearly \$283 million for the Montgomery County Police Department. This is less than a one percent increase from last year’s budget. The police budget eliminates 27 sworn positions including five School Re-

source Officer positions designated for MCPS middle schools, six traffic complaint officers, five patrol investigations officers, and the Centralized Auto Theft Unit, among others. The police budget also includes two new Internal Affairs Division positions to help expedite internal investigations. The budget includes \$570,390 to enhance the Electronic Control Weapons Program, which will replace outdated Tasers for police officers.

In the Sheriff’s Office, the total budget is \$26.4 million, which is an increase of \$857,607 from last year’s budget. The Council restored \$17,789 to maximize the availability of less lethal force options.

The budget for the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DOCR) is \$72.9 million. This is an increase of \$1.8 million over the

MORE

MoCo FY22 Budget, cont.

FY21 Approved Budget. The budget continues year two of a three-year initiative to retrofit cell vents, bunks, and doors to reduce opportunities for self-harm. The budget also institutes a Medication Assisted Treatment Program for opioid disorders for inmates within DOCR in collaboration with the Department of Health and Human Services.

Fire and Rescue Services' operating budget is \$232.7 million. This is an increase of \$7.7 million or 3.4 percent from last year. The budget includes \$155,000 to support Bethesda Chevy Chase Rescue Squad's Emergency Medical Services (EMS) supply costs, its Stryker Power Cot and Load Systems contract, and apparatus maintenance and repairs similar to how MCFRS supports other local fire and rescue

departments. The Council also added \$191,509 for a new paramedic chase car to enhance EMS delivery.

The Council added \$700,000 in the Emergency Management and Homeland Security budget for non-profit security grants for faith-based and ethnic organizations.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Council approved more than \$78.3 million for 12 unique business assistance programs throughout the pandemic. The Council also approved \$3 million for the County's Incubator Programs NDA and nearly \$5 million for the County's business incentive programs.

The Council supported Visit Montgomery's \$1.6 million budget. Visit Montgomery promotes the County's hotel and tourism industry, which has been deeply impacted

by the pandemic.

The Council approved a \$1.2 million appropriation for the KID Museum to expand its operations in the County. The KID Museum is a learning space that provides hands-on learning that incorporates STEM, art, and culture with skills like creativity and critical thinking. This funding will directly aid KID Museum, in partnership with MCPS, to address pandemic-related learning loss.

The Council continued its support of the Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation's (MCEDC) with a \$5 million appropriation in FY22. MCEDC was integral in partnering with the County on certain business relief programs during the pandemic, and it is well-positioned to facilitate and market the County's economic

MORE

MoCo FY22 Budget, cont.

recovery in the coming year.

The Council supported WorkSource Montgomery, which is the County's lead workforce development organization, with a \$1.4 million appropriation in FY22, including \$185,000 for stipends to MCPS students participating in the Summer R.I.S.E. Program. WorkSource is partnering with the County, the State of Maryland, and local businesses and nonprofits to connect residents with jobs during the economic recovery.

The Council also supported about \$1 million for the Office of Agriculture, including an additional \$25,000 to support the MARBIDCO cost share program. This program provides small grants for farmer projects in the County.

TRANSPORTATION

The Council funded the Department of Transportation's (DOT) budget at more than \$228.6 million. The budget extends the RideOn fare holiday through September 2021. Funding is also provided to bring RideOn back to its pre-COVID service level, but on a more gradual schedule.

DOT's budget also extends the Seniors Ride Free Program to all hours of operation starting in July. Funding for the Safe Routes to School Program is also doubled by \$200,000 in the FY22 CIP and \$150,000 in the FY22 Operating Budget.

The budget also implements parking fee increases in Bethesda and Wheaton and enforcement hours in Silver Spring and Wheaton but delayed the effective date until January 2022.

OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

The Council funded the Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) at \$1,001,712, which is an increase of 72.3 percent from the FY21 approved budget. This increase is primarily due to an increase in staffing. The budget funds six full-time positions for the ORESJ in FY22 which will provide two new staffers in addition to what Council added through special appropriation in FY21.

The additional staffing will support ORESJ in meeting the requirements of the County's Racial Equity and Social Justice Act, which was authored by Councilmember Navarro and enacted by the full Council, by enhancing the capacity to train departmental staff and assist with examining policies, processes, pro-

MORE

MoCo FY22 Budget, cont.

cedures, and budgetary decisions to address racial and social justice disparities for County residents.

CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES

The Council funded the budget for Children, Youth, and Families at \$94.8 million. The Council continues its commitment to helping children, families, and individuals thrive. The budget includes nearly \$11 million in funding, which is an increase of \$5 million, to support the Montgomery County Early Care and Education Initiative (ECEI), which was spearheaded by Councilmember Nancy Navarro and is supported by the County Executive and Council, to expand quality early care and education opportunities for infants, toddlers, and preschool-

ers. The ECEI is focused on expanding the number of quality ECE seats in a mixed delivery system, ensuring the sustainability of family and center-based programs, increasing resources to providers and families, identifying existing unused or underutilized classrooms in high-need areas, increasing utilization of local child care subsidies, and supporting recovery work during the COVID pandemic. As the initiative moves into year three, there is a focus on reducing costs for early educators, increasing quality programming, and subsidizing the costs of childcare for families.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

The Council funded more than \$363 million for the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). The department has been at the center of the County's CO-

VID-19 response. While much of the cost of testing and vaccinations has been funded by federal grants and reimbursements, the Council funded several increases that continue changes which have taken place, such as the Service Consolidation Hubs and an additional \$3 million to provide increased year-round emergency shelter capacity with the ability to socially distance to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other illnesses.

The Council recognized the extraordinary work of the County's nonprofit organizations and approved additional funding so that eligible contracts can be increased by three percent. The Council added more than \$970,000 to the budget to fully meet the request for the supplemental funding to organizations that serve and care

MORE

MoCo FY22 Budget, cont.

for residents with developmental disabilities and increased funding for the supplement to adult medical day care providers.

The Council also funded \$1.14 million to open a wellness center at the newly constructed Seneca Valley High School, which will be ready to open at the beginning of the next school year.

The Council also provided \$750,000 to continue the delivery of therapeutic recreation services that the Council added in FY21 and \$806,673 to continue the delivery of expanded mental health services for MCPS students that were also added in FY21.

The Council supported the new funding included in the Executive's recommended budget to continue to increase the capacity of mobile

crisis response and alternatives to a police response to a person having a behavioral health crisis. The six new positions in the FY22 budget, when combined with the six positions funded by the Council as a FY21 special appropriation, will create six new Mobile Crisis Outreach Teams to bring service directly to the community.

The budget also adds \$250,000 to the County's Dental Program to provide targeted school-based services and establishes a community homeless court docket to resolve certain misdemeanors outside the traditional court system.

COMMUNITY GRANTS AND WORKING FAMILIES INCOME SUPPLEMENT

The Council funded the Community Grants NDA and Capital Grants as part of the capital budget within

the Cost Sharing: MCG Project. The Community Grants nondepartmental account includes nonprofit contracts totaling \$711,000 to be moved to a County department's base budget and renewals of \$9.6 million nonprofit community grants contract for FY22. In coordination with the Montgomery County State Delegation, the Council matched State funding for capital projects to nonprofit organizations that were awarded Maryland State bond bills prior to FY22.

Multiyear funding was restored from FY21 to support the Public Arts Trust to not only commission community-based public art installations but to also repair and maintain the County's current public art collection. The Council also maintained funding for arts capital grants that were approved in FY21

MORE

MoCo FY22 Budget, cont.

to arts and humanities venues for capital projects that will allow the safe reopening of venues.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The Council allocated more than \$89 million in capital and operating funds to support the production and preservation of affordable housing through the Housing Initiative Fund (HIF). This is a \$20.5 million increase from the amount available and held in the designated reserve for FY22. The HIF provides funds to finance the production, acquisition, and preservation of affordable housing and rental assistance programs for low-income households and for households moving from homelessness to permanent housing. The Council increased the funding that provides assistance with home own-

ership from \$2 million to \$3 million, noting that this increase is accommodated by the additional \$2.9 million from the designated reserve.

The Council approved the Affordable Housing Opportunity Fund as a part of the original FY21-26 CIP. The fund would be primarily used for short-term and intermediate financing to purchase and preserve affordable housing. The source of funds is the Recordation Tax Premium for capital projects. There is no County debt associated with this proposal. The funds would be reserved for projects in partnership with the Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI).

