



Civic Federation News

March 2015

Serving the Public Interest since 1925

Official Publication of the
Montgomery County Civic
Federation

www.montgomerycivic.org
montgomerycivic@yahoo.com

twitter feed, @mccivicfed

Peggy Dennis, Editor - Phone: 301-983-9738 - Email: mccfnewsletter@gmail.com

Please forward this e-newsletter to all association members, friends and neighbors. Share! Please.

March Program: Montgomery County Budgets

By Jerry Garson, Treasurer

Our program on Monday, March 9 will be presented by Steve Farber, Council Administrator for the Montgomery County Council, a representative from the Office of Management and Budget; and Joseph F. Beach the Director of Finance from the Department of Finance.

Our guests will discuss the following budget and financial issues, including but not limited to:

- Proposed County Operating Budget.
- Other government and department requests.
- Bond authority and ratings.
- Impact on commercial and residential property tax assessments

Montgomery County provides a web site that covers the Budgets and provides useful information. It can be accessed at:

<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/omb/openbudget.html>

Some of the items from last years approved FY year 2015 budget are listed below:

- Implementing a comprehensive modernization of the Tax Assessment System and an upgrade for the property tax billing system (including moving the system to a Cloud environment). These systems are used in the collection of over \$2 billion in revenues annually.
- Engage in a cross-agency consolidated healthcare study to identify and analyze the health data for all County agencies as a way to leverage and develop a strategic approach to managing the cost of the County agencies' healthcare programs. The data will also be used by the County Government to develop and maintain a dynamic, comprehensive, data-driven wellness program.
- Develop, deploy, and improve Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) Business Intelligence (BI) tools, such as adding reporting modules for grant/capital projects and positions.

Federation Meeting

Session 864

Monday, March 9, 2015

7:45 1st Floor Auditorium
County Council Office Building.
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD

Agenda:

- 7:45 Call to Order & Introductions
- 7:50 Approval of Agenda
- 7:51 Announcements
- 7:55 Approval of Minutes of Nov 10 meeting
- 7:56 Treasurer's Report
- 7:58 Community Hero
- 8:00 Program: Montgomery County Budgets
- 9:15 Resolution on WhiteOak Master Plan
- 9:20 Resolution on Special Committee on ITA
- 9:35 Committee Reports
- 9:40 Old & New Business
- 9:45 Adjournment

- Implementing the ERP Oracle Warehouse Management and Tax Assessment Management modules.
- Provide direct communication with residents through social media sites, YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter; and through electronic publications such as “The Paperless Airplane.”
- Improve service and convenience for residents by implementing an enhancement that supports the scheduling of next trash collection day’s pickup by the Department of Environmental Protection Solid Waste. Requests are accepted until midnight on the prior day.

The **Montgomery County Civic Federation** is a county-wide nonprofit educational and advocacy organization. It was founded in 1925 to serve the public interest. Monthly Federation meetings are open to the public. The **Civic Federation News** is published monthly except in July and August. It is emailed to delegates, associate members, news media and local, state, and federal officials. Recipients are encouraged to forward the **Civic Federation News** to all association members, friends and neighbors. Permission is granted to reproduce any article provided that proper credit is given to the “**Civic Federation News of the Montgomery County Civic Federation**”.

- Started projects through the new Innovation Program, including projects dealing with autism technology, open data, food access, interactive touchscreen kiosks, 21st century libraries, and text-to- give. Launched a website for the Innovation Program to solicit ideasfrom residents and provide updates on projects.
- Reduce fuel consumption through increased utilization of alternative fuel and advanced technology vehicles.
- Integrate the installation of radio and video equipment into the initial prepping of new vehicles; reducing the amount of time needed to prep the new vehicles.
- Enhance Call ‘N’ Ride eligibility requirements to increase subsidies of the monthly payments for 500 current participants, and add 431 new participants to the program.

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- Implement new bus service in Germantown, Gaithersburg, Potomac, and White Flint; and implemented new "Meet the MARC" bus service from Clarksburg to Germantown.
- Extend the hours by one hour for the Kids Ride Free Program Monday through Friday from 2pm until 8pm.
- Oversee an expanded resurfacing program, which went from 24 lane miles in FY14 to 129 lane miles in FY15.
- Initiated the County's first Light Emitting Diode (LED) street lighting project in an effort to reduce energy and maintenance costs. Approximately 100 new LED street lights are being installed along New Hampshire Avenue, and approximately 180 existing street lights in Damascus are being converted to LED lights.
- Complete Pedestrian Safety measures for Reddie Drive; Randolph and Selfridge Roads' measures are under construction; and initiated the Fenton Street Pedestrian Road Safety Audit.
- Replace the on-street parking meters and meters in public parking lots in Silver Spring with a combination of new, more customer friendly "Smart" parking meters and Pay By Space systems.
- Open the Capital Crescent Garage (Public Parking Garage 31) in Bethesda at Woodmont and Bethesda Avenues in FY15. This new, state-of-the-art, 950 space public parking facility will include 60 foot clear spans and raised ceilings, a security system with video cameras and call stations, electric vehicle charging stations, and enhanced bicycle parking for easy access to the adjacent Capital Crescent Trail.

Plan to come and learn about the proposed budget. As always, the program is open to the public and there will be plenty of opportunity for Q&As and dialogue with the audience.

March's Community Hero, Jim Turner and Collaborators

by Jean Cavanaugh, Co-chair, Environment Committee

This month we are honored to recognize Jim Turner of Bethesda and his collaborators for their quick action on establishing and obtaining, in less than a week, over 1,000 signatures on a petition opposing MC 24-15, state legislation, submitted by County Executive Ike Leggett, to create an Independent Transit Authority and fund transit through property tax increases beyond the Charter limit. Mr. Leggett submitted this significant bill to the County's delegates in Annapolis without public and County Council discourse on its goals and impact. Using Jim Turner's petition as their platform, citizens throughout the County from Germantown to Wheaton to Silver Spring signed and wrote substantive criticisms of the bill. This successful petition helped persuade the County's State delegation to move a scheduled public hearing from Annapolis to Rockville so more people could testify, a rare move in the middle of a General Assembly session. County Executive Leggett, in the face of scores of residents

testifying against MC 24-15, and more than a thousand signatures on the petition, withdrew the bill.

