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CIVIC FEDERATION NEWS

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY CIVIC FEDERATION, INC.

NOVEMBER • 2026

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TO PRINT, USE PRINT VERSION

of note

Next MCCF Meeting #979

November 9, 2026, 7:00 p.m. *online via Zoom*. Topic: "Data Centers and Electricity/Starter and Silver Homes."

Join the Zoom Meeting Here

[See further instructions on page 2. No password is required.]

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Membership Application

JOIN ONLINE | MAIL-IN FORM

Federation Meeting #979

Monday, November 9, 2026
7:00 p.m.
Online Zoom Meeting

AGENDA

1. Call to Order/Introductions
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Approval of Minutes: October General Meeting P.17
4. Treasurer's Report
5. Announcements
6. November Program: Data Centers and Electricity/ Starter and Silver Homes 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.

The November 9, 2026, meeting will be held online via Zoom (see page 3 for program) at 7:00 p.m.:

- To be part of the video conference, first visit the Zoom website to download the program for your phone or computer.
- Date and Time: Monday, November 9, 2026, 7:00 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 **824 6540 9555**. No password is required.

We hope you will join us! ❙

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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 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
civicfednews AT montgomerycivic.org

TO SUBMIT AN ARTICLE, SEE PAGE 22

Our November Speakers

Our guest speakers for the November 9, 2026, meeting will be Lorig Charkoudian, who represents District 20 in the House of Delegates and serves as Vice Chair of the Economic Matters Committee, and Brian J. Feldman, who represents District 15 in the Maryland State Senate. The State Senate President announced that Feldman will be the new majority leader and chief of policy. He previously chaired one of only four standing committees in the Senate: the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee.

BRIAN FELDMAN

LORIG CHARKOUDIAN

Brian Feldman also serves as a member of the Executive Nominations Committee, the Rules Committee, and the Legislative Policy Committee. Additionally, he is the Senate's representative on the Maryland Economic Development Commission and the Maryland Commission on Climate Change. At the national level, as a member of the National Conference of State Legislatures, he serves as the National Co-Chair of the Task Force on Energy Supply. Prior to being elected to the Maryland State Senate, Feldman was a member of the Maryland House of Delegates, serving on the House Economic Matters Committee and chairing its Banking, Economic Development, Science, and Technology Subcommittee. Additionally, Feldman was appointed to the leadership position of House Parliamentarian, served as the House Chair of the Joint Information Technology and Biotechnology Committee, and Chair of the Montgomery County House Delegation.

As the only Attorney/CPA in the Maryland General Assembly, Senator Feldman practices law outside the legislature, specializing in tax litigation and tax controversies. He was previously employed by PriceWaterhouse and the U.S. Department of Justice, Tax Divi-

MORE

Our Speakers, cont.

sion, where he was a three-time recipient of the Justice Department's prestigious "Outstanding Attorney Award."

Feldman received a Bachelor of Science degree in accounting from Penn State University, a Juris Doctor from the University of Pittsburgh School of Law, and a Master's Degree in Government from Johns Hopkins University. He has also taught graduate courses in state policymaking and healthcare at both Johns Hopkins and the University of Maryland. Numerous honors and awards have been conferred on Brian for his work in the Legislature.

Currently, Feldman sits on the Board of Directors for the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. Senator Feldman and his wife, Janice, an attorney, have two children, Matthew and Rebecca, who both graduated from Montgomery County Public Schools.

Lorig Charkoudian represents District 20 in Montgomery County as a member of the Maryland House of Delegates. She has served as a member of the Economic Matters Committee since 2019, becoming its vice chair in December. She also serves on the Rules and Executive Nominations Committee.

Charkoudian was sworn in on January 9, 2019. She is the first Armenian American member of the Maryland House of Delegates. (In Armenian, Lorig means "little quail.")

Charkoudian earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in mathematical economics in 1995, afterwards moving to Baltimore to attend Johns Hopkins University, where she earned a Doctor of Philosophy degree in economics in 2002.

She has won more than a dozen awards from community and advocacy organizations.

Charkoudian has two children and lives in Takoma Park, Maryland. She is vegan.

According to MoCo 360, since 2013, Charkoudian has annually run 72 miles from Hagerstown to Baltimore to fundraise for mediation programs between families and prisoners. ▮

President's Letter

Dear Delegates and Members,

With the November election and a transition in County leadership ahead, MCCF continues to follow decisions affecting our neighborhoods and help associations keep residents informed.