RECREATION

The Council funded total expenditures of \$46.47 million for the Department of Recreation. This is a slight decrease from last year's

approved budget. The budget adds \$250,000 in funding for senior services to increase recreation programs, classes, events, and clubs at six senior centers and senior trip services. The Council also added \$520,000 to restore funding proposed for reduction to support three to four additional Summer Fun Centers and enhanced programming for all recreation summer camps.

ENVIRONMENT

The Council supported the \$3.5 million operating budget for the Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) General Fund. DEP will initiate a County-wide anti-litter campaign. Based on a pilot in White Oak, the goal of the outreach effort is to reduce material and debris entering the County's sewers and waterways. Funding is

MORE

MoCo FY22 Budget, cont.

also provided to add a new position to enhance enforcement of the laws and regulations the Department of Environmental Protection is tasked with enforcing, such as the bans on polystyrene, single-use plastic straws, and the bag tax.

The Council funded \$134.1 million for the Recycling and Resource Management portion of the DEP budget. This is a \$2.6 million or two percent increase from last year's approved budget. This funding allows for an improved partnership with the Bethesda Urban District, the Silver Spring Urban District, and the Silver Spring Regional Services Center to address the lack of recycling bins in the downtown areas. DEP will also initiate the curbside pickup of electronics for recycling in the northern part of the County in FY22 through

new recycling contracts.

The Council also funded \$29.5 million for the Water Quality Protection Fund (WQPF). The WQPF covers County costs associated with water quality and the inspection, maintenance, and rehabilitation of stormwater management facilities. Watershed grants and the Rain-Scapes Program were each increased by \$100,000.

The Council also added \$650,000 in funding for the Climate Change Planning nondepartmental account. This NDA was started in FY20 and provides funding for the prioritization of greenhouse gas reduction strategies and the development of an implementation plan to meet the County's goal of an 80 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2027 and a 100 percent reduction by 2035. With the Climate Action Plan work nearly concluded,

the focus now will be on the implementation of the high-priority recommendations and follow-up review and study of specific issues.

PARK AND PLANNING

The Council funded \$152.9 million for the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC), including debt service. This is nearly a six percent increase from last year's approved budget. Included in this amount is a project manager position in the Parks Department to assist with facility assessments in Equity Opportunity Areas and funding for maintenance and infrastructure upgrades necessary to meet the County's greenhouse gas emissions target. The Planning Department received funding to support the creation of an Innovative Housing Toolkit and a

MORE

MoCo FY22 Budget, cont.

Redlining Mapping Tool, as well as funding for a Wheaton Downtown Revitalization Study. The Council also approved several amendments to M-NCPPC's FY21-26 CIP, including: a \$2.5 million appropriation for Mid-County Park Benefit Payments to cover developer contributions; a change in funding source for the Ballfields Initiatives project; appropriations necessary to accommodate state aid for capital projects throughout the County; and a \$10 million grant for the Power Line Trail project.

LIBRARIES

The Council funded \$42.7 million for the Montgomery County Public Libraries' (MCPL) budget. MCPL continues to play a critical and central role in the economic

recovery of the County. The FY22 budget to operate the 21 library branches in the County remains intact, with a focus on the safe reopening of in-person browsing and book borrowing.

Funding was restored by the Council for the 21st Century Library Enhancements Level of Effort to expand the rollout of the Open Plus Pilot project, which will allow access to public areas of the library after hours at additional library branches. The results of the Open Plus Pilot at Maggie Nightingale Library in Poolesville, which is scheduled to be implemented by the end of FY21, will guide the project rollout.

WASHINGTON SUBURBAN SANITARY COMMISSION

The Montgomery and Prince George's County Councils held their bicounty meeting and reached a

budget agreement for the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC). The Councils approved an FY22 operating budget of \$852.1 million, which is a \$2.4 million increase from the FY21 Approved Operating Budget. This includes a proposed 5.9 percent increase in the volumetric rate and no change in the system development charge, account maintenance fees, or the infrastructure investment fee. All new bi-county spending plans are effective starting July 1, 2021.

NEGOTIATED AGREEMENTS

The Council funded salary and benefit increases for employees represented by the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP), the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF), the Municipal and County Government Employees' Organization

MoCo FY22 Budget, cont.

(MCGEO), and nonrepresented County government employees. The Council also funded increases in the agreement with the Montgomery County Volunteer Fire and Rescue Association.

