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of note

Next MCCF Meeting #933

May 9, 2022, 7:30 p.m. *online via Zoom*. Topic: "The State of Montgomery County's Environment."

! **Join the Zoom Meeting Here**

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

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Membership Application

JOIN ONLINE | MAIL-IN FORM

Federation Meeting #933

Monday, May 9, 2022

7:30 p.m.

Online Zoom Meeting

AGENDA

1. Call to Order/Introductions
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Approval of Minutes: April General Meeting #932 **P.10**
4. Treasurer's Report
5. Announcements
6. May Program: The State of Montgomery County's Environment **P.3**
7. Committee Reports
8. Old Business
9. New Business
10. Adjournment

About MCCF Meetings

All monthly MCCF meetings are open to the public. They are held on the second Monday of each month, September through June. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the start time is now at 7:30 p.m.

The May 9 meeting will be held online via Zoom (see page 3 for program) at 7:30 p.m.:

■ To be part of the video conference, first **visit the Zoom website** to download the program for your phone or computer.

■ Date and Time: Monday, May 9, 2022, 7:30 p.m. Eastern Time.

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

■ To participate by phone (audio only), call 301.715.8592. The meeting ID is 828 3863 2004. No password is required.

We hope you will join us! ■



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

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

Civic Federation News

civicednews AT montgomerycivic.org

TO SUBMIT AN ARTICLE, SEE PAGE 14

May Program: The State of Montgomery County's Environment

By Bailey Condrey

This is complicated and trying to set the tone for what is occurring with the county's efforts to improve the environment and address the climate crisis would take many pages and numerous newsletters as there are so many moving parts and engaged groups. The state of one county's environment taken in isolation is rather hard to parse when the entire continent and globe currently reside in a tremendous state of flux. The climate crisis strengthens with each passing year and the data reveal that humankind's collective efforts to stave off its worst effects have been insufficient as evidenced by the climate driven weather catastrophes that keep hurdling in our direction.

Flooding, hail and wind storms, tornados, wildfires, droughts, hur-

ricanes, blizzards, ice shelf collapses, ice storms, carbon particles, microplastics, coastal plain inundation, salinization of arable land, cryokonite melting, glacial retreat, sea ice elimination, methane emissions and carbon dioxide are threatening the food and water supplies of billions of people. Where the extremes exist, communities and nations fight for survival.

This largest of counties in one of the nation's smallest states, however, is making progress in its efforts to comport with its self-declared climate emergency of 2017. County Executive Marc Elrich has dedicated serious levels of funding to jump start the effort.

And lots of groups and organizations are making headway in the fight to give the Earth a chance to

heal itself, to give the myriad species at future risk of extinction some respite and to provide the human race some buffer from the unrelenting catastrophic weather events that our destabilization of the atmosphere has set into overdrive. But let's be clear, to make a difference, this wealthy county has to take a hard look at consumption. As a society we must consume less. We must place less impermeable surface across the county's acreage, we must push for stronger laws to protect existing forests and we must replant trees and native species with unrelenting fervor.

We should all be looking to source the farm products we buy from as many local farming operations as possible and the more re-

May Program, cont.

generative practices these farms employ, the better. In a recent article in the *Facing Future* newsletter, Robert Hunziger suggests that **the collapse of factory farming** may also help to give the world a break. Montgomery County's Agricultural Reserve is making progress with regenerative farming efforts and supporting them should be a goal for all.

As the county moves to incorporate planning efforts into what should be the primary concern of every elected politician, setting a national example for combating the climate crisis, these planning documents must deliver more than benefits for a minority of citizens. They must deliver concrete improvement for all. We must look at more than the environment that surrounds us when we leave our dwellings because

home is an environment that most directly affects us for the greatest part of our lives. As a long-time Silver Spring activist has shared with me, "Thrive and the Missing Middle Housing Market Study are environmental documents, because the indoor environment, thus 'housing,' is an environmental health issue. Housing is Montgomery's most impactful environmental policy because it heavily influences and often determines parks, stream protection, and transportation decisions. Where people live also relates to environmental and racial justice decisions and outcomes."