Jim Turner and his collaborators exemplified the qualities of a Community Hero by taking a leadership role in educating neighbors and the wider Montgomery County community about a controversial bill, keeping people updated on the status of the bill, communicating directly with the State legislature, and testifying effectively with the delivery of a printed copy of signatures and comments at the Montgomery County delegation's public hearing on MC 24-15 on January 30, 2015. Jim Turner and his group's leadership sent a message to our County Executive that taxpayers and residents of Montgomery County want an open dialogue about how transit is managed and funded.

2015 Awards Nominations and Committee Work

The Civic Federation's Annual Awards Banquet is just around the corner on May 1. We could really use some good, solid nominations for award recipients! So, if you know a person or group who deserves a public pat on the back, send us your nominations with a brief justification of why your nominee deserves the award. These are the awards:

The Wayne Goldstein Award: awarded to an individual or group for outstanding service to the people of Montgomery County.

The Sentinel Award - sponsored by the Montgomery Sentinel newspaper and awarded to an individual or group for a significant contribution to good government at the local level.

The Star Cup - sponsored by the Federation and to be awarded to a Delegate or Committee of the Federation for outstanding public service on behalf of Montgomery County.

We could also use help on the Awards Banquet Committee. This committee is responsible for soliciting and accepting nominations for award recipients, evaluating those nominations and making final recommendations on the awardees. The committee also does the organizational and outreach work for creating a successful banquet. Volunteers, please step forward!

Contact our President, Paula Bienenfeld at paula_bienenfeld@yahoo.com to let her know that you're willing to serve.

White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan Update & Resolution

by Barry Wides, President, North White Oak Association.

Last summer, the County Council approved the White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan, which would significantly increase development density and traffic in the White Oak, Hillandale and surrounding communities along Route 29, New Hampshire Avenue and Cherry Hill Road. This Master Plan covers an area of about 5 square miles in Eastern Montgomery County in the area bounded by the Beltway, US 29 (Colesville Road), New Hampshire Avenue Cherry Hill Road and the Northwest Branch. A major impetus for the revision of this Master Plan is the County's public private partnership with Percontee to develop a life sciences-oriented

commercial/residential development near the Food and Drug Administration's headquarters on New Hampshire Avenue in Silver Spring. However, the plan envisions significant projected development in an area of less than 5 square miles—14 million square feet of commercial development and over 8,000 residential units (for a total of 23 million square feet).

The version of the Master Plan initially approved by the Planning Board in September 2013 envisioned that the public facilities infrastructure would be put in place as development occurs through a Master Plan staging process. Staging has been used in the master plans approved by the County Council in Germantown, Great Seneca, White Flint, and Chevy Chase Lake and should have been written into in the WOSG Master Plan as well. Staging was removed late in the process and congestion standards were increased. However, the enacted master plan never created a formal mechanism to monitor development under this plan as has been done in other areas around the county. We support council action to direct the planning board (and provide necessary funding) to begin and maintain an accurate, publicly accessible website tallying the status of the development projects in the WOSG plan area. We ask that the Civic Federation support our efforts to get the council to direct the planning board to do this.

Unfortunately, County Council is now proposing to remove the customary Local Area Transportation Review (LATR) process in the White Oak Master Plan areas and substitute a “pay and go” approach. Such a change would be achieved through an amendment to the Subdivision Staging Policy (SSP) that would be unique to White Oak. We recognize that the SSP could be improved and support the efforts of the interdepartmental SSP working group that began meeting several months ago and is expected to make recommendations later this year. We support this SSP working group in their efforts to make appropriate recommendations to address the LATR “background traffic” policy issue throughout the county. We have concerns that the White Oak SSP amendment attempts to address this problem on an “ad hoc” basis before the working group has fully considered the issues and makes a balanced and well thought out recommendation. For this reason, we oppose the Council's enactment of the WO SSP amendment. We are recommending that the Montgomery County Civic Federation oppose this amendment.

Fortunately, the County Council has recognized that existing traffic is a significant problem in the White Oak Master Plan area and we are pleased that the County Council took action to create a White Oak Transportation Management District (WOTMD) and look forward to the WOTMD becoming operational in FY 2016. We are requesting that the Civic Federation ask the Council to appropriate the necessary funds in the FY 2016 budget to adequately fund the White Oak Transportation Management District.

RESOLUTION: We urge Civic Association members to support us in our efforts to properly manage the development process in East County. The proposed Resolution will be introduced for discussion and a vote at the March 9 meeting:

Be it Resolved that the Montgomery County Civic Federation:

- Asks the Planning Board to create a formal mechanism to monitor development under the White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan as has been done in areas around the county.
- Asks the Council to address the SSP issues comprehensively when the Council revises the SSP for the entire county in 2016.
- Asks the Council to appropriate the necessary funds in the FY 2016 budget to adequately fund the White Oak Transportation Management District.

Independent Transit Authority, What Do County Residents Really Want? Background & Resolution

By Cary Lamari

Is Ike Leggett's proposal for an Independent Transit Authority (ITA) putting the cart before the horse?

The ITA was proposed by County Executive Ike Leggett in the form of Bill MC24-15. It was sent directly to our state delegation without public discussion or County Council input. Due to well-deserved negative feedback, the legislation was withdrawn, but Mr. Leggett has stated that we have six months to offer input before he resubmits it.

The ITA, as proposed, would be an independent government agency with the authority to finance, build, and run a transit system in Montgomery County. The ITA and the County Council would together have the ability to impose a tax over and above that bound by charter restrictions. This could potentially cost county taxpayers several hundreds or even thousands each year in additional taxes.

But it is not at all clear how this new authority is supposed to work with WMATA or the State Highway Administration, or if the ITA can build or assign dedicated transit lanes to support Bus Rapid Transit (BRT).

What were the components of this bill? Glenn Orlin, Deputy Chief of Staff, in his staff summary to the County Council, which was prepared prior to the Delegation hearing but not shared with the delegation states:

" The concept. Here are some thoughts on whether an ITA makes sense organizationally:

"One of the arguments for an ITA is that the Division of Transit Services (DTS) is only one of five divisions within the county Department of Transportation (DOT), so not enough focus can be given to transit. However, DTS represents 63% of the operating budget and 72% of the employees (measured as FTEs) of DOT, so by these measures DOT is primarily a transit department now. If the Division of Parking Services is absorbed into an ITA (a possible option being explored by Executive Branch staff), then these percentages would go up to 77% and 76%, respectively.

"Furthermore, unlike heavy rail (Metrorail) and light rail, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) is not a separate "business" that has its own expertise. Many of the buses will be larger, but they are still buses that-with a bit more training-can be operated and maintained by DTS.

