



# CIVIC FEDERATION NEWS

Official Publication of the Montgomery County Civic Federation

Serving the Public Interest Since 1925

Peggy Dennis, Editor Phone: 301-983-9738 Email: hotyakker@aol.com

745<sup>th</sup> Session

www.montgomerycivic.org

March 2003



As Ruth Van Mark (center), Deputy Staff Director of the US Department of Transportation, listens, Stan Schiff (right) describes transportation funding. Councilmember Marilyn Praisner (left) takes notes in preparation for her remarks on sources of transportation funding. Dan Wilhelm was the fourth panelist (not shown).—*Photos by Cary Lamari.*

## March Program

### Why Not Elevated Monobeam Rail Transit?

**O**ur March program will be a presentation by G. Stanley Doore of the “Maryland-Virginia Monobeam-Monorail Initiative” on the advantages of the elevated monobeam rail and why we should be considering using this form of transportation to expand and improve our public transit.

The monobeam rail has about the same high-volume capacity as heavy rail, but is less obtrusive and less costly to build and operate than high-volume, heavy rail like Metrorail and low-volume, light rail trolleys. (cont.)

## *In This Issue . . .*

March Program: Monobeam Rail	Page 1
Feb. Delegates Meeting Minutes	Page 2
Feb. ExCom Meeting Minutes	Page 3
The Threat To Smart Growth	Page 4
Pedestrian Safety & Snow Removal	Page 5
Community Heroes: Humphrey & Gilligan	Page 6
From the President	Page 7
2003 General Delegates Meetings	Page 7
Nomination and Awards Committees	Page 8
Duncan’s Campaign Funds Exposed	Page 8
Federation “Listserv” Established	Page 9
A Short History of Monorail	Page 10
Directory of Officers and Committees	Page 11
Agenda for Delegates Meeting	Page 12

## Monobeam Rail Transit (cont.)

Trolleys, subways and the maglev require about a 25-foot wide right of way, whereas the monobeam rail needs only 15-feet for two-way simultaneous travel, so land acquisition costs and impact on adjacent homes are lessened.

The subterranean tunneling to extend or add to Metro takes forever and costs an astronomical amount. Putting in trolley lines requires digging up streets and considerable construction disruption. Installing a monobeam rail system, on the other hand, is relatively fast, simple and inexpensive, a little like building a Tinker Toy. The monobeam rail requires four-foot pylons to hold up the elevated rail structure. These pylons are built in place at about 120 foot intervals. The monobeam is about 2-meters (6.5 feet) wide and provides two-way simultaneous travel because the cars are attached to both sides of the beam rather than riding on top. The beams are prefabricated off-site and require about an hour and a half to install.

Because trolleys at street level must compete with traffic along the road and at intersections, they are less safe and can only go as fast as the flow of the surrounding traffic. The monobeam rail, on the other hand, rides along above the street traffic with speed unhindered and much greater safety. Urban and suburban elevated monobeam rail vehicles can safely travel safely up to 70 miles per hour. A monobeam is also about 10 decibels quieter than other types of rail transit, again lessening the environmental impact on adjoining homes.

Have these facts piqued your interest? They should have! So, plan on attending the Delegates Meeting on Monday, March 10 to learn more about this interesting transit system and why it has not been included in the list of options to help relieve traffic gridlock.

## Delegate Meeting Minutes Feb. 10, 2003

—by Richard Zierdt, Recording Secretary

MCCF President Cary Lamari called meeting to order at 7:19 PM.

Program: Stan Schiff begins program on transportation funding. Dan Wilhelm gives a presentation with charts and handouts which are also projected on screen. Ruth Van Mark (Deputy Staff Director for the Federal Department of Transportation) speaks. T21 project due for authorization by Sept 30, 2003. Senator Imhoff. Describes various transportation funding increases.

Maryland pays more in federal gas taxes than it receives back (donor vs. recipient states). Do some states drive more SUVs than others? Perhaps more factors should be considered, such as number of miles driven.

Councilmember Marilyn Praisner: describes County sources of transportation revenue. Four areas of the County subject to an impact tax.

*Community Hero Award:* presented by President Lamari to the Dr. Reverend Thomas Jeremiah Baltimore, founder and senior minister of the People's Community Baptist Church (see article in the February 2003 Newsletter, pages 6 and 7).

*Announcements:* Dick Strombotne. State senators introduced study of the outflux of seniors to other states because of Maryland's taxes (Senate bill 183). West Montgomery County Citizens Advisory Board has three openings. Election Reform committee will meet Thursday, Feb 27.

Agenda: added are (1) Northwood High School, (2) Real Estate taxes and (3) Liability insurance for the MCCF. Additions adopted.

Minutes from the Delegates Meeting, January 13, 2003 approved with one abstention.

### *New Business.*

Sarah Gilligan, Maplewood Citizens Association. ZTA 03-01. Bill 38-02 passed, but ZTA 03-01 would be a compromise, by adding a buffer between existing housing and new. Distributes list of upcoming meetings and hearings. Marilyn Praisner has offered amendments to ZTA 03-01 in terms of language, such as the word "style."

Bob Jones: Bob was asked to file a FOIA of the County Department of Transportation asking for information to evaluate the allocation of resources related to street maintenance subject to cost. (meaning the cost, if any, would be discussed at a later time). Dick Kauffunger asks that MCCF authorize Bob Jones to file such a FOIA. Passes 22-2-2.

MC Property Taxes: Marvin Weinman, Montgomery Taxpayers League. Distributes a handout on "Factors Determining Your Property Tax."