AMENDED FY21-26 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAM

The County's FY21-26 CIP as amended is \$4.316 billion. In a year with constrained resources, the Council adjusted revenues based on anticipated state aid and information from Montgomery County Public Schools. Keeping school projects on track is a top priority for the Council and County residents.

The Council took action to address school capacity issues. Some of the school projects include: funding for a new school to replace

the old JoAnn Leleck Elementary School to address capacity and equity issues; providing additional funding for the reopening of the Woodward High School addition and facility improvements for Northwood High School; funding the renovation of Highland View Elementary; and accelerating funding for a major renovation at Stonegate Elementary School that will advance the completion date to Sept. 2023 instead of Jan. 2025. In addition, the Council accelerated the completion of William Tyler Page Elementary School and Woodlin Elementary School to Sept. 2023. The Council also supported requests from the Montgomery County Board of Education to increase funding for heating, ventilation, and air conditioning improvements, roof replacements, and the Planned Life-cycle Asset Replacement Program.

Some of the transportation projects include: funding to keep the Capital Crescent Trail tunnel on the schedule agreed to by the Council last year; \$4.5 million for the design of the Veirs Mill Road Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project and \$6 million for the design of the first segment of the Maryland Route 355 BRT; \$12 million for the design and construction of the interim transit service project from the Great Seneca Science Corridor to the Shady Grove Metro Station; and accelerated funding for the North Bethesda Transitway. Funding was also provided to purchase 45 electric buses between FY22 and FY24.

The Council also supported the County Executive's recommended CIP amendment of \$20.4 million to upgrade and expand the County's Material Recovery Facility (Recycling Center). ■

Opinion: Thoughts on Attainable Housing: Substance and Process

By Karen Cordry

I am President of the Kensington Heights Civic Association (KHCA) and Recording Secretary of the Civic Federation. We will hopefully try to have comments from KHCA for the Planning Board but that will require a further process and I write this article for now on behalf of neither group, but rather based on my own thoughts to this point. This is an area of much concern to myself and to the members of KHCA because we are, in many ways, “ground zero” for any proposals of this nature.

KHCA directly adjoins the Westfield Wheaton Mall on its south and west sides and most of our territory is within a mile of the Wheaton Metro and the major arterials of Georgia, Viers Mill, University Boulevard, and Connecticut Avenue.

We are, indeed, within walking distance of major retail and a relatively “complete community” of goods and service providers. (I was reminded of this recently when I was able to walk home from the tire dealership while I was waiting for my new tires to be put on my car.)

KHCA is a highly diverse community on any measuring scale. The population has large numbers of residents who are “people of color” of every ethnic shade and geographic origin. It is largely comprised of R-60 single family zoning. A great deal of the housing stock was built in the 1950s and 1960s as sturdy brick Cape Cods in a variety of sizes that were obviously erected in a number of waves. Those houses still sell from anywhere in the high \$300s to the low \$600s. But we also have

several substantial townhouse communities, ranging from the relatively modest selling in the high \$400s to our most recent addition adjoining the Mall with large townhomes selling for just under a million dollars. We have also had additional single family homes built over the years in a wide variety of sizes and styles from, again, the relatively modest up to what are often referred to as “McMansions.” And we, too, have started to see the phenomenon of the buying up of small Cape Cods in order to tear them down and build much larger single-family homes next door to, and towering over, the remaining neighboring Cape Cods. So, the questions of “what does compatibility mean” within that context and what do we do about trying

MORE

Attainable Housing, cont.

to maintain the mixed income and small community feel of our neighborhood are very real.

At the last Civic Federation meeting, the agenda was amended to allow consideration of a proposed resolution on the County’s current consideration of various actions, including proposed Zoning Text Amendments and language in the Thrive Montgomery 2050 plan, dealing with the concept of what was originally referred to as “Missing Middle” housing and now, more formally, as the Attainable Housing Strategy Initiative. As finally passed, the resolution stated that “MCCF should oppose further legislative action on those proposals until the comprehensive planning required for such fundamental and long-lasting legislation is completed and there is a

significant open process whereby the public can appear in person.” While that resolution passed eight to two, there were at least five recorded abstentions based, somewhat ironically, on the concern that the proposal had not been raised before the meeting so attendees did not feel they could vote on behalf of their communities.