"Part of the concept is to bring the transit portion of Fleet Services under the ITA. Another alternative is simply to return Fleet Services to DOT, where it existed for decades before the County Executive moved it to the Department of General Services in 2007. More than 80% of Fleet Service's activities and budget are for maintaining DOT equipment: buses and highway services equipment (frontend loaders, dump trucks, etc.).

"Another argument put forward for the IT A is that DOT "is not currently empowered, structured, or equipped to manage a long-term and large scale program of transit investment for the county" (January 2015 consultant report, p. 5). However, the BRT system will not be built by the ITA: it will be built mainly under the auspices of the State Highway Administration (SHA), since-with the exception of the Corridor Cities Transitway-nearly all of the rest of the system is within SHA right-of-way and under its jurisdiction. There is no difference between running buses in an HOV lane and running them in a fully or partially dedicated bus lane, for example.

"Having transit in an entity separate from DOT means that the institutional link between transit and traffic engineering will be severed. This link is critical, since so much of the effectiveness of BRT depends on traffic signal prioritization"

Many questions must be resolved before a proposal for an independent agency such as the ITA should be brought up again.

- Growth is the catalyst for the continuing dialogue about BRT and the proposed ITA; Is a proposal which increases high-intensity growth while removing vehicle lanes from our roadways and passing a significant new tax unrestrained by the Charter limits the best or the only solution?
- Should Montgomery County, given these dynamics, continue in the new paradigm of increasing density and transforming our County into a new concrete urban utopia?
- Should the County use disincentives like reduced or fewer traffic lanes and more vehicle congestion to encourage transit? Where does the General Plan fit in this new paradigm?
- What is the nexus between the ITA, state and federal financial contributions?
- How would an ITA interface with WMATA, and the State Department of Transportation?
- And finally who should pay the costs associated with this new direction in county planning policies?

These and many other questions need to be vetted through public discussion, before Ike Leggett resubmits the ITA proposal. We, the residents of the County, should be included in a comprehensive county-wide dialogue. It would appear that the biggest beneficiaries of the ITA proposal will be the development community, yet 100% of the costs may be levied on the residents. Is this fair?

We pay a gas tax to meet our State transportation needs. We pay property taxes toward the state's Transportation Trust Fund – a fund which has been raided by the past two Governors and is being considered by Governor Hogan as a resource, yet again, to pay for general state obligations.

The proposed ITA would tax county residents to pay for transit infrastructure that is supposed to be a state responsibility. If implemented, would this not weaken our delegation's position when they advocate for more funding for Montgomery County transportation? You can bet it will.

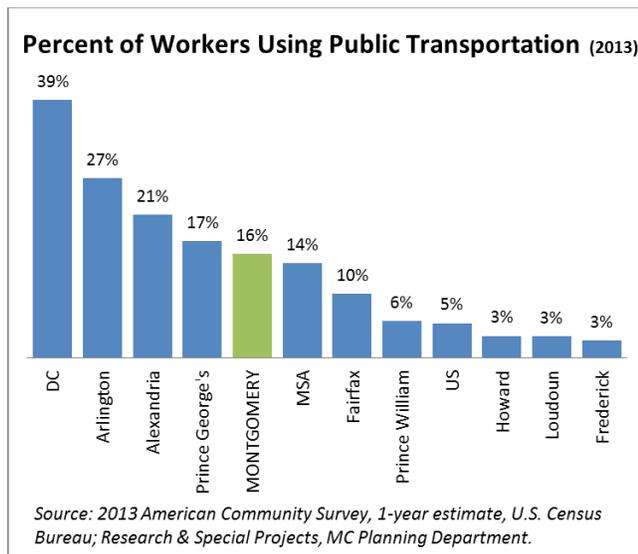
Some transit ridership facts to consider.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau 2013, American Community Survey of Montgomery County, the percentage of workers using transit (BUSES AND METRO) was 16%, up from 15% estimated in the 2002 Georgia Avenue Bus-way Study analysis; adjacent Counties like Howard and Frederick County have a 3% transit ridership and Prince Georges County has 17%. According to MNCPPC's Planning Division (CRIS) of the approximately 16% using transit only 5.4% of working commuters use buses as of September 9, 2013. (See nearby table and figures.)

There are huge questions as to why Bus Rapid Transit should be the preferred

COMMUTING TO WORK	MONTGOMERY		WASHINGTON METRO AREA (MSA)	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Workers 16 years and over	535,655	100%	3,119,595	100%
Car, truck, or van -- drove alone	355,244	66.3%	2,063,301	66.1%
Car, truck, or van -- carpooled	48,980	9.1%	297,850	9.5%
Public transportation (excluding taxicab)	83,706	15.6%	441,847	14.2%
Walked	12,321	2.3%	102,782	3.3%
Other means	5,271	1.0%	57,213	1.8%
Worked at home	30,133	5.6%	156,602	5.0%
Mean travel time to work (minutes)	34.7		34	

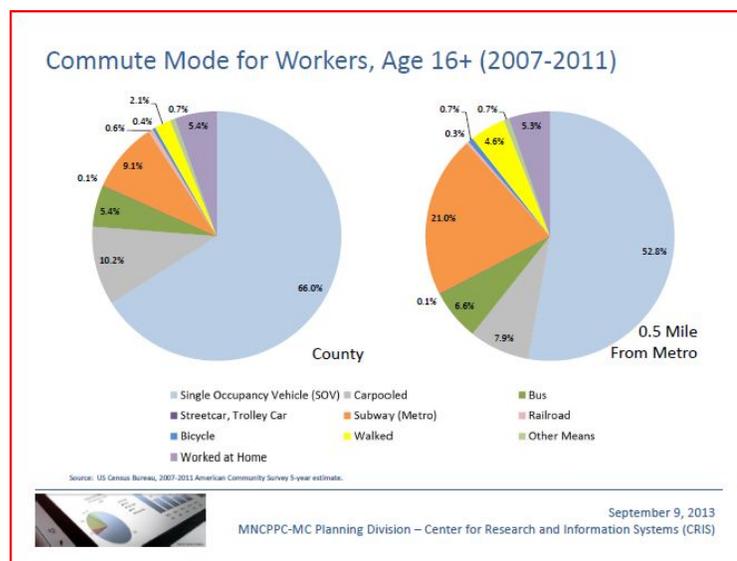
Source: American Community Survey 2013, one-yr estimates



method to deal with transit needs rather than the less costly alternatives of providing express buses and improving commuter (Ride-on) buses, better schedules and more extensive routes serving more neighborhoods.