It's rather hard to ignore that the **Missing Middle Housing Market Study** directly refutes the claim that Thrive Montgomery 2050 is a "housing for all/affordable housing" policy by showing that its approach to densification will lead to more ex-

pensive housing units in DTSS. The report was not widely shared. [See the related **Missing Middle Housing Study**, Sept. 2018.]

The debate surrounding Thrive 2050 has been a months-long examination of what the document will and won't really deliver. Another local activist shared the following, "One factor I've seen little attention to is the EPA air quality figures, **which are available online**. The data show that our area in Silver Spring, which is very likely to be even more highly densified if Thrive is passed, is already high in pollutants. The simplistic "sprawl vs. density" approach taken by some environmental groups like the Sierra Club sheds very little light on this crucial subject. And then there is the issue of the environmental impact of new construction without mandatory

May Program, cont.

green features.”

If local and state leaders really embrace Montgomery County reaching the goals of the Climate Action Plan, then planning documents should play into ensuring that the CAP succeeds and not divert attention and resources in other directions. A great example of a simple concrete effort to show that every agency operating within the county will do what must be done to make the CAP successful falls to Montgomery County Public Schools. As National Geographic has recently shown us, **microplastics have now become part of the human condition**, but the science remains unsettled as to how much they harm us. Microplastics are in our bodies. How much do they harm us? Why can't MCPS, with the support of local and

state politicians, call for a moratorium on synthetic turf? These abhorrent plastics fields poison our watersheds and most likely the people using them.

MAY PROGRAM

The first part of the program for May will look at how the county's Department of Environmental Protection is working to restore watershed streambeds and whether the data show these efforts to be positive. Ken Bawer—of the Montgomery Coalition to Prevent Stream Destruction and President of the West Montgomery County Citizens Association—will present.

Then we'll dive into overall county efforts to meet the goals set out in the 2017 Climate Emergency Declaration and what progress the Climate Action Plan has made to lower emissions and improve the

lives of its citizens.

We'll look at bills passed to strengthen environmental laws and how Thrive 2050 plays into strengthening or weakening the state of the county's environment. The individual steps being taken across the county and the interactions by hundreds of activists with public policy makers may present a positive example for localities across the country to adopt. Laws are being passed and funded. Disposable, single-use products are being banned. Vehicle fleets are being electrified.

The latter part of the presentation may simply lay the groundwork for a lively debate with those on the Zoom call to really discuss what extraordinary steps have been taken—and what sacrifices may be required by all—if the county is actually to meet the goals outlined in the CAP and really improve our environment. ■

Maryland State Assembly Legislation Report

By Peggy Dennis, Chair, Legislation Committee

Here's how we did in supporting various bills in the Annapolis legislature during the 2022 session. These bills have already been enacted or are with Governor Hogan for his signature.

MC 25-22: Montgomery County—Deer Hunting—Sundays

Thanks to Del. Fraser-Hidalgo, the current law is extended indefinitely with no sunset provision. Hunters may hunt deer on each Sunday of the deer-hunting season from 30 minutes before sunrise until 10:30 a.m. It also adds one Sunday each in the bow and firearms season when hunters will be permitted to hunt the whole day.

HB 1059: Bicounty Commissions—Ethics—Certification of Compliance

The three bicounty agencies (WSSC, M-NCPPC, and WSTC) must now annually certify that their ethics regulations are “similar” or “substantially similar” to State ethics regulations.

HB 396: Montgomery County Planning Board—Open Meetings—Video and Audio Streaming and Minutes

The Montgomery Planning Board must now stream its meetings and publish written minutes.

HB 375: Open Meetings Act—Application and Enhanced Requirements

This Maryland State Agency Transparency Act of 2022 repeals exemptions from the Open Meetings Act for certain independent and regional development units; and establishes enhanced requirements under the Open Meetings Act for specified public bodies.

SB 387: Public Safety—Untraceable Firearms (Ghost Guns)

Senator Lee's bill changes the definition of “firearm” to include an unfinished frame or receiver; prohibits a person from purchasing, receiving, selling, offering to sell, or transferring an unfinished frame or receiver, or possessing such a firearm on or after January 1, 2023.

The following bills passed in the House but made it no further and are dead:



Legislation, cont.