Our November 9 meeting at 7 p.m. will feature Senator Brian Feldman and Delegate Lorig Charkoudian discussing electricity costs, data centers, and anticipated housing legislation. Senator Feldman's upcoming role as Maryland Senate majority leader and chief of policy makes this an especially timely conversation. (See page 3.) Invite your neighbors. The public is welcome. These discussions are one way MCCF helps members stay informed and engage directly with policymakers.

After the election, we look forward to working with incoming County leaders and our state delegation, including legislators taking on new responsibilities. We will build those relationships while maintaining MCCF's independent voice and advocating for meaningful community participation early in the policy process.

That advocacy continues as the current Council considers legislation affecting our neighborhoods. Cheryl Gannon and fellow members have analyzed Bill 41-26, which would remove the owner-occupancy requirement for accessory dwelling units. Cheryl wrote MCCF's testimony and shared details to help members understand the proposal. MCCF supports ADUs but has raised concerns about accountability, neighborhood impacts, and investor competition for single-family homes. Cheryl is preparing an update on proposed safeguards and enforcement questions as the bill moves toward full Council consideration. **Members and residents should contact Councilmembers now to make their views heard before the vote.** We also distributed a listserv- and newsletter-ready summary for associations to share with residents.

Alan Bowser's article examines pedestrian-safety investments, results, and the role of community advocacy. We are also tracking how proposed forest-conservation law changes could affect forests, existing conservation easements, and neighborhood tree canopy. The Planning Board will consider the amendments on November 5, with public testimony accepted.

We welcome the Greater Olney Civic Association and the Darnestown Civic Association, whose

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President's Letter, cont.

participation will broaden our representation in the northern part of the County. Associations bring different perspectives, and sharing those perspectives helps us identify common concerns and opportunities to work together. Alan's article explores the history and meaning of "citizens" and "civic" association names, emphasizing that welcoming neighbors requires more than a name.

Please share MCCF information with your residents and let us know what would be useful to your association. We welcome help with recruitment, communications, or following an issue. Thank you for your participation and the work you do in your communities.

—*Linda Nemec*
President, MCCF ▮

TIPS: Keep Access and Contacts Current

▮ **Share financial access.** Have at least two authorized officers on your organization's bank account, and make sure debit-card access does not depend on one person. Review authorizations whenever leadership changes.

▮ **Update your membership information.** Keep your organization's officers and your contact details current in Simplidues so MCCF communications reach the right people. Individual members should also review their contact details.

▮ **Update your contacts with Montgomery Planning.** Keep your organization's contact information current so you receive notices about development proposals, zoning changes, and opportunities to comment on plans affecting your neighborhood. Outdated contacts could mean missing an opportunity to weigh in.

▮ **Check your email addresses.** Several addresses in MCCF's membership database appear to be incorrect or no longer working. Please check your email addresses in Simply Dues, correct any errors, and replace inactive addresses so you don't miss important updates.

TOP

Vision Zero in Mont, County: Priority Roads, Public Investment, Community Advocacy

By Alan Bowser, MCCF Secretary

Montgomery County's Vision Zero initiative makes an ambitious promise: nobody should die or suffer a life-altering injury while traveling on its roads. Adopted in 2016, the program succeeded the county's Pedestrian Safety Initiative and established a goal of eliminating fatal and serious-injury crashes by 2030

The first action plan followed in 2017; the current Vision Zero 2030 Action Plan contains 45 actions addressing street design, transportation choices, and safety culture. Its underlying principle is that preventing deaths requires a safer transportation system, not simply repeated appeals for individual caution.

HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

The nuts and bolts combine engineering, enforcement, education, and data analysis. Engineers install sidewalks, pedestrian refuge islands, curb extensions, protected bicycle lanes, and pedestrian hybrid beacons—signals that stop vehicles so people can cross. Signal timing can give pedestrians a head start, while restrictions on right turns on red reduce conflicts with turning vehicles. Speed cameras, impaired-driving enforcement, and public education supplement these physical changes.

The 2023 Safe Streets Act strengthened this framework by requiring designated right-turn-on-red restrictions, additional traffic-control measures, an automated-enforcement plan, and infrastructure reviews following certain crashes involving students traveling to or from school. The FY2026 work plan subsequently called for completing pedestrian head-start signals and right-turn restrictions at 230 intersections in business districts and near schools.