New and future growth appears to be the driver behind the proposed BRT system and the ITA. Much should have been and still should be discussed prior to increasing the taxes of residents over and above those we currently pay. One major question is: how are the developers—the principal beneficiaries of the growth that would be necessitate this new transit paradigm—to be assessed for their share of the costs? There are many stakeholders that should be included in this discussion.

I am hoping these and other questions will be answered through community discussion and public forums conducted by the Civic Federation. However, first the MCCF members must vote to take on this important issue. I would hope our County Executive gives us time to go through a process that will clarify and factually support the Federation's membership's position. Democracy takes time. If we get going now we could be able to contribute to the resolution of this major issue this summer.



Motion for consideration

Be It Resolved that the Montgomery County Civic Federation, Inc. shall create a Special Committee to look at the dynamics of transit in Montgomery County. The Committee shall attempt to work with all stakeholders and endeavor to submit a community county wide response to the issue of the Independent Transit Authority. We will gatherer information, educate, and our efforts would culminate with a consensus report of Montgomery County Civic Federation Members. Also be it resolved we hold as many meetings that are necessary, send out data/information and a questionnaire electronically to civic groups in an effort to come to some consensus on the methods & types of transit operations & modes and the type of funding necessary for the construction and operation of recommendations. These should include any special and county wide taxing districts, & recommended levels of additional taxes if any for residents, businesses and developers.

The Council will be on a similar course and it is the hope that this special committee will have a report for County Council and the County Executive by June 2015

Help the NPS with White-tailed Deer Management Plan

by Peggy Dennis, Past President & Newsletter Editor

At our September Program on different management options for dealing with the problem of overpopulation of white-tailed deer, Kevin Brandt, Superintendent of the C&O Canal National Historic Park (NHP) described the application being made jointly with the Harpers Ferry NHP to carry out an Environmental Assessment (EA) on the impact of deer in both parks. An EA takes less time and money to carry out and is, therefore, better for the parks than having to carry out a full Environmental Impact Assessment. The joint application was approved, and the EA has begun with "scoping" (public input and commentary) meetings held in February in Harpers Ferry, Hagerstown (C&OCNHP headquarters) and Potomac. The last, the only "scoping meeting" in Montgomery County was not as well publicized or attended as we would have wished. A follow-up meeting may be scheduled.

The full White-tailed Deer Management Plan passed out at the scoping meetings can be found at

<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/showFile.cfm?projectID=55715&MIMETType=application%252Fpdf&filename=2015%5F2%5F9%5FCHOH%5Fnewsletter%5Fv5%5Fnot%20for%20print1%2Epdf&sfid=202530>

The key points from this document state:

"researchers with the US Forest Service have estimated that a healthy deer density in Maryland's forests is approximately 20 deer per square mile. NPS biologists agree that a deer density of about 20 per square mile is a sustainable density that allows for adequate forest regeneration; however, monitoring results show that this density has been substantially exceeded in both parks for many years. The parks have monitored deer density since 1998—C&O Canal NHP has focused on the Goldmine Tract in Great Falls. The park(s) have also assessed other related parameters such as herd health, vegetation condition, and forest regeneration. Deer densities (in deer per square mile) have ranged from 60 to 141 at the Goldmine Tract at C&O Canal NHP.

"PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION

The purpose of the plan/EA is to develop a white-tailed deer management strategy that supports long-term protection, preservation, and restoration of native vegetation and other natural and cultural resources and landscapes in C&O Canal and Harpers Ferry NHPs. A plan is needed because:

- An increasing number of deer in the parks has resulted in adverse effects on the natural distribution, abundance, and diversity of plant species in the two parks.
- Browsing and other damage to native seedlings, saplings, and understory vegetation by deer in the parks has prevented successful forest regeneration and restoration, and resulted in unacceptable changes to forest structure and composition.

- Attainment of the parks' cultural landscape preservation and restoration goals and mandates are compromised by the high density of deer in the parks.
- Opportunities exist to improve coordination with other nearby jurisdictional entities and other stakeholders currently implementing deer management actions.
- Chronic Wasting Disease has been identified in deer near the parks and represents an imminent threat to resources in the parks. There are opportunities to evaluate and plan responses to threats from CWD over the long term."

The options under consideration are:

"ALTERNATIVE A: NO-ACTION (CONTINUATION OF CURRENT MANAGEMENT)

NEPA requires that a no-action alternative be analyzed. This alternative describes existing management and policies and establishes a baseline. Existing management activities at both parks include monitoring deer density and relative numbers; monitoring vegetation; and limited use of deer repellants to protect small landscaped areas.

"ALTERNATIVE B: NONLETHAL DEER MANAGEMENT

Alternative B would include all actions described under alternative A and may also include the use of: reproductive control agents to reduce deer density to a point at which vegetation can recover; small scale fencing and large scale enclosures to protect gardens, restoration areas, or agricultural landscapes; repellents for short-term situations or over growing seasons; and aversive conditioning in selected areas or at specific times. Reproductive control agents would need to meet NPS criteria for use of such agents.

"ALTERNATIVE C: LETHAL DEER MANAGEMENT

Alternative C would include all actions described under alternative A and may also include: controlled harvest programs to reduce deer population to an acceptable range through the use of sharpshooting (firearms and/or archery) by park staff or contractors and limited capture and euthanasia only when sharpshooting would not be feasible due to safety concerns.

"ALTERNATIVE D: COMBINATION OF LETHAL AND NONLETHAL DEER MANAGEMENT

Alternative D would include all actions described under alternative A with a primary focus of incorporating a combination of lethal and nonlethal deer management actions from alternatives B and C to address high deer density. Lethal actions (including sharpshooting, with very limited capture/ euthanasia if necessary) would be taken initially to reduce the deer herd numbers quickly. Population maintenance could be conducted via nonsurgical reproductive control methods if these are available and meet NPS criteria or by sharpshooting."

"HOW TO COMMENT The comment period will be open through March 20, 2015.

There are several ways to provide input on the plan/EA:

- Submit comments electronically at: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/NHPdeermanagement> .

• Submit written comments at your parks' visitor center or by mail to the following central address for this project:

National Park Service
C & O Canal and Harpers Ferry NHP Deer Plan/EA
c/o Michelle Carter
C & O Canal National Historical Park
1850 Dual Highway, Suite 100, Hagerstown, MD
21740-6620

Please include your full name and address with the comments, so the Park Service may add you to its mailing list for future notices about this process. Because this plan/EA will address two parks, be sure to note if your comments apply to a specific park."