HB 231: Montgomery County— Automated Traffic Enforcement

HB 918: Montgomery County— Business Regulation—Landlord License

This bill would have benefited Montgomery County renters by promoting competition and ensuring tenant access to multiple wired broadband providers.

HB 0007: Reckless and Negligent Driving—Death of Another (Sherry's and Christopher's Law)

Would have required that a person charged with reckless or negligent driving must appear in court and may not prepay the fine if the reckless or negligent driving contributed to an accident that resulted in

the death of another person.

HB 131/SB 321: Environment— Synthetic Turf and Turf Infill— Chain of Custody

This bill would have required a producer of synthetic turf and turf infill sold or distributed in the State to establish a system to track the chain of custody of the synthetic turf and turf infill and report the chain of custody to the Department of the Environment. It would also have required an owner of synthetic turf and turf infill to report information to the DEP and required the DEP to develop and maintain a website that displays chain of custody information; and make a violation of the Act a civil offense.

Let us hope that we can work harder to get these important bills across the finish line and signed into law during the 2023 session. ■

CIVIC FED TONIGHT!

SEEKING POSSIBLE SPEAKERS FOR YOUR CIVIC ASSOCIATION MEETINGS?

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

Montgomery County Wants Your Promise That Your Next Vehicle Will Be Electric

By Peggy Dennis, Transportation Committee Member

One Sunday in April, my sons and I went to the Rockville Science Fair to test drive several electric vehicles. I had already signed the “EV Pledge,” and I’m enthusiastic about the plan for the County to initiate a cooperative purchasing program. The following three paragraphs are from the program’s description.

“If we are to achieve our Climate Action Plan goal of zero emissions by 2035, we will need to completely transition our transportation system away from fossil fuels, and we need to start right away,” County Executive Elrich said. “Community members and businesses who take the pledge to make their next vehicle electric will help demonstrate consumer demand for electric vehicles in

Montgomery County. We are working to get more people into electric vehicles by making the purchasing process easier. Electric vehicles have lower emissions and operating costs and the program will make them more accessible. It’s going to take all of us doing our part to realize a cleaner future for our community.”



The pilot phase of the program is scheduled to run from January through May 2022. As a centerpiece of the pilot, County Executive Elrich is challenging residents and businesses to sign an online pledge stating that their next vehicle purchase will be a new or pre-owned electric vehicle. The County set a goal of getting 1,000 Montgomery County residents and 50 businesses to take the pledge this year.

“The transportation sector comprises 42 percent of Montgomery County’s community-wide greenhouse gas emissions,” said County’s Climate Change Officer and Acting Director of the Department of Environmental Protection Adriana Hochberg. “To reach Montgomery County’s climate goals, we will need

Electric Vehicles, cont.

to transition from fossil-fuel vehicles to electric vehicles, walk and bike more, and use more public transportation to get where we need to go.”

I note here that the cars we drove, a Tesla Model 3 and a Hyundai Ionic, both handled beautifully and were very responsive. I urge everyone to sign the pledge to help get the program up and running. Signing the pledge indicates your interest. It does not commit you to buying an EV, new or used, at any specific time in the future. You have nothing to lose! I, for one, look forward to jumping aboard and benefiting from the incentives already offered and the lower costs of cooperative purchasing.

Learn more about the [County's Electric Vehicle Purchasing Co-op Pilot and make your pledge here.](#) ■

Transportation Update

By Jerry Garson, Chair, Transportation Committee

Traffic on highways is on many days is above prepandemic levels but much lower on rail.

We are seeing the traffic on the Beltway and I-270 exceeding the prepandemic levels on many days in April 2022.

We see that the traffic that is measured on the westbound Beltway west of New Hampshire Avenue is reaching peak levels in the morning on some weekdays between 5 and 6 a.m. Therefore, up to 45 percent or more traffic is being diverted to the local roads because of congestion between 6 and 9 a.m. Pre-pandemic, the peak occurred more frequently between 5 and 6 a.m.

The peak hourly traffic is now being recorded on Sundays on the

Beltway westbound west of New Hampshire Avenue. The other traffic counter on the Beltway at Persimmon Tree Road overpass has been broken since November 2021.