The county's Pedestrian Master Plan, approved in October 2023, addresses the broader walking environment: missing sidewalks, inaccessible crossings, maintenance, connections to transit, and the needs of people using mobility devices. It complements Vision Zero by treating pedestrian safety as part of a connected transportation network rather than a collection of isolated intersections.

PRIORITY STREETS: WHERE IMPROVEMENTS MATTER MOST

Targeting resources is essential.

MORE

Vision Zero, cont.

The county's FY2024 report identified a High Injury Network comprising approximately 3 percent of roads but accounting for 41 percent of serious and fatal injuries. This measure combines fatalities and serious injuries; it is not a ranking of streets by pedestrian deaths alone. Nevertheless, it provides a stronger basis for investment than responding only to the loudest complaints.

Several corridors illustrate the priorities and the different kinds of intervention required:

❙ Georgia Avenue has experienced repeated pedestrian fatalities. Its safety problems also intersect with transit access: the Action Committee for Transit has criticized conditions on Georgia Avenue and Route 355 where bus passengers face difficult crossings or substantial detours to reach signals. That is an advocacy assessment, but it identifies a central planning question—whether safe crossings are available where people actually need them.

❙ Veirs Mill Road remains a corridor of concern. A pedestrian died following a July 2025 collision near Galt Avenue. County planning work explicitly examined the corridor through a Vision Zero initiative, demonstrating that the need for safety improvements has been recognized for years.

❙ New Hampshire Avenue received a $15 million state investment for pedestrian, bicycle, and multimodal improvements along approximately 2.5 miles between University Boulevard and Powder Mill Road. The project illustrates the importance of state participation on major arteries beyond county control.

❙ East-West Highway is another state priority. A 2026 legislative fiscal analysis reported that its Pedestrian Safety Action Plan project was fully funded, with $16.8 million included in Maryland's FY2026–2031 transportation program.

❙ University Boulevard West received bus-and-bike-only lanes in February 2024, an improvement identified in the county's FY2024 Vision Zero report under work on High Injury Network corridors.

❙ Montgomery Village Avenue demonstrates the county-road approach. Following a 2024 road safety audit, officials proposed improvements along 2.4 miles between Midcounty Highway and Whitman Road, including new crosswalks, median extensions, pedestrian hybrid beacons, accessibility improvements, and clearer signs and markings.

These are documented priority

MORE

Vision Zero, cont.

corridors and improvement locations, not a definitive "deadliest roads" ranking. A defensible ranking would require a consistent period, comparable road segments, and a clear distinction among pedestrian deaths, all traffic deaths, and serious injuries. The county's public crash-data tools provide a starting point for that analysis.

SUCCESSES—AND THE LIMITS OF PROGRESS

Preliminary county figures recorded 248 serious-injury and fatal crashes in 2025, 33 percent below the annual average for 2012–2016. These are crashes, not individual deaths. The county also reports a 44 percent reduction in pedestrian-vehicle collisions at locations receiving traffic-calming treatments. That finding supports targeted intervention, but it should not be presented as a countywide decline.

Other figures show why the program cannot yet be called successful overall. A January 2026 Council newsletter reported 678 pedestrian- and cyclist-involved crashes and 18 fatalities in 2025; those totals combine pedestrians and cyclists. October reporting separately cited 14 pedestrian deaths in 2025. Keeping these categories distinct is essential when judging progress.

The 2026 picture is troubling but not fully reconciled. October reporting cited 15 pedestrian deaths during the year to that point, while figures accompanying proposed sidewalk legislation reported 335 pedestrians struck, 41 serious injuries, and 17 fatal crashes during January-September, with pedestrian-involved crashes up 10 percent. The differing fatality-related figures should not be merged into a single definitive count. They nevertheless show that serious pedestrian harm remains an urgent problem.

FUNDING: SUBSTANTIAL INVESTMENT, CONTINUING CONSTRAINTS

The county's FY2027 approved budget identifies $171 million in operating and capital expenditures supporting Vision Zero. This is a broad, multiprogram figure—not a pedestrian-safety-only appropriation and not evidence that every needed sidewalk or crossing is funded.

State finances have also created uncertainty. In December 2023, Maryland announced proposed transportation reductions addressing a $3.3 billion six-year shortfall. Legislators criticized nearly $1 bil-

MORE

Vision Zero, cont.

lion in proposed reductions affecting transit, bicycle, and pedestrian investments. Those were statewide proposals, not a Montgomery County pedestrian-safety cut of that amount.