Whether you live close to the C&O Canal NHP or not, your comments on the various options – the comments of delegates, the associations you represent and associate members - will be valued. Please take the time to let the Park Service know what you think they should do about the problem of deer in these two National Parks.

Bus Rapid Transit Corridor Advisory Committees Convene

by Harriet Quinn, Planning & Land Use Committee

On Saturday, February 28, Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) held a kick-off event for the Corridor Advisory Committees (CACs) for the three corridors under study for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). The studies will be conducted by the State Highway Administration (SHA). Three corridors will be studied over the next two years: Route 355, Veirs Mill Road and Route 29. Routes 355 and 29 each have two committees and Veirs Mill Road has one. The kick-off meeting helped orient the CAC members to the upcoming process. The committees will provide stakeholders (residents, businesses, community organizations and others) with the opportunity to work with engineers and provide input to MCDOT and the State (SHA and MTA) in the decision making process.

Each Corridor Committee will meet every other month starting in March and the meetings will be open to the public. For more information about the Committees and the process, please visit <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/RTS/cacs.html>

President's Message: The Budgetpalooza!

Paula Bienenfeld

This month we look forward to spring – finally. Before we do I want to take some time to thank everyone who contributed to our very successful Third Annual Budgetpalooza!

The MCPS FY16 Operating Budget is proposed to be \$2.4Billion. That is half of our entire county budget. Is the money well spent? It is an enormous sum that goes to a government agency with no oversight, no benchmarking, and no independent audit controls.

For the past few years the Civic Federation has teamed up with the Montgomery County Taxpayers League and the Parents' Coalition of Montgomery County to do the deep dive into the budget. Volunteers from our organization and the public come out, take a chapter, and present their findings. We want to thank everyone who attended, and everyone who volunteered to put on their scuba gear and do the deep dive. This year's budget consists of 11 chapters and a set of appendices. Thanks to: Joan Fidler, President of the Taxpayers League, for her analysis and overview of the entire budget. Chapter elucidators included: Gordie Brenne, Vice President of the Taxpayers League, Chapters 1 and 8; Ed Amatetti (former candidate for Board of Education), Chapter 4; Jim Zepp, our First Vice President, Chapter 6; Jean Cavanaugh, Civic Fed At-Large Executive Committee Member, Chapter 9; and Stephen Brown, Civic Fed member, Chapter 11. We also want to thank Board of Education member Jill Ortman-Fouse for attending and contributing to the discussion. Janis Sartucci of the Parents' Coalition, and Jim Zepp taped the event. Look for the video on the Parents' Coalition blog.

Some highlights:

From Mr. Brenne's analysis of Chapter 1, the K-12 Budget:

- Only 16% of the budget is traceable to academic strategies, but this is 1% better than last year.
- No productivity or comparative benchmark data are provided to justify costs. There are no performance data, for example, for increased spending in the focus schools.
- Salaries are 20% higher than in Fairfax or Howard counties, where dropout rates are half.
- Direct overhead (administrators, counselors, media specialists) is 18.8%, down .01% from last year.
- There is no information on last year's "innovation" school initiative.
- Red Zone (Focus) elementary school teachers are paid 4% less and have lower math & reading scores in their classes.

From Mr. Brenne's analysis of Chapter 8, Office of the Chief Operation Officer Budget:

- The COO budget is over half of MCPS overhead spending (not directly linked to academic instruction)
- There are no productivity or comparative benchmark data to justify costs. For example, why does MCPS have 1,258 buses? How do costs for these functions compare to other large school systems? We don't know.

Overall, the performance measures are vague and don't include benchmarking.

There is redundancy in the different departments, and even across the county. For example, MCPS has its own quite expensive IT Department; so does the county as a whole. And, a serious independent audit is long overdue, including for overhead costs.

The Council has not yet taken up the MCPS budget. Please review it and send your comments to the Council and to County Executive Leggett. And, we'll see you all next year!

Sunshine Week

by Paula Bienenfeld, President

Sunshine Week is the week of March 15-21. The Civic Fed is a strong proponent of transparency and open government and this week we celebrate those objectives. There are lots of activities nationwide, including here in the metropolitan area. If you have ever wondered about getting information from our government, whether local, county, state or federal, these events are wonderful opportunities to find out the best ways to get those documents that the government tells you don't exist. I have gone to a few of these events and always come away with lots of helpful information. All these events are either free or inexpensive and all are open to the public.



Never written a Maryland Public Information Act request? This is a great week to begin. The letters are easy to write and can be submitted online. Our Maryland Attorney General has an easy template to follow in appendix A of the website here:

<http://www.oag.state.md.us/Opengov/pia.htm>.

Need some help with getting documents from the County government? Email us and we will help you out.

Here is a list of some local Sunshine Week activities:

March 13th: **FOI Day**. The Newseum Institute, OpenTheGovernment.org and the American Library Association (ALA), in partnership with the Sunshine in Government Initiative, American Society of News Editors and the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, will host the annual FOI Day at the Newseum in Washington, D.C. The morning event will include a look at 10 years of Sunshine Week and the importance of government transparency. The ALA will present its annual Madison Award for open government excellence. More details and registration information are [online here](#). The event will be webcast live. Follow #FOIDay15 on Twitter.

March 16th, **U.S. Department of Justice Sunshine Week 2015 Celebration**

The theme of this year's Department of Justice (DOJ) Sunshine Week event is a celebration of government FOIA professionals. The DOJ is accepting nominations in a variety of categories, and the winners will be recognized for their FOIA service with awards. The event in Washington will be held from 10 a.m. to noon and is open to agency personnel and the public. More information, registration and award nomination instructions are available on the [DOJ website](#).

Also on March 16th, **FOIA Faster** To mark Sunshine Week, the National Press Club and its Press Freedom Committee will host a workshop for journalists to teach them techniques to help get better results from Freedom of Information Act requests. FOIA Resource Center founder

Lisette Garcia will lead the class that costs \$5 for NPC members and \$10 for non-members. Details and registration information are on the [National Press Club website](#).

March 17th: **Webinar: Subsidy Tracker 3.0 Launch** In conjunction with Sunshine Week, Good Jobs First is hosting a webinar on using the latest version of its Subsidy Tracker database, which will include coverage of federal subsidies. [Register for the webinar](#) and see the [current Subsidy Tracker 2.0](#) for state/local data online.