The traffic counter on I-270 near Middlebrook Road is showing more traffic on many days than was present before the pandemic. The peak hour Southbound has occurred between 6 and 7 a.m. on 6 of the 17 weekdays, between 7 and 8 a.m. on 8 of the 17 weekdays, and between 8 and 9 a.m. on 3 of the 17 weekdays.

The latest data on ridership on WMATA rail for the first half of April 2022 shows that, on weekdays, system-wide passenger counts are down between 65 to 70 percent. ■

Minutes of April 11, 2022, MCCF General Meeting #932, Virtual Zoom Meeting

By Karen Cordry, Recording Secretary

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the General Meeting was held via Zoom as a virtual meeting. A total of 29 persons attended on the Zoom platform.

Call to Order: Alan Bowser, President, called the Meeting to order at 7:35 p.m.

Approval of Meeting Agenda: Moved, seconded, and approved by voice vote.

Approval of March Minutes: Moved, seconded, and approved by voice vote.

Treasurer's Report: Jerry Garson reported that, since July 1, we

had annual receipts of \$1,200, with \$50 in the last 30 days and total expenses of \$1,437 for a net balance of \$237. Current bank balance is \$8,752.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Alan thanked Gordie Brenne of the Montgomery County Taxpayers League for his detailed article in the April newsletter about the FY 23 County budget proposal and Jerry Garson for putting together tonight's program. Alan noted we have supported funding for the Office of People's Counsel and it's in the proposed budget. Public hearings on Apr. 12 and Alan will testify in favor of the OPC funding.

PROGRAM

County Budget 2022. Rich Ma-

daleno, MoCo Chief Administrative Officer and former director of OMB was the speaker. **Mr. Madaleno's PowerPoint is available here.**

Mr. Madaleno reported on a periodic survey the County does on residents' view of the state of affairs. This one was done in fall 2021 at the start of Omicron but the County generally received very high marks, i.e., 86% for overall quality of life. Service quality dropped from 84% to 77% but was well above the federal government at 55%. He noted there were challenges across the board for stepped up service needs from COVID.

Tax revenues were outperforming projections; COVID hit lowest income folks hardest but they don't pay many taxes and higher income

April Minutes, cont.

folks have been doing okay. Any added receipts go to fund a 10% reserve covering both the County budget and State aid. There has been record funding for a variety of initiatives, including climate change, affordable housing, and schools. Review budget under racial equity and climate change lenses.

Revenues

Taxes (68%), fees/fines (8%), state aid (21.6%), and miscellaneous (2.3%) (mostly from alcohol sales). Property, income, and recordation taxes are about 89% of the total. Property taxes are up due to hot demand, with even very expensive homes (\$2m plus) jumping now. The millennial generation is hitting its peak earning years and they, like the Baby Boomers, are a bulge work-

ing their way through the system.

Expenses

52% goes to education (school and Mo College). General services are 38%; debt service about 7%+, and parks about 2.9%. The County has been working to set up consolidated service hubs to allow one-stop assistance for a variety of needs in one place. They have been also looking at using direct cash assistance to let people decide for themselves what their most crucial needs are. They have also opened the first year-round, 24-hour comprehensive housing and service facilities so people don't go back on the street for hours or days. Has worked to keep down COVID rates for the homeless.

Public Schools

Proposed largest budget ever at \$2.9 billion (up about \$150M from

FY 22) and above maintenance-of-effort requirements.

He also noted proposals on spending for climate change; transportation (including getting service back to normal, reducing fares, and improving energy efficiency); libraries; a new rec center in Silver Spring; affordable housing (including \$40 million to protect naturally occurring affordable housing and \$100 million for Mont. Housing Init.); public safety, including added funding to make their salaries competitive to aid hiring; the Office of Grants Mgmt. to help nonprofits find funding sources; and economic and workforce development. And, he noted, the budget does propose funding the Office of the People's Counsel, which the Civic Fed. supports. His PowerPoint has substantially more detail on all these points.

April Minutes, cont.