The financial picture subsequently improved: Maryland's January 2026 transportation program incorporated approximately $400 million in additional annual transportation revenue. Specific projects, including East-West Highway improvements, have identified funding. The evidence, therefore, supports concern about competing demands and past funding pressures, but not a blanket claim that pedestrian safety receives no money. The more useful questions are which projects remain unfunded, which are delayed, and how rapidly appropriated money produces protection on the street.

LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS: ADVOCACY, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND SUPPORT

Montgomery County Civic Federation

The Montgomery County Civic Federation has made pedestrian safety a subject of organized civic advocacy. Its November 2019 program, "Pedestrian Safety Solutions in Montgomery County," brought attention to serious crashes and fatalities. A federation resolution dated November 11, 2019, affirmed the 2030 goal and called for pedestrian safety to receive the highest priority. The federation also participated in the Pedestrian Master Plan advisory group.

Its role connects countywide policy with neighborhood experience: residents can identify missing sidewalks, difficult crossings, inadequate lighting, and dangerous turning movements that may otherwise receive insufficient attention. The federation's documented programming and planning participation provide channels for bringing those concerns into public decisions.

Action Committee for Transit

The Action Committee for Transit advocated bringing Vision Zero to Montgomery County and links pedestrian safety to usable public transportation. Its proposals include lower speeds, conspicuous crosswalks, speed enforcement, restrictions on turning on red, and street reconstruction that encourages safe driving. It also challenges the practice of setting speed limits primar-

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Vision Zero, cont.

ily around existing driving speeds rather than pedestrian safety.

ACT's contribution is a sustained critique of automobile-first design: a transit system cannot work well if passengers cannot safely walk to stops or cross the road after leaving a bus. Its pedestrian advocacy therefore extends beyond individual crash sites to the design and operation of entire corridors.

❙ Montgomery County Families for Safe Streets

Montgomery County Families for Safe Streets combines advocacy with support for people affected by traffic violence. Its origins lie in memorial work beginning in 2019, when ACT and other advocates sought to commemorate every non-motorist traffic death in the county. More than 20 memorials were held during 2019–2021, using "ghost shoes" and "ghost bikes" near crash locations.

The county chapter launched in spring 2021 in partnership with the Washington Area Bicyclist Association. Its mission includes support and shared community for victims' families and friends, including those affected by pedestrian, cyclist, driver, and other roadway deaths. This work makes the consequences of unsafe roads visible while helping bereaved families avoid isolation.

❙ Montgomery County Council of PTAs

The Montgomery County Council of PTAs, or MCCPTA, does have an explicit pedestrian-safety focus. Its Safe Routes Subcommittee partners with Montgomery County Public Schools and state and local agencies to improve safety at school bus stops and for students walking or bicycling to school. That remit directly connects parent advocacy with the county's transportation responsibilities.

MCCPTA was also named as a partner with MCDOT, MCPS, and Safe Routes to School in organizing a Family Safety Day. Its participation demonstrates that pedestrian safety is not solely a transportation-advocacy issue; it is also a school-access and child-welfare concern.

Vision Zero's ultimate measure is *outcomes*. Infrastructure projects, enforcement, budgets, and civic participation matter only insofar as they reduce deaths and serious injuries. Montgomery County has built a substantial framework, but persistent harm on its priority corridors shows that the distance between adopting a safety goal and delivering safe streets remains considerable. ❙

Average Traffic Counts in Montgomery County on I-495

By Jerry Garson, Chair, Transportation Committee

Based on an analysis of traffic on I-495 (the Beltway) for the period of September 1, 2026, to September 27, 2026, I offer the following comments.

A traffic counter was set up by the Maryland State Highway Administration on the Beltway Westbound, 0.08 of a mile East of Sligo Creek Parkway, which is between Colesville Road and Georgia Avenue. The *peak hour* for traffic Westbound occurred on Saturday, September 12, 2026, with **7,199** vehicles between 11 a.m. and 12 Noon.

The *average* traffic on those 18 weekdays between 5 a.m. to 6 a.m. was **6,325** vehicles.

The average traffic on those 18 weekdays between 6 a.m. to 7 a.m. was **5,812** vehicles.

The average traffic on those 18 weekdays between 7 a.m. to 8 a.m. was **4,792** vehicles.