Charles Pritchard: Northwood High School. Was closed 10 years ago. Thanks Marilyn Praisner for preserving the school. Now it will re-open in 2004.

Mike Weiser. MCCF Liability insurance. Investigate liability insurance as per cost and need. Recommends that the MCCF investigate liabilities. If nothing else, it would be comforting to members. Dick Kauffunger describes the topic being researched 10 years ago. The cost was

prohibitive, and individual homeowner policies usually cover individuals. Motion to extend debate 5 minutes passes with 3 nays. Luella Mast moves that the issue be referred to the executive committee. Passes with no objections.

Meeting dates. General consensus is to not change the date of the Delegates Meetings.

Fifa Northrup. We need to increase membership.

Montgomery County bill 303-03, increase in automobile registration fees for exclusive County use. Dean moves that the MCCF oppose bill. Five seconds. Stan Schiff: there has been insufficient discussion of this issue. Dean: Cary wrote about this in the newsletter. Charles Pritchard. Marvin's presentation was very good. Motion passes 14-6-3.

Meeting is adjourned at 10:07 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Richard Zierdt, MCCF Recording Secretary

## ExComm Meeting Minutes

### Feb. 20, 2003

—by Richard Zierdt, Recording Secretary

**M**eeting called to order [minutes taken by Dean Ahmad until Richard Zierdt's arrival] at 7:55 PM.

No announcements. No objection to adding snow removal and electoral reform report to agenda. No objection to postponing approval of previous minutes until after Richard Zierdt's arrival.

Treasurer's report. Luella Mast distributed a written report (appended). Income is already at 118% of budget while expenses are at 85% of budget.

Stan Schiff announced that the Virginia transportation debate is tentatively set for either 3/12 or 3/13. Stan has received consultant's reports to the county on zoning changes and AGP. The planning board staff says they are open to consulting with the community in the process.

Listserve. Dean Ahmad has set up a listserve through Yahoo. Consensus was for an unmoderated list restricted to those paid delegates and associates who wish to be on it. Dale will provide draft rules to be modified by Cary and Dean and published in the newsletter for consideration by the general membership.

Cary: Bill 303-03 automobile registration surcharge will go to a vote of the county delegation with a favorable

recommendation despite the fact that the majority of comments received were against. Bill 466 is a judicial election reform bill. Since we do not have a position on this issue, a letter outlining our concerns has been sent to the committee.

Awards committee. Cary nominated Charles Pritchard (chair), Fifa Northrup, Dick Kauffunger, Charles Wolf, Chuck Lapinski. Passed on a voice vote.

Nomination Committee. Jorge Ribas, Lee Shipman, Dean Gibson, Lois Sherman, Charles Wolf, Dean Ahmad and Peggy Dennis have expressed willingness to serve. They or any other eligible member may be nominated from the floor at the March meeting.

Respectfully submitted, I. Dean Ahmad, Ph.D., Acting Recording Secretary until arrival of Richard Zierdt at 8:45 PM

Special Awards. Cary recommends that the MCCF acknowledge four retired politicians: Blair Ewing, Connie Morella, Ike Leggett, Nancy Dacek. Some discussion ensues.

Audit Committee. Charles Wolf moves that Jerry Garson, Bob Jones, and Bob Adelman be approved as members of the Audit Committee. Seconded. Passes unanimously.

Committee for Montgomery. Cary Lamari: This Committee may have voted improperly on an issue. Dick Kauffunger: Motions should be voted on only after full discussion of the issue. Dick Kauffunger moves that the MCCF Excomm send a letter to the CFM expressing concern that the CMF would take a position without any debate and without a vote. Seconded. Passes with two abstentions.

Programs. March: Monorail/Monobeam (Stan Doore). April Operating Budget (Joe Beach). May: Education (Bob Adelman). Passes unanimously. Dean recommends that the MCCF show the "Simpsons" episode that dealt with monobeam.

Land Use and Planning. Tom DeGraba. ZTA 03-01 will be introduced on February 25. Tom moves that the MCCF ExComm support this ZTA. Seconded. Passes unanimously.

Legislation. George Sauer. There may be some State "study" underway regarding a techway, second river bridge, etc.

Transportation. Dan Wilhelm. A Planning Board hearing was held today where Dan presented the MCCF.

Public Finance Committee. Charles Lapinski.

Snow Removal. Cary Lamari reports snow removal difficulties. Excomm feels it should take no position. Dan

moves that MCCF ExComm write a letter complaining about the lack of proper snow removal at intersections. Seconded. Passes with one abstention. Bob Adelman moves that the MCCF ExComm write a letter to the County Council concerning inadequate attention to pedestrian safety during snow removal. Seconded. Passes 7 – 4 – 0.

Electoral Reform: Dale Tibbitts. Hearing before the State Senate next Thursday that will deal with all bills related to campaign contributions. Dale would like to represent the MCCF at this hearing. Senate bill 232. Seconded. Passes unanimously. Bill Senate 259. Donors with donations over \$250 will be asked to give employer's name. Seconded. Passes Unanimously with one abstention Dan moves that MCCF oppose Senate 214 that would double from 10K to 20K. Sixty persons ran up against the \$10,000 limit over 4 years. Passes with 9 – 2 – 0. George moves MCCF support HB 397 (for MC) . Seconded, Passes 10-0-1. Tom DeGraba moves that the MCCF support HB1007 (statewide bill). Seconded. Passes with one abstention. Tom moves that the MCCF support bill HB 663 (statewide), which would limit to \$7000 the amount that one campaign could transfer to another. Seconded. Charles: Any limit may not be appropriate. Passes 8-1-2.