In some respects, I feel the thrust of the resolution is misplaced. Council Member Wil Jawando’s ZTA 20-07, which kicked off this discussion, was filed on December 8, 2020, almost exactly six months ago. Three months later, on March 8, 2021, Council Member Riemer and Council President Hucker drafted an alternative version, which has not been formally introduced, but has been part of the discussion. The Planning Board held a public hearing on February 9, and it recommended that the ZTA be taken up as part of

the overall Thrive Montgomery 2050 analysis. The County Council scheduled a public hearing for February 11 and approximately 50 people spoke at the first hearing, including myself. I am aware of a number of coalitions, neighborhood associations, and the like that were aware of the original proposal and have been discussing these issues since then. My own suggestion at the meeting was that this was a very complex topic and, even with all of the expertise of the Planning Department, what they needed, to coin a very unoriginal phrase, was a “task force.”

Following that hearing, the County Council wrote to the Planning Board on March 4 urging them to develop the concepts further and report back to the Council. On March 15, the Planning Board announced its Attainable Housing Strategies Initia-

MORE

Attainable Housing, cont.

tive, which did include, among other aspects, the creation of a Housing Equity Advisory Team (HEAT), i.e., a “task force,” with public members to meet with the Planning Board staff. There were also multiple meetings with the public scheduled and many of those groups named above have been holding meetings within their own communities to discuss these issues and to try to formulate positions on the numerous options that are at stake here. The HEAT group had a wide variety of members—including myself—and held four two-hour meetings with the staff. Planning Board staff also made themselves available for meetings with community groups such as the KHCA membership where they recently participated in a detailed discussion of many of these issues. The Planning

Staff intends to make recommendations to the Board later in June. The Board will consider those in making its own recommendations and the Council will not likely take these up until the fall; there will undoubtedly be further public hearings and comment periods throughout that time.

So, has there been a “significant open process”? Generally yes, with as much input as has occurred with many proposals. Has that input literally been “in person”? No, but it has been via meetings that allowed for large amounts of audience participation and we have all become much more comfortable with meeting and talking with groups via virtual platforms. They do not provide the chance for “chats in the hallway” or quite as much intimacy as an in-person meeting, but they are highly efficient, allow for many people to appear, and allow people to appear who

might not be able to take off several hours and drive to a distant location in order to make their views known. It seems clear that, going forward, such virtual hearings will remain very much a part of the process.

So, is the real problem the fact that there hasn’t been an opportunity for input? I think not. The real question is what is the substance of what might be enacted after such input. And that question does raise enormous concerns for a great many of us, including those who are basically supportive of the general concept of expanding housing types. At first, that idea might seem relatively simple but, as the discussions over the last six months have illustrated, workable proposals to implement this concept require consideration of a huge number of factors. And, a process that heeds and incorporates

MORE

Attainable Housing, cont.

the thoughtful concerns and suggestions of the public means that the proposal being considered is a constantly moving target! That is a good thing in many respects, but it does mean that one’s comments may constantly need to be updated.

The Planning Board staff has, for example, moved towards recommendations that would in some ways restrict the initial thrust of ZTA 20-07 by limiting the possibility of allowing greater density “by right” only on a maximum of two combined lots (rather than the original four), requiring that the buildings continue to meet all existing setback and building size limits, and incorporating the notion of a “pattern” or “form” book that would delineate acceptable design types. On the other hand, they apparently also plan to suggest



expanding the areas in which buildings could be built, both by expanding the types of zones to be included and by not necessarily limiting the changes to the areas directly adjacent to Metro or transit, although certainly part of the general concept is to try to keep this added density near to transit so as to reduce sprawl and to make it easier for persons to do without cars and the building expense needed to accommodate them if possible.

But, there are still many issues to be addressed, including how will

allowing these building types impact prices on existing homes. Will it create new demand for buying them to do teardowns for these denser housing types and raise the prices of those that remain? To the extent that these proposals are applied to close-in, built-out communities, that seems to be almost inevitable. But, if applied to areas that still have open spaces, that would be less of a concern and could allow building larger numbers of homes at the same time so as to create pricing efficiencies

MORE

Attainable Housing, cont.