The average traffic on those 18 weekdays between 8 a.m. to 9 a.m. was **4,821** vehicles

Only on one weekday morning was traffic not at a peak between 5 a.m. and 6 a.m.

Since the traffic was below capacity and congested between 6 a.m. and 9 a.m., a significant amount of traffic was diverted to University Blvd., Dale Drive, East-West Highway, or to the InterCounty Connector.

There is very heavy traffic on Seven Locks Road because of the congestion on the American Legion Bridge; most mornings and afternoons, many drivers get off I-270 Southbound at Montrose Road and get back on I-495 at River Road.

In the afternoons, the traffic backup towards I-270 was on the ramp from I-495 to I-270; traffic backs up from 3:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. due to the loss of a lane to HOV use and traffic diverts onto Seven Locks Road from River Road to Montrose Road. Seven Locks Road qualifies as a State Road since it connects to Interstate Roads: I-270 and I-495.

Traffic counts for the first 18 weekdays of September 2026 on I -495 from Virginia *Eastbound* at Persimmon Tree Road were as follows:

7 a.m. to 8 a.m. — 7,768
3 p.m. to 4 p.m. — 5,404
4 p.m. to 5 p.m. — 3,972
5 p.m. to 6 p.m. — 4,660
6 p.m. to 7 p.m. — 6,313

MORE

Beltway Traffic, cont.

The traffic counts for the first 18 weekdays of September 2026 on I -495 to Virginia *Westbound* at Persimmon Tree Road were as follows:

6 a.m. to 7 a.m. — 6,744
7 a.m. to 8 a.m. — 6,993
8 a.m. to 9 a.m. — 6,685

The peak traffic counts for all of the weekend days of September 2026 on I-495 to Virginia Westbound at Persimmon Tree Road were as follows:

Sat 9/5/26 — 7,170
Sun 9/6/26 — 7,279
Sat 9/12/26 — 7,058
Sun 9/13/26 — 7,338
Sat 9/19/26 — 7,117
Sun 9/20/26 — 7,45
Sat 9/26/26 — 7,293
Sun 9/27/26 — 7,122 ▮

Citizens Assn. or Civic Association: What's in a Name?

By Alan Bowser, MCCF Secretary

Does it really matter whether a neighborhood organization calls itself a "citizens association" or a "civic association"? At first glance, the difference seems small. Both names suggest neighbors working together to improve their community. But names also carry history, shape first impressions, and send signals about who belongs. The real question is *inclusion*: which name best reflects the organization's identity and makes people comfortable joining in?

A LITTLE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Montgomery County has examples of both traditions. Archival records document the Woodside Park Civic Association's activities during 1938–1950 and the Homewood Citizens Association's activities during 1954–1956. Both names were part of the county's neighborhood landscape generations ago. Neither should be treated as a recent invention or an entirely different kind of organization.

To understand that local history, it helps to look across the District line. Washington's citizens associations were organizing by the late nineteenth century. The East Washington Citizens Association, founded in 1871, sought a fair share of public improvements for neighborhoods east of the Capitol. After Congress eliminated the District's elected government in 1874, neighborhood associations became especially important channels for

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Civic or Citizens, cont.

bringing residents' concerns before appointed commissioners and Congress. They offered a voice in a city where residents lacked ordinary local voting power.

But that voice was not equally available to everyone. In 1910, twenty neighborhood groups organized the Federation of Citizens Associations, whose constitution included a whites-only clause that remained until 1972. Black neighborhood organizations developed their own network, and nine associations established the D.C. Federation of Civic Associations in 1921. In that setting, "citizens" and "civic" acquired a racial significance that went well beyond their dictionary meanings: the two federation names reflected separate, unequal systems of neighborhood representation.

That distinction matters today because "civic" was not simply a modern replacement invented to sound more welcoming. In Washington, it became associated with Black residents organizing for services, recognition, and influence when the white federation excluded them. Still, that history should not become a rule applied to every individual association. The distinction describes a particular institutional history, not an automatic racial meaning for either word everywhere.

Montgomery County's suburban growth unfolded alongside this Washington organizing tradition. Railroads and streetcars connected new Maryland communities to the capital in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Chevy Chase's trolley line opened in 1892, and Takoma Park developed around rail service and later streetcars. These connections created communities whose daily lives crossed the District line and whose residents faced familiar neighborhood questions about transportation, development, and public improvements.