Newsletter assignments made.

Minutes from last ExComm approved.

Meeting adjourned 10:20 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Richard Zierdt, MCCF Recording Secretary

## **The Threat to Smart Growth**

by Wayne Goldstein,  
Kensington Heights Citizens Association

**O**n January 13, Civic Federation delegates voted 26-6-4 to support the recommendations of the Maryland Smart Growth Policy Collaborative. One of those recommendations included the revitalization of properties in older areas. Since 1997, this recommendation has been largely implemented through the Heritage Revitalization Tax Credit Program. This program now provides a 20% tax credit for work done repairing and restoring historically designated buildings, primarily in central, core communities. In the last five years, this program has stimulated \$797 million in new investment in historic properties in Maryland and is projected to stimulate an additional \$2.19 billion in new investment over the next 10 years. The tax credit was lowered from 25% to 20% last year. At the 25% rate, for every \$1.00 of tax credit,

Maryland economic output increased by \$6.70 and State personal income increased by \$2.10. State tax revenue increased by \$.35 and local tax revenue by \$10. These numbers do not include the additional sales tax revenue from construction material purchases nor the additional property taxes resulting from increased property values. This credit pays for itself with the taxes resulting from increased economic activity and property values and then continues to generate additional revenues for years to come.

However, even though this program more than pays for itself and is the most successful program ever created to revitalize older communities, our governor and legislature want to cripple it or kill it outright. In their blind panic to balance the state budget, there are bills that would either end the program this coming June 30th or so restrict it with onerous limitations as to make it a shadow of itself in terms of effectiveness. Last year when the legislature first discovered how successful it had become, it lowered the credit from 25% to 20%, limited commercial projects to a credit of no more than \$3 million per project, and put in a 2004 sunset provision. The sunset provision was meant to trigger a further reexamination of this successful program in two years. Now there are plans to either end it or amend it to death.

One killer amendment would cap the statewide credit at \$25 million a year. It has recently averaged \$42 million a year. However, as deteriorating communities have seen what happens when a commercial historic building is restored, nearby homeowners then want to fix up their houses, thereby revitalizing entire neighborhoods. This cascading benefit would be throttled by severe restrictions like this cap. There are additional amendments that cap the amount per residential project at \$20,000 and for the state at a minuscule \$2.5 million a year for owner-occupied residential projects. Although Baltimore City has had the most commercial and residential projects, Montgomery County has had the second highest number of residential projects.

In a letter dated February 20, 2003, State Senator Ida Ruben wrote to a constituent: "I can understand the value and benefits this program provides; however, there is an annual cost to the State of approximately \$25 to \$30 million. When the Legislature is considering devastating budget cuts to important social programs such as child care, health care and education, tax credit programs such as this are certainly going to be discussed." Unfortunately, the Senator misses three points. First, I understand that credits have already been committed for the next two years for projects in the pipeline, so that there would be no actual budget reduction until at least 2005. Second, the state and local governments do not have to spend money on new roads, sewers, schools, libraries, and

---

recreation centers when new residents and new jobs come to existing cities and towns. Third, the tax revenues created by this extraordinarily successful program will help pay for child care, health care and education.

Smart Growth will not happen in Maryland without incentives to create new housing and jobs in older, core areas. Without such incentives, pressure will remain high to develop heretofore undeveloped areas (our agricultural reserve) thus increasing the demand for roads and accelerating sprawl and air pollution. The Heritage Rehabilitation Tax Credit is the first and best program we have to stimulate Smart Growth.

Montgomery County Senators Ruben (District 20), P. J. Hogan (District 39) and Rona Kramer (District 14) sit on the Senate Budget and Revenue Committee that is considering Senate Bill (SB) 203, which had a public hearing on February 12. I joined 77 speakers from across the state that day to oppose this bill.

House Bill (HB) 341 will also end the tax credit. Unfortunately, Del. Sheila Hixson (District 20) and Del. Mike Gordon (District 17) are co-sponsors of this bill. Other Montgomery County delegates on the House Ways and Means Committee that will consider this bill include Jean Cryor (District 15), Henry Heller (District 19), Anne Kaiser (District 14) and Nancy King (District 39). The public hearing has yet to be scheduled.

While the Civic Federation delegates viewed the recommendations of the Smart Growth Policy Collaborative as a work-in-progress, I hope they realize also that a solid foundation for this policy has already been successfully created by the Heritage Revitalization Tax Credit Program. It works so well that it can make for a far better implementation of the other recommendations. However, if it is severely undermined as currently proposed by these bills, it is very likely that Smart Growth will never succeed. Please contact any of these senators and delegates who represent you to tell them to oppose SB 203 and HB 341, and please vote to have the Civic Federation oppose these bills.

Please come and join us at our

Next Delegates Meeting

Monday, March 10, 2003, 7:45 p.m.

First Floor Auditorium

County Council Office Building, Rockville, MD

**Program:**

**“Why not Elevated Monobeam Rail Transit?”**

**Guest Speaker: G. Stanley Doore**

## On Pedestrian Safety and Snow Removal

—by Mark R. Adelman, Chair  
Education Committee

Lest anyone think this is a cheap shot in reaction to the recent snow, be assured that I have been expressing these views for some time now, including during the hearings held by the County Council a year or so ago regarding Mr. Andrews' law concerning the shoveling of sidewalks. I'm all in favor of shoveling sidewalks: my wife and I did so at least twice during the recent storm, but gave up when DPWT (or SHA - we live on University Blvd. W. so the real perpetrators are always the other guy!) plowed us under. The last storm was like the seven-year locust: very unusual but it served to highlight some fundamental problems. We need to get our priorities in order and we need to elect and support public officials who say what they mean, mean what they say, and put their words into action.