Mr. Madaleno then took audience questions on topics including use of synthetic turf on playing fields; costs for retired employees and how they are funded; the relationship between State and County taxes; concerns about the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC), which makes a large number of the environmental decisions for this area while the County does not have a specific Department of the Environment to deal with those issues; the Maintenance-of-Effort requirements for school support and how they vary based on the level of enrollment; whether RideOn Buses should simply be free rather than worrying about collecting a \$1 fare; and compliance of the school system with the

County's environmental goals. He was also asked about how the affordable housing would work and the tie-in to proposals under Thrive and related initiatives. He noted that the County's goals were to "protect, preserve, and produce" such housing but there were concerns to understand why many approved developments weren't going ahead. He also was asked about the County's efforts to resist climate change and noted a number of programs were moving forward but did take some time. Finally, he also commented on the County's "Vision Zero" pedestrian safety initiatives.

Some resources for more information:

- [Recording of entire meeting;](#)
- [Mont. County's Open Budget;](#)
- [Mont. County's Vision Zero.](#)

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Land Use

■ Liz Joyce sent a letter to the editor of *The Washington Post* spotlighting issues with Thrive 2050 and responding to long piece by others criticizing position of County Executive Elrich.

■ There was discussion of the issues regarding why affordable housing wasn't being built and/or why approved units were not moving forward. The DTSS plan is now being considered and a lot of these issues are coming up there.

■ Have asked Council staff attorney for update on RESJ process; the original RFP was limited to local contractors but none qualified, so it's been broadened and reissued.

Legislation

■ State legislature overrode a

April Minutes, cont.

number of vetoes. Ghost guns went through without Hogan's signature. [HB 485 passed both houses; waiting on governor. [See the article on [page X.](#)] One that hasn't yet passed is to require that certain filings be made "under penalty of perjury."

Transportation

■ Jerry Garson noted the budget proposal for the \$1 fare for RideOn buses.

■ Alan Bowser will be testifying on April 19th on some of these issues.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

■ We need recommendations for awards for June meeting and articles for the newsletter.

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 9:42 p.m. ■

Minutes of the April 21 Executive Committee Meeting

By Karen Cordry, Recording Secretary

Attendance: Alan Bowser, Jerry Garson, Karen Cordry, Joshua Montgomery, Jacquie Bokow, Bailey Condrey.

Meeting Agenda: approved.

Treasurer's Report: Jerry Garson said we recently received \$336 in dues for a total \$1,536.57 in income this year, with \$1,437 in expenditures. Net income: \$99. Bank balance is 9,088.

May 9 Program: Bailey Condrey is arranging. Del. Ken Bowers (former president of West Montgomery CA) will speak on stream restoration efforts; Bailey will give overview of

global climate situation and how it filters down to MoCo. We have asked County Exec Elrich for his view on how we're doing in MoCo. Del. Bowers will have a PowerPoint.

June 13 Program: This is normally our awards ceremony. There are three awards: Wayne Goldstein Award, the Star Cup, and the Sentinel Award. There were a number of suggestions and the Executive Committee will explore them further. It was suggested we ask U.S. Rep. Jamie Raskin to be the speaker.

New Officers: There was a discussion about who would need to be nominated, which might or might not include Alan's position. Josh will stay on as First VP. The vote can

April ExCom Mtg., cont.

be held in either June or Sept.

It was decided that we would hold an on-line forum for the At-Large County Council candidates, probably on June 20 in addition to the awards program. We will ask the same two moderators that we used for the prior successful County Executive forum.

Thrive 2050: It was noted that the County limited its original RFP for a racial and social equity analysis to in-county consultants and didn't get any proposals, so they have resolicited a broader group. They want it to finish by September to keep Thrive on the existing timetable but the project may end up being pushed over to the next Council.

Membership: There was discus-

sion about a listserv where people can post about Civic Fed or their group's activities.

An initial question by Josh about what dues were charged in neighborhood associations evolved into a broader discussion of the excellent work he and his group have been doing in McKinney Hills/Carroll Knolls to boost interest and paid membership (close to 2/3 of the residents are paying members)! It was decided this would make an excellent topic for a general Civic Fed meeting (probably September) and Josh would also do a May newsletter article about what they have been doing.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m. ■

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

Send all address corrections to membership AT montgomerycivic.org.

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