The clearest connection is therefore a shared regional setting, not proof that every Montgomery County association copied a particular Washington organization or its racial membership rules. The county developed its own mix of "citizens" and "civic" associations within a metropolitan area shaped by both neighborhood advocacy and segregation. Montgomery Planning's research documents how developers, property owners, and neighborhood associations used restrictive covenants to maintain

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Civic or Citizens, cont.

racial boundaries as suburban communities grew.

That history deserves an honest look. But it would be a mistake to assume that every association shared those practices—or that the words "citizens" and "civic" tell us which ones did.

There is another side to the story. In Takoma Park, the Colored Citizens Association, led by Lee Jordan, advocated for recreational facilities for Black residents beginning in 1941. Its work helped create opportunities denied under segregation. Here, "citizens" was part of a demand for recognition and fair treatment, not a declaration that others should be excluded.

THE CASE FOR KEEPING 'CITIZENS ASSOCIATION'

The strongest argument for keeping "citizens" is that it can express something worth preserving: people taking responsibility for their community. The word does not refer only to nationality. Merriam-Webster also defines a citizen as "an inhabitant of a city or town." In that sense, being a citizen means belonging to a place and helping shape its future.

There is also the matter of continuity. A familiar name can connect today's members with years of neighborhood work. If earlier generations organized for better services or equal treatment under that name, changing it may feel less like updating a sign and more like loosening a connection to their efforts.

Cabin John offers a useful local example. The Cabin John Citizens Association supports community celebrations and neighborhood communications while advocating for safe streets, parks, streams, and other local concerns. Its activities illustrate how "citizens association" can describe the everyday work of building community, rather than simply a statement about legal status.

The downside is that "citizen" also has a legal meaning. Someone who is not a U.S. citizen could reasonably wonder whether membership is open to them. An association may intend the broader meaning, but intentions do not always travel with the name. That is a communication problem worth taking seriously.

MORE

Civic or Citizens, cont.

THE CASE FOR KEEPING OR CHOOSING 'CIVIC ASSOCIATION'

"Civic association" shifts the emphasis from who people are to what they do together. As a naming choice, it can communicate shared responsibility without raising the same question about citizenship status. For an organization trying to reach neighbors unfamiliar with its history, that may be a meaningful advantage.

It is hardly a break with local tradition, either. The Woodside Park Civic Association's documented activities reach back to at least the 1930s. An association can choose "civic" without suggesting it is inventing a new mission or rejecting Montgomery County's neighborhood history.

But "civic" is not perfect. It can sound formal, even a little institutional. Some people may find "citizens" more personal and more closely connected to democratic participation. And adopting "civic" does not automatically make an organization more welcoming. A new name cannot, by itself, change who gets heard, who serves on the board, or whose concerns make the agenda.

For groups already called civic associations, keeping the name offers continuity while avoiding the ambiguity of "citizens." The argument against keeping it would be practical rather than moral: does it actually communicate the organization's purpose clearly to its neighbors?

MAKING THE CHOICE

The best approach is to avoid treating either name as a verdict on an organization's character. Ask what the history shows, what the membership rules say, and what neighbors understand when they see the name.

Keeping "citizens" can be reasonable when its meaning is clearly inclusive. Keeping or adopting "civic" can be reasonable when it offers a clearer welcome. Either way, the name should support the work—not stand in for it. The most convincing invitation is an organization where people can participate and know their voices matter. ▮

MCCF General Meeting #978 Minutes, Monday, October 12, 2026, via Zoom

By Alan Bowser, Secretary
(View video of meeting here.)

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

Call to Order: President Linda Nemec called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm..

Agenda and Minutes: The meeting agenda and the minutes for the September meeting were formally approved as submitted.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Jerry Garson reported on the financial status for FY27 (July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027):

| *Membership Dues Received:* $1,364

| *Total Expenses:* $482 ($182 for website maintenance; $300 for organization memberships)

| *Net Income:* $883

| *Current Bank Balance:* $5,260

2. PRESENTATION: MONTGOMERY PLANNING WORK PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Guest Speakers: Lisa Govoni (Housing, Zoning, and Infrastructure Supervisor) and Bridget Broullire (Deputy Director of Administration) of the Montgomery County Planning Board.

Agency Priorities: Core focus areas include housing production, multimodal transportation, environmental resilience, economic competitiveness, equity, and placemaking.

Budget Request: The Planning Board's FY28 budget request will be presented to the board on October 22, 2026.