There is NO way that Montgomery County (or the State of Maryland for that matter) can handle the kind of snowstorm we just experienced smoothly enough to please everyone. In fact, we really can't expect to please everyone with the handling of even the puny little snows we routinely get around here. But we should - and CAN - do better, IF we reassess our priorities and define new paradigms.

Let me start. Pedestrian safety is at least as important as driver safety. Everyone agree? Pedestrian safety is MORE important than driver convenience. Still on board? Let's assume so. Then what is the logic of plowing streets so that main roads are clear but side roads are not and sidewalks are under all/most of the snow that was plowed off the roads? Who are we kidding? Unless we invest money (more \$\$ than anyone really believes we can/should spend) in equipment to haul snow away (and/or melt it where it is plowed), something has to give.

I maintain that we MUST do more to help pedestrians, even if that means doing less to help motorists. Let me make a few suggestions, but first let me point out some obvious points: (a) with some exceptions we are all both pedestrians and motorists; (b) buses function as vehicles but require the kind of support that we normally think of as needed by pedestrians; (c) clogged sidewalks are a strain on all who shovel, not just the elderly or infirm; (d) being forced to walk in the street (especially one that is a state road carrying hundreds of wild-eyed drivers frustrated by delays) is not healthy for anyone, including

the school kids for whose safety our elected officials have expressed such pious concern; and (e) if smart growth (choose your own flavor) means anything, then the extra density we create near urban districts and Metro stations ought to come with easier access for pedestrians to get to and from mass transit.

With the above in mind, here are a few suggestions about what we should do with regard to clearing the snow in the future. Feel free to shoot any one (or all) of these down, but we **MUST** come up with better ways to do things and we cannot rely on our "leaders" to come up with solutions.

1. I believe our highest priority should be to clear snow so that all segments of the moving public regain mobility at comparable rates. That means that clearing sidewalks, main roads and neighborhood streets should have equal priority and that **NONE** of the above should have higher priority than another. That is, we should **NOT** clear snow from main roads in such a fashion as to make the use of sidewalks or sidestreets harder.

2. If the last week or so has forced us all to re-learn anything, it is that it is better to at least be able to walk to a local store than to have to sit in traffic for hours trying to drive to a store that is within walking distance.

3. At present we are using the old model of clearing main roads as fast as possible, by plowing snow off to the right side of the road. I suggest that we seriously consider, on those thoroughfares with wide median strips, plowing towards the median and, if necessary, **NOT** plowing the left hand lane of multi-lane roads. Plow the snow at intersections back onto the median. This strategy would leave the right lane open, which would keep bus-stops accessible and would encourage people to shovel sidewalks, because the shoveling would not quickly be undone by the plowing of the roads. It would also keep access to sidestreets as open as possible.

4. Plowing to the middle of sidestreets will, in most cases **NOT** work, so I am **NOT** suggesting that item 3 is the **ONE** solution. I suggest that we continue to plow to the right on side streets and that we **NOT** plow multiple lanes on main roads until at least one lane has been plowed on sidestreets.

5. Since our capacity to remove snow is limited, I suggest that we officially recognize that, after major storms, in some locations (urban districts, near Metro stations) it is **MORE** important to clear sidewalks than to clear streets. Yes - I mean we should clear some sidewalks **BEFORE** we clear the adjacent roads. As someone who has lived through major storms in New York City and in Chicago, I know for sure that it is easier to walk a few blocks than to drive the same distance in the first few days after a major storm. I'd rather walk on the sidewalk, than on a partially

cleared road but, as we all know, people **WILL** walk on the partially cleared road even if they have to fight traffic to do so.

6. I realize that what I've suggested would require reconfiguring many snowplows, not to mention the minds of many of our leaders and those who run DPWT and SHA. So what? We pay for the equipment and the salaries, so we have the right to demand changes when the status quo isn't working.

OK, enough. You get the point. Bottom line: if we really are concerned about pedestrian safety and mass transit after snowstorms, we **MUST** rethink our priorities. Clearing roads can no longer be our highest priority. High? Yes. Highest? **NO!**

### **Humphrey and Gilligan to receive March Community Heroes Awards:**

*—by Cary Lamari  
MCCF President*

**R**elative newcomers to the arena of civic activism, Jim Humphrey and Sarah Gilligan hit the ground running in the fall of 2001. Jim's initial goal was to oppose a project planned by the Federal Realty Corporation for a site on Arlington Road in downtown Bethesda which violated the area's Sector Plan. Already serving as Bethesda/Chevy Chase chair for Neighbors for a Better Montgomery PAC, Jim signed on as a member of the Land Use and Development Committee of his neighborhood citizens association and began working to defeat the project. Their group has recently filed a lawsuit in the Circuit Court challenging Planning Board approval of the Arlington Road project.

Sarah Gilligan is a member of the Wingate Elementary School PTA and an executive member of the Maplewood Citizens Association. Her group became alarmed when a developer leaned on the County Council to pass legislation to allow a more intense development of the Goodwill property on Wisconsin Avenue than permitted by current zoning. Land use law had, for some years, required the inclusion of moderately priced housing units (MPDUs) as part of new subdivisions with 50 or more units. But what was to become Bill 33-02 (recently passed by Council) extended the "density bonus" which builders receive in exchange for building those MPDUs to smaller projects and "in-fill" developments where developers "voluntarily" opt to include MPDUs.