March 18th, **Era of Transparency: Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), Privacy Act, and Open Government** The U.S. Census Bureau is hosting a Sunshine Week discussion on the importance of open government. Topics are slated to include proactive disclosures, the Privacy Act and data accessibility. The event will take place from 9 a.m. to noon in Suitland, MD. For more information, see the [event notice online](#).

March 19th **Sunshine Week Happy Hour and FOILIES Awards**. The Sunlight Foundation is teaming up with the Electronic Frontier Foundation and MuckRock to expand its annual Sunshine Week Happy Hour in D.C. to include a celebration of the FOILIES Awards, presented for the most "extraordinary and egregious" FOIA request responses, as nominated by the public. The event will be held from 5-7 p.m. at Lost & Found in Washington. More details and nomination information can be found on the [Sunlight Foundation website](#).

Also on March 19th, **Let the Sun Shine: FOIA requests for journalists and researchers**, sponsored by the National Security Archive and the Estelle and Melvin Gelman Library, The George Washington University, Washington. Nate Jones, director of the National Security Archives' FOIA Project, will give a 2-hour workshop on how to file effective federal Freedom of Information Act requests. The event, which begins at 4 p.m. at GWU's Gelman Library is free and open to the public. More information can be found on the [library's website](#).

Civic and Cultural Events of Interest & News You Can Use

A listing here does not indicate MCCF support for any elected official or political party.

Wednesday, March 4, at 7:00 P.M.

East County Citizens Advisory Board Meeting

Invited Guest Speaker is **Lily Qi**, Director of Special Projects, Office of the County Executive. Topic: "Establishing a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for Montgomery County."

East County Regional Services Center

3300 Briggs Chaney Road, Silver Spring, MD 20904

Saturday, March 7, 8:30a.m. – 4:00p.m.

Let's Talk: Forum on Infrastructure & Growth - Are We Keeping Pace? Sponsored by Councilmember Roger Berliner**Bethesda/Chevy Chase High School, 4301 East-West Highway, Bethesda, 20814**

Coffee, breakfast, and child care generously provided by Montgomery County Council of PTAs (MCCPTA). **Please Register as capacity is limited and childcare must be reserved.** To register and submit questions, go to: www.montgomerycountymd.gov/berliner . Contact: Neil Greenberger 240-777-7939 or Delphine Harriston 240-777-793

Saturday, March 21 6:30-8:30**Washington Revels/Carpe Diem Community Sing**

"On the 21st of every month we gather to share songs, community and refreshments – and sometimes even a dance or two! We sing adult, kid and family songs. All are welcome to bring refreshments and songs to share. Featuring numerous special guest song leaders. All ages welcome. No prior experience necessary. Bring refreshments and songs to share if you wish. Celebrating birthdays with fresh BD songs, cake and candles during the break at 7:45pm. Free admission. Donations appreciated. You can sign up in advance to lead a song by contacting Busy Graham (busygraham@gmail.com or 301-466-0183). Or just show up to sing (or even just to listen)!"

6:30-7:45pm – Community Sing—all ages welcome!

7:45-8:00pm – Social Time & Celebration of February Birthdays with fresh fruit, cake, and candles

8:00-8:30pm – Music Jam session—BYO ukeleles, guitars, etc

Montgomery County Police Department Website

If you want to keep current on police alerts, crime statistics, safety tips, find out how to file online reports, learn about volunteer opportunities or get a list of frequently used police department phone numbers, the police department's website, www.mymcpnews.com is just the ticket.

Bills in Annapolis

The Executive Committee reviewed Bills submitted for the 2015 Session of the Maryland General Assembly and voted to take positions on the following bills. Links to the web page for each Bill are provided.

[SB0153/](#)HB0885 Corporations - Political Expenditures - Stockholder Approval. **Support.**

[HB0652/](#) Planning Board Commissioner Terms. Authorizing up to 4 consecutive terms (16 years) for a Planning Board Commissioner if named Chair of Planning Board. **Oppose.**

SB667/[HB0185](#) Elections, Campaign Financing Disclosure. Requiring a political committee to file contribution report within 48 hours after receiving a single contribution, transfer, or loan of \$1,000 or more during the year of an election. **Support if within 2 weeks instead of 48 hours.**

[HB0264](#) Open Meetings Act - Public Body – Definition. Altering the definition of "public body" to include a multimember subcommittee of a standing committee of either house of the General Assembly. **Support.**

[HB0234](#) State Executive Branch - Lobbying by Former Officials and Members of the General Assembly. Altering the time period during which former members of the General Assembly and Executive Branch are prohibited from assisting or representing specified parties for compensation in a matter that is subject to legislative action. **Support.**

[SB0695](#)/[HB0755](#) General Provisions - Public Information Act - Enforcement, Fees, and Exemptions; establishing the State Public Information Act Compliance Board. **Support.**

[HB0300](#) Department of Transportation - WMATA Services - Utilization Study. **Support.**

[HB0541](#) Utility Companies - Removal of Facility Equipment From Utility Poles. **Support.**

[SB0747](#)/[HB0611](#) Public Utilities - Electric Companies - Vegetation Management. **Support.**

[SB0778](#)/[HB0172](#) Task Force to Study Issues Related to the Use of Self-Driving Vehicles. **Support.**

[HB0539](#) State Highway Administration - Evaluation of Urban Highways - Classifications and Speed Limits **Support.**

[HB0814](#) Increasing to 65 miles an hour the maximum speed limit on the Intercounty Connector. **Support.**

[HB0818](#) Vehicle Laws - Rules of the Road - Lane Changes. **Support.**

[SB0200](#)/[HB0216](#) Environment - Personal Care Products Containing Synthetic Plastic Microbeads - Prohibition on Manufacturing or Sale. **Support.**

[SB0409](#)/[HB0449](#) Environment - Hydraulic Fracturing - Protect Our Health and Communities. **Support with recommendation panel appointed before 2022**

[SB0588](#)/[HB0481](#) Stormwater Management - Watershed Protection and Restoration Program – Repeal. **Oppose.**

[HB1145](#) State Board of Tree Experts – Establishment. Oppose.

[SB0163](#)/HB0605 Agriculture - Neonicotinoid Pesticide - Labeling Requirement. **Support**

[SB0256](#)/HB0881 Maryland Shoreline Risk Assessment, Preparation, and Adaptation Act. **Support.**

[HB0675](#) Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission Reform Act of 2015. Support if expanded to Montgomery County.

HB0344/SB390 Education - Due Process Hearings for Children With Disabilities - Burden of Proof. Support.

MC 7-15/ [HB0086](#) – Voting authorizing the student member of the MC BoE to vote on specified matters. Oppose.