Active and Upcoming Sector Plans:

| *Friendship Heights Sector Plan:* Currently in work sessions; transmittal to the County Council is set for November 2026.

| *Germantown Sector Plan Amendment:* Scheduled for transmittal in April 2027.

| *Eastern Silver Spring Communities Plan:* Working draft has been introduced and a public hearing scheduled; transmittal set for June 2027.

| *Damascus Main Street Sector Plan Amendment:* Initiative has begun following secured state funding, focusing on fast-tracked Main Street improvements.

| *Carderock Spring Historic District Amendment:* Scheduled for Council review by FY28.

| *Wheaton Plan:* In early cor-

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October Minutes, cont.

ridor plan development stages.

| *Kensington Sector Plan, Climate Resilience and Adaptation Functional Plan, and Burtonsville Employment Area Minor Master Plan Amendment:* All are on the active work program but currently delayed due to staff capacity or funding constraints.

Studies and Initiatives:

| *Retail Market Analysis:* On the Planning Board agenda for Thursday, October 15, 2026.

| *Ongoing Studies:* Clarksburg to Montgomery Village transportation study, Green Streets guidelines, and the Greater North Bethesda Implementation Study remain in progress.

| *Growth and Infrastructure Policy Update:* Review process begins next summer (conducted quadrennially).

| *Digital and AI Policies:* Internal AI usage guidelines are under development. The deadline for ADA digital compliance has been extended to April 2027, with legacy asset remediation underway.

| *State TOD Designations:* Official Transit-Oriented Development designations are being sought for the Bethesda, Silver Spring, Friendship Heights, and Wheaton Central Business Districts.

| *Community Planning Academy:* Free, online, self-paced 10-module course (available in English, Spanish, and Chinese) with over 550 enrolled residents; graduations occur biannually.

3. HOUSING PREFERENCES SURVEY FINDINGS

Overview: Results presented from the first statistically valid countywide housing survey (~874 responses gathered via mail, email, text, and phone).

Key Insights:

| *Move Drivers and Affordability:* Job proximity and employment opportunities are the primary draws to the county. Housing affordability remains the leading factor in home selection, particularly among younger and newer residents.

| *Renter Demographic:* 80% of renters express a desire to buy, but 60% cite the down payment as their primary barrier (rising to 81% among Black respondents and families with young children).

| *Policy Support:* 76% support at least one policy change to increase housing affordability. Integrating townhomes and small-lot homes into single-family neighborhoods received the highest support; building

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October Minutes, cont.

ADUs, accepting traffic increases, or renting room space received the lowest support.

| *Housing Trade-Offs:* 85% of respondents would consider a smaller single-family detached home, driven by affordability for younger families and aging in place for seniors.

| *In-Commuter Survey:* An informal, non-random survey confirmed that while employment draws workers to Montgomery County, high housing costs serve as the main barrier to residing here.

4. ADU POLICY UPDATE & COMMUNITY RESPONSE TO BILL 41-26

ADU Production Context: Current output sits at ~40 units per year following 2019 reforms. High construction costs ($250,000–$300,000) and limited traditional financing remain barriers. Key jurisdictions with high ADU growth (e.g., Portland, Los Angeles) paired zoning reforms with direct financial incentives, which Montgomery County has not implemented.

Legislative History:

| *2013–2019 (ZTA 7, ZTA 19-01):* Streamlined licensing under DHCA, removed conditional use and lot-size/spacing limits, and relaxed parking requirements.

| *September 2026 (ZTA 26-06):* Aligned county code with state law, expanding eligible zones, further relaxing parking, and increasing permitted ADU size up to 75% of the primary dwelling.

Pending Legislation (Bill 41-26):

| Proposes removing the owner-occupancy requirement and offering fee waivers for ADUs rented at ≤65% AMI for 10 consecutive years.

| PHP Committee work session is scheduled for October 26, 2026. Note: The Planning Board did not support removing owner-occupancy; the bill was introduced from the Council side with 9 co-sponsors.

Community and Federation Concerns:

| Removing owner-occupancy effectively legalizes investor-owned duplexes in single-family residential zones without guaranteeing a net gain in affordable units.

| The $2,500 affordable ADU subsidy is insufficient relative to the 10-year rent restriction requirement.

| Housing code enforcement is already under-resourced, and an increase in absentee landlords could worsen noncompliance.

| *Advocacy and Outreach Strat-*

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October Minutes, cont.

egy: Members discussed engaging potential swing votes (Councilmembers Sheba Evans, Loriann Sales, and Evan Glass), requesting a formal position statement and press conference from the County Executive, and distributing educational summaries to civic listservs. Potential compromise amendments were discussed, such as retaining owner-occupancy rules while allowing exceptions for temporary work/military relocations or caregiving.