Fearing that Bill 33-02 would jeopardize the character of established single-family neighborhoods and further overload already crowded public schools, and realizing

---

that for citizens to be heard by County government they must speak in great numbers and with unanimity of voice, Jim, Sarah and a handful of others, worked to create the Rally for Bethesda Coalition. This group of nine citizens associations advocates for development in the Bethesda area that adheres to the approved CBD Sector and Master Plans. Jim's and Sarah's efforts to protect the quality of life in their neighborhoods led them to contact the Montgomery County Civic Federation, thus expanding their network of contacts countywide. Both Sarah and Jim believe we should work to find ways to integrate needed affordable housing throughout the county in a way that provides the MPDU residents with dignity and also protects the character of existing neighborhoods. They are now pushing for passage of ZTA 03-01, which will modify implementation of Bill 33-02 and help preserve the character of established neighborhoods.

We wish to recognize Jim Humphrey and Sarah Gilligan for their tireless work on these important zoning and land use issues. Although both were galvanized into action by problems in their own "backyards", both have come to see how the work of developers to subvert existing laws and regulations undermines the County's efforts to channel and constrain growth and has negative consequences for all of us who seek to maintain and enhance our quality of life.

## From the President

All eyes are on Annapolis this month. Montgomery County is in the unique position of being a beacon across the state of Maryland and, for that matter, across the country, in the area of campaign finance reform.

Since the November elections there has been much criticism of the electoral process and existing campaign funding laws. I wrote about this concern in the October newsletter, stating that government is supposed to be "of the people, by the people and for the people", not of, by and for vested special interest groups. The Federation established an election reform task force to look into a number of concerns, and I would like to report Dale Tibbitts is doing a fantastic job at getting to the heart of the problem.

I would also like to report that many bills have popped up on this and related topics in Annapolis, some good, some not so good, and some just terrible. Senate bill 214 which doubles the allowable maximum campaign contributions in a year election cycle from \$10,000 to \$20,000 is a prime example. I am concerned about the sincerity of some of our elected officials in Annapolis when it comes to working on behalf of our citizens. One elected official

has been quoted in the Gazette as saying that we should double the maximum contributions so that wealthy citizens may spread their money around to other candidates for public office. Only in Montgomery County could a statement like that not have the appearance of having a corrupting influence.

That said, we can still be proud of some elected officials who have shown real intelligence and courage in trying to put forth bills on behalf of the citizens of Montgomery County. I would like to acknowledge Adrienne Mandel for her Herculean efforts in the area of campaign finance reform as well as acknowledging the need to reform the process by which judges are elected. Adrienne's efforts didn't stop there; she scrutinized and argued against (unfortunately unsuccessfully) Bill 303-03, the bill which will double the vehicle registration fee paid by residents of Montgomery County and give Mr. Duncan a slush fund to spend on his pet transportation projects: projects I must add that are not necessarily those already approved and adopted by the County Council. We rarely give the Annapolis session this much scrutiny, but times are changing, and we will be watching to see how things shake out.

Here in Montgomery County, Mr. Duncan would be well advised to look to the severe budget shortfalls we are facing. Montgomery County's school population is expected to increase by up to 2,500 students per year for the next several years, a growth rate higher than that experienced during the height of the baby boom. This will bring about significant challenges to our already overcrowded public schools. He should also be more concerned about looming shortfalls in basic services like fire and public safety, libraries, and health and human services. Raising taxes (or fees) to finance costly highway construction projects during periods of economic recession and shrinking public revenues, hardly seems in the public interest.

## Mark Your Calendars

Please mark your calendars with the dates of the General Delegates meetings for the remainder of the spring. All meetings will be held in the COB Auditorium, beginning at 7:45 p.m.

Monday, Jan 13, 2003  
Monday, Feb 10, 2003  
Monday, Mar 10, 2003  
Monday, Apr 14, 2003  
Monday, May 12, 2003  
Monday, June 9, 2003

## Delegates to serve in the Nomination and Awards Committees

*By Cary Lamari, President*

We have had a good team on the Executive Committee this year and I am proud of the work we have accomplished. I know many will continue to carry out their functions and responsibilities, but we do need to fill a few empty spots on the Executive Board.

Also, our by-laws dictate that I establish the committees that will seek and nominate candidates for office in 2003-2004 and nominate the recipients of the Star Cup and Sentinel and Gazette Newspapers awards to be presented this June. They are:

### Nomination Committee

The list of Federation members interested in serving on the Nomination Committee is:

Jorge Ribas, Lee Shipman, Lois Sherman, Dean Gibson, Charles Wolf, Peggy Dennis and Dean Ahmad.

### Awards Committee

The responsibility of the Awards committee is outlined in Article XVI of our Bylaws. Briefly, the committee selects recipients for the (1) Star Cup for a Delegate or Committee of the Federation for outstanding public service on behalf of Montgomery County; (2) The Gazette Award to an individual or group for outstanding service to the people of Montgomery County; and (3) The Sentinel Award to an individual or group for a significant contribution to good government at the local level.

I have the pleasure of nominating five individuals who will do an excellent job on the Awards Committee: Charles Pritchard as committee chair; Fifa Northrup, Dick Kauffunger, Charles Wolf, and Chuck Lapinski.

## Firms' Cash to Duncan, Ballot Allies Criticized

*By Matthew Mosk  
Washington Post Staff Writer*

[Reprinted] Tuesday, February 25, 2003; Page B04

Groups such as paving contractors and real estate developers took advantage of permissive language in Maryland's campaign finance law to donate \$1.6 million to Montgomery County Executive Douglas M. Duncan

and his allies on the County Council, according to a report to be released today.