MC 22-15/ [HB0176](#) Montgomery County Board of Education - Special Election to Fill a Vacancy. Support.

MC 27-15/ [HB0510](#) Montgomery County - Education - School Bus - Doors That Lock. Oppose.

PG 407-15/[HB0597](#) Prince George's County BoE - Public High Schools - Outdoor Synthetic Turf Fields Oppose.

[HB0727](#) Anne Arundel County Board of Education - Wireless Telecommunications Towers - Moratorium and Report. Support.

[HB0668](#) Education - Due Process Hearings for Children With Disabilities - Attorney's Fees. Support.

[SB0210](#)/HB0934 Educational Institutions - Personal Electronic Account - Privacy Protection Support.

Minutes of the February 9 Meeting

By Jean Cavanaugh, Environment Committee

CALL TO ORDER: President Paula Bienenfeld called the meeting to order at 7:55 PM. Introductions of attendees followed.

AGENDA: Paula called for and received approval of the agenda.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Budgetpalooza on Thursday, Feb. 26 will review MCPS FY2016 operating budget, proposal totaling \$2.4B. The event is sponsored by the Montgomery County Taxpayers

League, the Parents Coalition of Montgomery County, and MCCF. County Executive Leggett plans to stop in. Volunteers are needed.

- Transparency and government. March 15 is Sunshine Week. The Sunlight Foundation <http://sunlightfoundation.com> is hosting interesting events.
- April 22 marks the 45th anniversary of Earth Day.
- Stormwater Partners has a Feb 23 meeting with the Parks Dept., and a March 9 briefing with the County Council T&E committee.
- Thank you to everyone who attended and wrote to the MC Delegation in opposition to MC 24-15. This legislation [which MCCF opposed](#) would enable the creation of an Independent Transit Authority, funded through undetermined levels of increased property taxes beyond the charter limit.

MINUTES: Paula called for and received approval of the January 12, 2015 minutes as published in the latest newsletter.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Jerry Garson, Treasurer, reported income, expenses, and current accounts for the 6 month period. All is in good shape.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMMUNITY HERO - Jasmine Thompson received the February Community Hero Award for speaking out about an MCPS employee who inappropriately touched her in her school, Baker Middle School. Although she was pressured to keep quiet, Ms. Thompson spoke out because she was worried other children would have the same experience.

PROGRAM: Jean Cavanaugh introduced Mr. Josh Faust, Public Outreach Manager for the Montgomery County Department of Transportation's Division of Highway Services, and Lon Anderson, Managing Director of Public and Government Affairs for American Automobile Association (AAA) Mid-Atlantic. The speakers discussed Perilous Potholes and Crumbling Curbs: Neighborhood Road Resurfacing. MCDOT is conducting its biannual survey of all county roads this spring. Using a Google Earth type van, sensitive equipment runs over all roads to contribute to 19 factors defining road condition and a repair prioritization score. MCDOT spends its funds equally throughout the five councilmanic districts. There are seven regional depots that are responsible for small service areas. They fill potholes within 48 hours of receiving a call from "311" or reported through mc311.org. MCDOT does not have a master list of streets/roads in the county. After repaving a road, there is a three year moratorium on utility work. MCDOT is trying to improve coordination between utilities and DOT. A question about permanent patching versus repaving revealed a preference for permanent patching on low traffic roads because it is quick and cheap. MCDOT wants to plant trees along roads because their cooling properties extend the life of pavement. Josh encouraged people to call or write him with questions, at 240-777-7642 or josh.faust@montgomerycountymd.gov.

Lon Anderson from AAA congratulated civic organizations for speaking out against a recent proposal to create an Independent Transit Authority funded by property taxes beyond current charter limits. He also lauded the 83% of voters who approved a referendum this past November for a State constitutional amendment to protect the Maryland Transportation Trust

Fund from being “raided” for other purposes. Lon detailed the high cost of potholes to motorists and insurance companies. Only 31% of people whose cars were damaged by potholes file claims. Road congestion in Maryland costs each motorist an average of \$422 per year. That said, Montgomery County does a good job filling potholes, with County Executive Leggett using additional funds when necessary to fix roads. AAA supports continuing to index the gas tax to inflation. Lon pointed out that 93% of all person miles are traveled on roads, and Maryland’s major transit carriers are buses. Maintenance of roads has declined which also affects bus operations. Lon questioned the absence of road projects on the County’s recently released transportation priority list sent to the State.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Environment committee: Carole Ann Barth gave an update on a Montgomery County Parks survey about publicly and privately owned open space options.

Legislation: Bill MC 24-15, which would have enabled the County to create an Independent Transit Authority (ITA) funded by property tax increases beyond the charter limit, was withdrawn. Bicounty Bill MC/PG 105-15, a bill to increase the number of terms a Planning Board Commissioner and Chair can serve, will be voted on by the Montgomery County delegates on February 13. Delegate Al Carr submitted a late bill allowing Board of Education vacancies to be filled by a new voting process instead of the current appointment practice. MCCF is tracking other bills including extending “care provider” to include friends; increasing responsibilities of the student member of the Board of Education.

NEW BUSINESS

Former MCCF President Cary Lamari urged MCCF to form a special committee to review Montgomery County transit and funding. Cary suggests surveying all civic associations, research transit status, numbers and options, and writing a white paper for the County. The Executive Committee will discuss this at their next meeting.

Eric Hensal presented a proposal to change the County Charter to create ten councilmanic districts. One must collect 10,000 registered voter signatures to include on the ballot a provision to change the charter. The Executive Committee will discuss this at their next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 10 pm.

Minutes of the February 18 Executive Committee Meeting

By Recording Secretary, Danila Sheveiko

The Executive Committee (ExComm) convened via conference call due to inclement weather.

Call to Order: Paula Bienenfeld, President, called the meeting to order at 7:07 PM. Present: Paula Bienenfeld, Jerry Garson, Peggy Dennis, Jim Zepp, Carole Ann Barth, Danila Sheveiko, Virginia Sheard, Alan Bowser, Jean Cavanaugh, and Harriet Quinn.

Adoption of Meeting Agenda: Paula called for and received unanimous approval of the proposed agenda as amended to include discussion of locations for future MCCF meetings.

Approval of Minutes for Dec. 18th ExComm Meeting: Paula called for and received unanimous approval of the minutes.

Treasurer's Report: Jerry Garson, Treasurer, reported no change since last reporting period.