5. TRAFFIC AND INFRASTRUCTURE CONCERNS

Data Review: Jerry Garson shared State Highway Administration (SHA) traffic data analyzed along westbound corridors near Sligo Creek Parkway during September. (See page 12.)

Capacity Limits: Key regional arteries (I-270, I-495) operate at or beyond capacity, with peak weekly congestion shifting to Saturday afternoons. Local feeder roads (University Blvd., East-West Hwy., Dale Dr., Seven Locks Rd.) routinely absorb diverted highway overflow, while the American Legion Bridge experiences gridlock six days a week.

Systemic Issues: Interstate roads are excluded from Adequate Public Facilities (APF) calculations, masking local infrastructure stress. Additionally, declining gas tax revenues due to the transition to hybrid/electric vehicles are reducing available highway maintenance funding.

6. COMMITTEE REPORTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Upcoming Meeting: The November meeting will feature State Senator Brian Feldman (Chair, Education, Energy, and Environment Committee) to discuss data center policy, rising electricity costs, and state housing legislation. Outreach is also underway for Delegate Laura Charkoudian (District 20).

Legislative Flag: Bill 48-26 was highlighted, which proposes a $2,500 property tax credit for MCPS union members while the $692 credit was recently removed for approximately 200,000 homeowners.

Master Plan Enforceability: A question regarding the legal status of master plans (noting a Maryland Supreme Court ruling describing site plans as “aspirational”) was raised by Sheldon and deferred for full discussion at a future meeting.

7. ACTION ITEMS AND NEXT STEPS

ADU Summary Distribution:

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President Linda Nemec to draft and circulate a short summary of Bill 41-26 for distribution across member civic association listservs.

Grassroots Coalition Coordination: Hold an organizing call tomorrow to map out community outreach, listserv communications, and Councilmember meetings regarding Bill 41-26.

County Executive Outreach: Request Cheryl to coordinate with the County Executive's office regarding a public statement, newsletter update, or press conference on Bill 41-26.

Firewall Requirement Follow-up: Lisa Govoni to follow up with Paul Mortensen regarding specific fire code/firewall applications for ADUs and report back.

Presentation Materials: Lisa Govoni and Bridget Briar to send the Montgomery Planning PowerPoint presentation and staff contact details to Cheryl for distribution. ▮

MCCF Executive Cmte. Minutes for October 22, 2026

By Alan Bowser, Secretary

1. Call to Order. President Nemec called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. Members present: Linda Nemec, Jerry Garson, Cheryl Gannon, Elizabeth Joyce, Ken Markison, Alan Bowser, Daniel Meijer, Joseph Harkins, and Jacquie Bokow.

2. Treasurer's Report. Treasurer Jerry Garson reported a bank balance of $5,338.00. Members discussed bank account access by Federation officers.

3. ADU Bill and Legislative Strategy. Cheryl Gannon discussed the ADU bill currently before the County Council, with a focus on the owner-occupancy issue. Members discussed related advocacy issues. Gannon also noted that an anti-algorithmic rent-fixing bill had passed the Council unanimously.

4. November Meeting. Maryland State Senator Brian Feldman and State Delegate Lorig Charkoudian will discuss housing and energy issues.

5. Pedestrian Safety. Members discussed several pedestrian safety-related issues of interest to

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member associations. Members suggested ways to raise awareness of Vision Zero policies and programs for Montgomery County residents, including pedestrian friendly infrastructure and community education, and traffic enforcement. Members recommended a future general meeting or community town hall on pedestrian safety, with speakers from County, state and nonprofit subject matter experts.

6. MCCF Membership. 2nd Vice President Liz Joyce reported on membership recruitment and renewals.

7. Social Happy Hour. President Nemec recommended that the Federation hold a "happy hour" for Delegates and members on Thursday, November 5th, 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. in Silver Spring.

8. Newsletter. Submissions for the December 2026 newsletter are due October 29th.

9. Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 8 p.m. ▮

Montgomery County Civic Federation
www.montgomerycivic.org
info AT montgomerycivic.org
Twitter Feed @mccivicfed
MCCF Facebook Page

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

Send all address corrections to *membership AT montgomerycivic.org*.

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