That represents nearly 60 percent of all contributions to those candidates, according to numbers compiled by Neighbors for a Better Montgomery. The group, which backed several council candidates defeated by Duncan's "End Gridlock" slate, decried the infusion of cash from development interests.

"In reality, the campaign was the opposite of End Gridlock," said Drew Powell, who heads the Neighbors group's research committee. "What creates the gridlock is more and more unsustainable development. And these are the people who kicked in two out of every three dollars of the End Gridlock campaign."

Duncan (D) said it's no secret that development interests contributed to his campaign and to those of his County Council allies. But he said all of the donors, developers included, sought the same outcome he did: traffic relief. "What I can tell you is, 100 percent of my contributions came from people who wanted to solve traffic congestion," Duncan said.

Duncan's effort to use campaign funds to rebuild the council with members who support his transportation initiatives was the first of its kind in Montgomery politics. The End Gridlock treasury financed a barrage of negative mailings and phone calls aimed at unseating those who opposed his program.

The display of political muscle has drawn intense scrutiny from Duncan's political opponents, many of whom are now championing reforms that would prevent the use of such tactics again.

Members of the Neighbors group undertook their massive review of campaign finance records this year. They said they were concerned about what they found. Dan Tuten, a group member, said, "It's disturbing because these companies are pouring money into local races without any accountability."

The Neighbors group used state campaign finance records to show how firms donated through different corporate entities to give well in excess of the \$10,000 limit on gifts during a four-year election cycle.

The lists show how one firm, Oxbridge Development, donated \$127,000 to 73 candidates and political action committees in the last election cycle -- including \$22,750 to Duncan and \$22,600 to council contenders.

Neighbors found that each of six affiliates of a local paving contractor, F.O. Day Co., gave \$1,000 to Duncan and \$700 to the candidates Duncan supported for the County Council, while Day family members and company employees gave Duncan an additional \$16,750. Lawyers in the law firm that handles much of the land-use business in Montgomery County, Linowes and Blocher,

**Duncan Criticized (cont.)**

**Duncan Criticized (cont.)**

contributed a combined \$66,900 to local candidates, according to Neighbors.

Joseph P. Blocher, a senior partner with the law firm, said the gifts were not part of an organized effort to bundle contributions to specific politicians. "We have a strict policy," Blocher said. "You support whomever you want to support."

But members of Neighbors for a Better Montgomery said the gifts have a cumulative effect, orchestrated or not. Said Tuten: "The development industry and its allies 'bought' the 2002 election."

This is a conclusion that Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce President Rich Parsons finds "completely at odds with reality."

"This is just sour grapes," said Parsons, who noted that Neighbors tried to raise money for its favored candidates in the same manner.

David Weaver, a Duncan aide, noted that the county executive backed a fee increase last year that would raise \$10 million a year directly from developers.

Neighbors will post its findings on the Internet today at [www.neighborspac.org](http://www.neighborspac.org), two days in advance of hearings in Annapolis to discuss legislation to tighten state limits on campaign contributions.

[Reprinted from The Washington Post © 2003]

***Letters to the Editor***

**The County Budget and  
Your Property Taxes**

*By Marvin Weinman, President  
Montgomery County Taxpayers League*

Montgomery County is facing a very significant revenue problem for the current FY03 and next year's FY04 budgets. The economy and the stock market have combined to provide a significant shortfall in the previously projected income tax revenue. As the Executive and the Council rightfully explore additional options to raise revenue, the focus appears to be on property taxes to save the day. Taking advantage of this year's huge 47% average residential assessment increase seems to be a reasonable approach to closing the gap. However, continuing to maximize property tax revenue using the current Council assumptions will effectively double your property taxes in seven years. This is a best case estimate assuming no property tax increases during that time. The realistic probability of this occurring is zero.

We need to look for other revenue alternatives. For example, have the developers paid their fair share for infrastructure costs to support the significant road and school improvements needed as a result of their new construction? For FY04 the total proposed Development Impact Tax contribution is a mere \$6,665,000. The Development District Tax for the same period is only \$4,335,000. All this while developers are showing record profits. According to the Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation for FY03 Montgomery County will have over 25% of the new construction in the state. In difficult times there needs to be a sharing of the burden. In the long term continuing to place an increasing burden on property owners will have a detrimental effect on the hard working, middle class population of Montgomery County. In most cases this group already needs both parents working to make a go of it today.

The Council will hold public hearings in April on the budget. These hearings are little or no benefit in helping the public understand the consequences of the tax burden and other budget matters. What the public needs is the opportunity for a dialog with their elected officials in an environment where they can become informed and have their concerns addressed in a question and answer period. Currently, education of the public relative to issues of concern is lacking. A significant part of the Taxpayers League mission is public education. Space does not permit me to fully explain the property tax laws and how the coming actions of the County Council may affect your future real tax bill. The full, more detailed version of this letter will be posted on the Civic Federation's website, [www.montgomerycivic.org](http://www.montgomerycivic.org), and I urge you to study it carefully. The Taxpayers League is prepared to make a more detailed presentation to interested groups. Please contact me to arrange for such presentations: Marvin Weinman, 301-946-3799, [weinmanm@msn.com](mailto:weinmanm@msn.com).