Announcements:

[Budgetpalooza](#) – Feb. 26th, 7-9:30pm, [B-CC Regional Service Center](#). Volunteers needed

BRT [Corridor Advisory Committees](#) kick-off event – Sat. Feb. 28th.

Councilmember Berliner hosts [Infrastructure & Growth Forum](#) – Sat. March 7th 8:30am-4:00pm at Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School – to register click [here](#).

Programs: Paula introduced discussion of future programs.

March: County Operating Budget (Jerry)

April: 21st-Century Transit Options & Alternatives (Jim Zepp)

May: [Water Quality Protection Charge](#) aka Rain Tax (Peggy, Carole Ann)

Issues Discussed

- [_testimony report](#): big turnout, interesting discussion on both sides, lots of good testimony, farming community opposed to bill even though agriculture is excluded.
- [Committee for Montgomery](#) Advocacy Day report from Jerry.
- Proposal to form Special Committee as outlined in the Bylaws for the purpose of formulating a response to [Independent Transit Authority](#) proposal (as discussed at February General Meeting). MCCF Transportation Committee to review and respond.
- [Pesticide Bill](#): County Charter referendum proposals.
- Concerns with speakers introducing new business issues.
- Maryland General Assembly legislation – bills to be reviewed on Feb. 22nd over the phone, including [SB0695/HB0755](#) General Provisions - Public Information Act - Enforcement, Fees, and Exemptions.

Committee Reports

Planning & Land Use:

MCCF opposes proposed State legislation, local bill [MC/PG 105-15](#) extending term limits on Planning Board Commissioners from 2 to 4 terms (change from 8 consecutive years to 16) for Chair. Bill advanced to House Committee on Environment as [HB0652](#) by Montgomery House delegation (vote 17-6) with amendments for 12 consecutive years. Public hearing March 17th.

Councilmember Riemer's bill removing DPS from [plat signature authority](#) is opposed by all agencies and MCCF will send comments to [PHED Committee](#) ahead of their worksession on Feb. 23rd.

MCCF opposes County Executive's Expedited Bill for new \$200,000/year [Developer Ombudsman](#) non-merit position. PHED Committee [worksession](#) on Feb. 23rd. Council staff recommended against proposal.

Subdivision Regulations Rewrite: info-only community meeting to discuss draft of new Subdivision Regulations was held on Jan. 21st at the Planning Dept. – first comprehensive rewrite in 50 years, regs clarify and streamline [review and approvals process for subdividing property](#) and requirements for adequate public facilities and improvements to lots based on the impact of the subdivision.

[Proposal](#) to change Zoning Text Amendment introduction procedures. Currently ZTA Advisory Committee recommendation required to be included in Council Staff Memos. The bill to remove this requirement passed the Council despite objections on Jan. 27th.

Transportation:

Following public hearing, Bill MC 24-15, Independent Transit Authority [proposal was pulled](#) by County Executive & bill was [withdrawn by MC Delegation](#) in Annapolis. County Executive stated he might resubmit in the future.

Planning Dept. review of Local Area Transportation Review (LATR) Test and the [Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance](#) (APFO) continues with technical workgroup [monthly meetings](#).

Environment:

[Stormwater Partners Network](#) is working on a “beyond compliance” proposal for the County's [MS-4 Permit](#).

Council Transportation, Infrastructure, Energy and Environment Committee (T&E) hearing on Pesticide Bill 52-14 set for March 16th.

Public Safety:

Jim Zepp is following up with DOT's Josh Faust regarding agency's three year plan for road repaving and repair.

Education:

The search for a new superintendent is on – a non-compete bid to [the same executive search firm](#) as last time.

Old Business

- Website update: Virginia Sheard, Member at Large, is working on a layout draft.
- Costco gas update: The [Ethics Commission](#) met on Feb. 10th (short video [here](#)) to review potential conflict of interest concerns by two Board of Appeals members set to make final decision on the retailer's special zoning exception for a gas station.

- IgCC update: Draft legislation release for the [International Green Construction Code](#) has been delayed pending fiscal impact analysis.
- [Bus Rapid Transit Citizen Advisory Committee](#) update - Georgia Avenue BRT study taken off the table per County Executive's decision.

New Business

- General Assembly: MCCF legislative priorities.
- County Executive's Operating Budget: MCCF priorities.
- [Sunshine Week](#), March 15-21 Events
- [Earth Day](#), April 22, 45th Anniversary Events
- Newsletter deadline and articles – Saturday, Feb. 28th 6pm to Peggy Dennis at mccfnewsletter@gmail.com
- Date and location of next two ExComm meetings:
 - o March 19th, 7:45pm, B-CC Regional Services Center.
 - o April 16th, 7:00pm, Mid-County Regional Services Center.

Adjournment: Paula called for and received unanimous approval for adjournment at 10:02 PM.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY CIVIC FEDERATION MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION OR RENEWAL

July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2015

Mail to MCCF Treasurer: Jerry Garson
8308 Raymond Lane, Potomac MD 20854
301-765-9470; email: garson AT comcast.net

Form updated August 2014

Name of Organization/Individual _____ Date _____

Number of Households (Approx) _____ Annual Dues (see below) \$ _____

(Make checks payable to **Montgomery County Civic Federation**)

Membership Type	Number of Households	PLEASE CHECK	DUES	Max Number of Delegates	Voting Privileges
Local Association (civic, community, homeowner or municipality. Can not be a single local issue group.)	10 to 50		\$20	1	Yes
	51 to 300		\$35	2	
	301 to 600		\$50	3	
	601+		\$65	4	
Umbrella Association (Two or more local associations. Cannot be single local issue group.)	60 to 500		\$35	2	Yes
	501 to 1000		\$50	3	
	1001+		\$65	4	
Regional or County-Wide Organization (environmental, transportation, or other civic/community).	50+ memberships, not households		\$35	2	Yes
Individual Associate	(not applicable)		\$15	1	No
Associate Group (Gov't agency, business, or other organization)	(not applicable)		\$75	2	No

The newsletter is no longer mailed. Email is the only way to receive it. Organizations can also select less than the allowed number of delegates and pay according to that number.

1.	Name (President)		Phone (H)	
	Street		E-mail	
	City, State, Zip		Put email address in directory: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
			Phone	
2.	Name		(H)	
	Street		E-mail	
	City, State, Zip		Put email address in directory: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
			Phone	
3.	Name		(H)	
	Street		E-mail	
	City, State, Zip		Put email address in directory: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
			Phone	
4.	Name		(H)	
	Street		E-mail	
	City, State, Zip		Put email address in directory: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	