(just as was done with the building in KHCA in the 1950s and 1960s). To be sure, building in those areas might be seen as inviting undesirable sprawl, but, if it turns out that COVID-19 has created a permanent new world in which many more of us can stay home rather than using transit to travel to a distant downtown office every day, perhaps “sprawl” is just another way to describe dispersed communities in which people can still enjoy the sense of small town life. That’s something we don’t know now and probably won’t know for a few years, which is another reason why it’s hard to decide what to do now.

What I think many of us are left with is the sense that this is a process that should move forward incrementally with a “let’s see what

works” approach. Rather than applying the same provisions to the entire county at one time, perhaps it should be tried in specific areas, such as Silver Spring, where it is already part of the Master Planning process as I understand it. And, while there are certainly concerns that there must be some degree of “by right” approvals for smaller projects if builders are ever to agree to even try these projects, the staff recommendations appear to be moving in the right direction in that regard. If the community can see what types of buildings might be placed in their area—and perhaps given the right to comment on those allowed forms—that would go a long way towards assuaging concerns. There are other ways, too, in which the County could experiment with these projects while keeping the option to rework and update them as experience dictates.

For instance, there could be a sunset date on the zoning changes and/or only a certain percentage of the lots in a given area could be allowed to be reworked under these standards. If only one in four or five lots, for instance, on a block, could be converted to a duplex or a triplex, that would be unlikely to overwhelm the existing physical infrastructure or the availability of schools or similar services. And, if the County starts small and works its way up, it can use the initial phase to work directly with builders to see what problems they encounter as they start this new process.

In the end, it’s hard to say whether these proposals will be a “Brave New World” or a form of “Back to the Future.” But, I think what we all want to do is to make sure that we don’t just “get it done” but that we “get it done right.” ■

Commission on Redistricting Meets June 9

[In November, voters passed Councilmember Glass’ proposed Charter Amendment to add two Council Districts to the County Council for a total of 11 Council members: seven district members and four at-large members. Below is an update on the progress of the Redistricting Commission from a news release.]

The fifth meeting of the Commission on Redistricting will take place via Zoom on Wednesday, June 9, and will be livestreamed on the County Council’s [Facebook page](#).

The Commission on Redistricting was established after the confirmation of 11 appointed members by the Council on Jan. 26. In the 2020 general election, the Montgomery County Charter was amended by the voters to require the County to be divided into seven Council districts

to elect seven district and four at-large members of the Council. The Charter required that the Council appoint a Commission on Redistricting composed of 11 registered voters who reside in the County.

At the last meeting, the Commission received a presentation on a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) redistricting tool created by the Planning Department to assist the Commission in drawing seven Council districts.

This meeting will continue with a discussion of observations on the use of the redistricting tool by commissioners, followed by a discussion of ground rules for establishing district boundaries and rules for commissioners attending community meetings and gatherings as guests. The Commission will decide on uniform

guidelines for how commissioners must address the public in the future when discussing their work.

The group will then discuss a tentative schedule to receive input from the public. Commissioner Samuel Statland has volunteered to assist with coordinating engagement efforts between County residents and the Commission.

The members of the Commission on Redistricting are as follows: Imad Aldean Ahmad, Laura Ard, Mariana Cordier, Keshia Desir, Arthur Edmunds, Valerie Ervin, Bruce Goldensohn, Jason Makstein, Nilmini Rubin, Samuel Statland, and David Stein.

Residents can view the meeting on the Council’s [Facebook page](#). The full agenda for this meeting can be viewed [here](#). Meeting minutes for this meeting will be available [here](#) at a later date. ■

Minutes of May 10, 2021, MCCF Virtual General Meeting #923 Online Via Zoom

By Karen Cordry, Recording Secretary

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the General Meeting was held via Zoom as a virtual meeting.

Call to Order: President Alan Bowser called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. There were 25 participants online over the course of the meeting. Introductions were made.

Approval of Agenda: It was moved and seconded that agenda be approved with amendment to allow consideration of proposed resolution on Thrive 2050 and Missing Middle Housing; approved by voice vote.

Approval of Minutes: It was moved and seconded that April minutes be approved; approved by voice vote.

Treasurer's Report: Jerry Garson reported that the dues collected this month were \$40 in dues, with a total for the year of \$1,467.65. The current bank balance is \$9,294.29, with net income for the year of approximately \$40.