**Federation "Listserv" Established**

*By I. Dean Ahmad, Ph.D.  
Immediate Past President*

A "listserv" is an easy way for people with a common interest to exchange e-mail about their interests. I have set up a Yahoo listserv called "montgomerycivic" for the benefit of the MCCF. Any member of the Federation (whether a delegate or paid associate) can join the listserv. By joining montgomerycivic, you will be able to exchange messages with other group members, store photos and files, coordinate events and more.

Once the rules for operation of the listserv have been approved, all eligible members for whom we have e-mail addresses will receive an invitation to join the listserv. If

**“Listserv” Established (cont.)**

we don't have your e-mail address already, please send an e-mail to the proposed listmaster, Richard Zierdt at richard.zierdt@landmark.com so that he can add your name to the invitation list.

Below are the rules I am proposing for the listserv, which will need to be approved at the March meeting of the Civic Federation:

**Rules for the Montgomery County Civic Federation Listserv**

The listserv is open to all paid individual members of the Montgomery County Civic Federation including delegates, associates, and delegates-at-large who have not lost privileges to access the list by violation of the rules below. Upon complaint of a rule violation by any Federation delegate the listmaster, at his/her discretion, may temporarily suspend or permanently revoke the offender's right to access the listserv. A suspension or revocation may be appealed to the Executive Committee.

The purpose of this listserv is to give our members an additional venue through which they may promote cooperation, education, and the effectiveness of civic and community associations thus bringing about civic and social betterments. All posts must be directed towards the sole objective of the Federation, namely, to protect and enhance the Quality of Life of current and future residents of the County. To this end they may address ways and means for the promotion of the civic community and general welfare of the County; announce, discuss or debate educational, benevolent, and beneficial programs and activities; monitor and evaluate activities of local government to assure an open, accountable, responsive, and effective performance; and/or address cooperation with other organizations of like purposes in other jurisdictions. Posts must be strictly nonpartisan, non-sectarian, and non-sectional, and may not endorse or support any candidate for elected office. No commercial posts, nor any other post that may jeopardize our tax status, shall be permitted.

While posters may freely critique the views of others, including positions adopted by the Federation, they may not engage in direct personal attacks on other posters or any other excessively annoying behavior. Off-topic posts will not be tolerated. This means that posts must be relevant to the topic in the subject line and the topic must be an item in some way appropriate to the mission of the Civic Federation. News items from other websites or newspapers should be posted only if they relate to the MCCF mission and then only by link to the originating cite and not by insertion of the entire text of the article. Posting items that contain viruses or that the poster should reasonably have known to be unreliable constitutes a violation of these rules.

**THE ADVENTURES OF MONORAIL IN  
THE COUNTY AND THE STATE:  
A SHORT HISTORY**

*By Chuck Lapinski, Chair  
Public Finance and Utilities*

Most of you will probably think that the monorail concept being proposed as a solution for our county transit needs by Stanley Doore in our March program is new and unique. Actually, it has a long history dating back to one of the first practical applications at Disney World. The Disney World monorail was the source of some inspiration, since it was fast, quiet and could move a sizeable number of people very efficiently.

Consideration of monorails actually began here in the late sixties. Then Parks Director, Jack Hewitt and his staff, thought a monorail might be an economical way to bring people from the (old) Blair High School area to Wheaton Regional Park. But trolleys were still in use in both downtown Baltimore and D.C.. Monorails were thought of as something like voodoo, and not taken too seriously.

In 1986, the County Council appointed a group of citizens to the Commission on the Future of Montgomery County. One mission of this group was to study transportation and development. Monorails were considered as the technology was, by that time, reasonably mature and well known. But the state and county planning staffs were enamored with modernized trolleys and light rail even if those required a big dig. It was technology that they knew.

In 1997, Jack Hewitt was appointed a Commissioner of Park and Planning, and he began distributing videotapes showing monorail in action throughout the world. Then County Executive Neal Potter and Councilman Steve Silverman were recipients of a copy of the videotapes. Others borrowed the tapes, and interest in monorail began to revive. That is, until the State Highway Administration sponsored Beltway Study Group began to study options to improve the beltway.

The state planners considered monorail, but they still liked heavy rail better. It was consistent with their experience and that of WMATA.

Now a real opportunity that can take advantage of the technology's merits and maturity presents itself in the form of a the latest Purple Line proposal. This time perhaps monorail will overcome the array of old biases favoring old, environmentally and financially costly technology and get the attention its merits so justly deserve.