PROGRAM

The program focused on the County's actions with respect to environmental and climate change issues. The speaker was Adam Ortiz, Director of the Department of Environmental Protection. Alan Bowser also asked that he talk about County programs for residents for services such as rain gardens, tree plantings, storm water services, etc.

Ortiz noted the importance of having resident involvement, noting that what we face now arises

from more than 400 years of human impacts and mismanagement of those effects. Storm water management has been a major issue; we're making progress in the agricultural community, but there are still a lot of effects in developed areas from everything that falls on the impervious surfaces and lawns and flows down into the waterways. They are asking for everyone's help.

I Rainscapes Program: Works with residents control rain on their own properties to keep down runoff of both water and sediments. All of the projects are meant to provide ways to store rainwater in ways that allow it to soak in rather than just run off. The DEP has programs to pay for part of the costs, and those interested can [check their website](#).

MORE

May Minutes, cont.

I Comments on Proposals: They are currently reviewing the housing ZTAs, the Thrive Montgomery proposal, etc., and how those proposed changes could affect the County's open spaces, stormwater management, burdens to infrastructure, etc. Ortiz noted that they have raised such concerns with the Thrive Montgomery staff, but they don't control that process, so they are offering advice, rather than issuing orders. They had recommended the Thrive Montgomery discussion pull all the environmental issues into one place; that wasn't done in this draft but they are still working on changes.

I Incinerator/Landfill Issues: A question was asked about why we still use the Dickerson incinerator rather a landfill. Ortiz noted that both disposal methods have prob-

lems. Burning is a huge issue, but landfills tend to create a lot of methane and, if it escapes, it's a much more potent greenhouse gas. Even with cap-and-capture approaches at landfills, there are still a lot of emissions. There are also often issues with landfill liners breaking; they are just about to start a \$60 million renovation at the Gude landfill. They are pretty much state-of-the-art with respect to capturing CO₂ from Dickerson, generate energy from the process, and do capture metals that were in the garbage.

I Water Management near roads and streams: A question was raised about cooperating with DOT on projects near roads and getting DOT to cooperate on plantings. Ortiz noted that cooperation was improving and they were getting ready to do about \$40 million of stream and water restoration projects and

have been coordinating with WSSC, DOT, Parks, and DEP to do all the projects together to keep costs down, make them more sustainable, and to help others with these problem areas.

I Trees: The County is being overwhelmed with requests for trees and they are trying to do more. The link for those seeking trees is treemontgomery.org.

I Climate Action Plan: The County has been working to involve the public and have had about 200 people participate in work groups; they have had public hearings and have about 500 pages of comments. The County has purchased 14 electric buses as a pilot and has about 850 general electric vehicles in its fleet. 30+ government buildings have solar panels and the Park and Planning building in Wheaton has LEED

MORE

May Minutes, cont.

Platinum status. New commercial construction will be held to very high energy-efficiency standards under a new Green Building Code and will be phasing in upgraded efficiency standards for existing buildings over the next decade. There will be a public hearing in June.

Watershed Restoration:

The County has a sophisticated biological monitoring service; it is cross-referenced with development to see where projects will have the most impact and they are trying to include equity concerns in the analysis.

Other Topics: Mr. Ortiz also mentioned other actions, including the existing ban on pesticides and limits on herbicides that can be used on invasive species; new bills

to ensure septic tanks are maintained; and the phase in of the ban on plastic straws and No. 6 plastic which aren't recyclable. They are also trying to make the system more efficient at sorting out the recyclable items with substantial retain value. There were questions on maintaining the water/sewer pipes and that stream erosion can damage the nearby pipes. It was also noted that the Attorney General had issued an opinion requiring that mandated replacement trees must go back in the same locale and not a distant reserve.

Solar Panels: There was a question about whether solar panels could be mandated above all parking lots. Ortiz noted elevated panels were still a lot more expensive so it wasn't being done much, but they are working with developers to try to bring the cost down and to help

aggregate properties to make a project of a viable size.

Community Engagement:

Ortiz noted that, in general, the County tried to bring in stakeholders, including businesses, when they were working on a proposal to try to get their input and make changes if possible at an early stage. He also described their efforts to communities of color to improve outreach and involvement.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Land Use and Planning

Dick Kauffenger made a motion with respect to the County's action on Attainable Housing Strategy ZTAs and the related Thrive Montgomery 2050 language. His motion was moved and seconded, there was substantial discussion and friendly amendments. The final language

MORE

May Minutes, cont.

was "MCCF should oppose further legislative action on those proposals until the comprehensive planning required for such fundamental and long-lasting legislation is completed and there is a significant open process whereby the public can appear in person." The final vote was 8 yes, 2 no, and 5 abstain.

Transportation

County will be retaining free RideOn Bus service for a time.

Road traffic volumes are largely back to normal, but transit ridership remains low.

Adjourn: At 10:00 p.m., it was moved and seconded that the meeting be adjourned. Motion was approved by voice vote. ■

Minutes of the MCCF ExCom Meeting on May 20, 2021

By Karen Cordry, Recording Secretary

Call to Order: 7:33 p.m. Attendees: Alan Bowser, Jacquie Bokow, Carol Barth, Sue Schumacher, Jerry Garson, Karen Cordry, Peggy Dennis.

Approval of the Meeting Agenda: Moved, seconded, approved on voice vote.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the April 2021 Executive Committee were approved.

Treasurer's Report: The bank balance reported at the May General Meeting was unchanged.

JUNE AWARDS PROGRAM

After discussion, the following groups and individuals were nominated to receive the 2021 Federation Awards:

Star Cup: Louis Wilen, based on his efforts to correct errors at SDAT, resulting in legislation for refunds to taxpayers. He has also served as a delegate from his HOA and Utilities Chair for the MCCF.

Sentinel Award: The Thrive 2050 Neighborhood Coalition and The Citizens Coordinating Committee for Friendship Heights for their efforts to review and comment on the Thrive 2050 proposals.

Wayne Goldstein Award: The MoCO CAP Coalition for work reviewing and commenting on the County's ongoing environmental

MORE

May ExCom Minutes, cont.

and climate change efforts.

OFFICER ELECTIONS

After discussion, the Executive Committee decided to hold MCCF officer elections at the September General Meeting instead of in June. Potential candidates were discussed.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Planning and Land Use

■ Hearings on the Thrive Montgomery 2050 Draft Plan were held at the Planning Board in November and the Board sent their revised Draft to the County Council in April.

There will be at least two County Council public hearings on the Planning Board Draft Plan on June 17 at 7:00 p.m. and June 29 at 7:00 p.m. Alan Bowser will testify on behalf of

the MCCF; he urged others to sign up for their own comments. Residents may [sign up for the waiting list here](#). Residents may also send written comments on the General Plan to County.Council@montgomerycountymd.gov.

■ There was also a report by Karen Cordry on the planning staff discussions with the advisory team on Attainable Housing Strategy Initiative.

Transportation

■ Committee Chair Jerry Garson noted that the Maryland Department of Transportation has asked for public comments on possible toll rates for the HOT lanes on the I-270 project.

■ Garson also noted that the P3 project for the Beltway and I-270 is now just the stretch down to and across the American Legion

Bridge and they intend to stay within the existing right-of-way. The record will remain open until August 12. There was discussion about the need to redo the bridge in any event. Peggy noted that if the Biden infrastructure bill passed, that might provide funding.

NEWSLETTER

Due to the Memorial Day long weekend, the story deadline for the June 2021 newsletter was delayed to June 1.

NEW BUSINESS

■ Members discussed whether the Civic Federation will resume in-person meetings in September. Members decided to postpone a decision until the County's indoor meeting requirements were clarified.

■ It was noted that the Mont-

MORE

NOTIFICATIONS

THE ELECTION OF MCCF OFFICERS FOR 2021–2022, USUALLY HELD IN JUNE, WILL NOW BE HELD AT THE SEPTEMBER 13 MEETING.

CURRENT PLANS ARE TO RETURN TO IN-PERSON MEETINGS BEGINNING IN SEPTEMBER! CHECK OUR WEBSITE THEN OR THE SEPTEMBER NEWSLETTER FOR THE MEETING VENUE.

May ExCom Minutes, cont.

Montgomery County Historical Society is working to digitize its physical collection of *The Gazette* and *The Sentinel* newspapers. They need about \$15,000 for this work.

Adjourn: Moved and seconded; approved by voice vote 9:00 p.m. ■

Montgomery County Civic Federation

www.montgomerycivic.org

info AT montgomerycivic.org

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Submit contributions for the next issue by the 26th of the current month. Send to CFN at civicfednews@montgomerycivic.org.

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