## 2002-2003 MCCF Officers and Committee Chairs

Office	Name	Home #	Office #	Fax #	e-mail
<b>President:</b>	Cary Lamari	301-924-2746	301-924-2558	<none>	carylamari@yahoo.com
<b>Past-Pres.:</b>	I. Dean Ahmad	301-951-0539	301-656-4714	301-656-4714	dahmad@speakeasy.net
<b>1st Vice-Pres.:</b>	Dan Wilhelm	301-384-2698	703-384-2698	<not available>	djwilhelm@erols.com
<b>2nd Vice-Pres.:</b>	Stanley D. Schiff	301-530-6455	same	<not available>	stanschiff@msn.com
<b>2nd Vice-Pres.:</b>	Pat Cummings	301-977-6004	301-840-0921	301-840-0967	<call first>
<b>2nd Vice-Pres.:</b>	Mark Adelman	301-942-6893	301-295-3208	301-942-4108	adelman3@erols.com
<b>2nd Vice-Pres.:</b>	Vacant				
<b>Treasurer:</b>	Luella Mast	301-384-4178	<not available>	<not available>	luella@sysnet.net
<b>Rec. Secretary:</b>	Richard Zierdt	301-881-0283	703-464-1617	<not available>	richard.zierdt@landmark.com
<b>Correspond. Sec:</b>	Fifa Northrup	301-984-9424	<not available>	301-984-0147	rcnorth@bellatlantic.net
<b>Dist. 1 V.P.:</b>	Diana Conway	301-983-6124	<not available>	<not available>	dconway@erols.com
<b>Dist. 2 V.P.:</b>	Dick Strombotne	240-621-9881	<not available>	240-621-9881	rlstrombotne@ieee.org
<b>Dist. 3 V.P.:</b>	Tom DeGraba	301-340-2570	<not available>	<not available>	<none>
<b>Dist. 4 V.P.:</b>	Bob Abrams	301-946-7291	<not available>	<not available>	robertabr@aol.com
<b>Dist. 5 V.P.:</b>	Jim Johnson	301-587-7233	<not available>	<not available>	JimJJohnson@compuserve.com
<b>Historian:</b>	Charles Wolff	301-585-9744	301-286-8185	<none>	wolff99@starpower.net
<b>Newsletter Ed.:</b>	Peggy Dennis	301-983-9738	same	<not available>	hotyakker@aol.com
<b>Parliamentarian:</b>	Vacant				
<b>Public Relations:</b>	Stuart Rochester	301-384-5515	<not available>	<not available>	<not available>
<b>Education:</b>	Mark Adelman	301-942-6893	301-295-3208	301-942-4108	adelman3@erols.com
<b>Environment:</b>	Charlie Pritchard	301-593-1781	same	<not available>	erc69434@aol.com
<b>Legislation:</b>	George Sauer	301-762-7260	same	<not available>	musicwilma@earthlink.net
<b>Membership:</b>	Fifa Northrup	301-984-9424	<not available>	301-984-0147	rcnorth@bellatlantic.net
<b>Pl. &amp; Land Use:</b>	Tom DeGraba	301-340-2570	<not available>	<not available>	<none>
<b>Pub. Fin. &amp; Util.:</b>	Chuck Lapinski	301-384-0392	703-506-4600	<not available>	clapinsk@mclean.mcric.com
<b>Transportation:</b>	Dan Wilhelm	301-384-2698	same	<not available>	djwilhelm@erols.com

## Planning Board Launches New “Resident’s Guide” Series

The Montgomery County Planning Board has announced the publication of a new series of “Resident’s Guide” brochures.

These 11 brochures replace the outdated and out-of-print resource book, *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Planning, Zoning, and Subdivision in Montgomery County, Maryland...but were afraid to ask*.

Free copies are available for downloading online at [www.mc-mncppc.org](http://www.mc-mncppc.org). Alternatively, the entire set of printed brochures may be bought for \$2 at the M-NCPPC’s second floor information section, 8787 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring.

For more information, please contact Marion Joyce at 301-495-4600.

## *Think about it...*

You have just read one of the most thorough, independent, and accurate newsletters in the County. For over 77 years, elected officials, community leaders, citizens and journalists have relied on the Civic Federation News as an authoritative source of citizen’s concerns and expectations.

Whether it is environmental issues, traffic congestion, ethics in government, unmet social needs, schools or land use, the **Civic Federation News** provides you with timely and accurate information. Join the Civic Federation today. With the exception of giving your own time and energy, it is the best investment you can make for your community.

Download your application form today from our website: [www.montgomery.org/membersh.pdf](http://www.montgomery.org/membersh.pdf).

*Delegates Meetings*

**Monday, March.10 – 7:45 p.m.**

**First Floor Auditorium  
County Council Office Bldg., Rockville**

**AGENDA:**

- 7:45 - Call to order, Cary Lamari presiding
- 7:50 - Announcements and Introductions
- 7:55 - Adoption of Agenda
- 8:00 - Approval of minutes (p. 2)
- 8:05 - Community Hero (p.6)
- 8:15 - Election of Nomination Committee (p. 8)
- 8:20 - Report: Electoral Reform Subcommittee
- 8:30 - Program: Elevated Monobeam Rail Transit (p. 1)
- 9:10 - Old Business, officers reports
- 9:30 - New Business
- 9:55 - Adjournment

The **Montgomery County Civic Federation**, a nonprofit, educational, and advocacy countywide group, was founded in 1925 to serve the public interest. The monthly Delegates Meeting is open to the public and it is held on the second Monday of each month (except for holidays, July, August and December) at 8:00 p.m. in the First Floor Auditorium, County Office Building, Rockville, MD.

The **Civic Federation News** is published monthly. It is mailed to Delegates; associate members; news media, and local, state, and federal officials. Permission is granted to reprint any article provided proper credit is given to the "*Civic Federation News* of the Montgomery County Civic Federation." Deadline for submissions for the next issue: 5 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 25. Attach submission to e-mail to: Hotyakker@aol.com file in fully justified 11-point Times Roman font (preferably as a Word document.) Send editorial content to Peggy Dennis, 1111 Fawsett Road, Potomac, MD 20854.

**Please send all address corrections to Steve Howie**, P.O.Box 325, Clarksburg, MD 20871, 301-972-2736, stevehowie@aol.com.

**Next Executive Committee Meeting**

**Thursday, March 20, 2003, 7:45 p.m.**

**Red Brick Courthouse**

29 Courthouse Square, Rockville

(Note: there is free parking in front of the courthouse.)

**Montgomery County Civic Federation**  
**Steve Howie, Database Manager**  
**P.O. Box 325**  
**Clarksburg, MD 20871**

*Address Service Requested*

**First Class Mail**