

February Program: Greening Our Neighborhoods: A Sampler of Grass Roots Action | Local grassroots environmentalists who have successfully launched small-scale, practical neighborhood projects—initiatives that help protect our watersheds, preserve our trees, and beautify our streets—will show us how they did it. | [MORE](#)

County to Weaken Green Building Standards | Environmental activists and local industry leaders alike are concerned that Executive Regulation 21-15, as proposed by County's executive branch, is a step backward for green building standards in Montgomery County. | [MORE](#)

MCCF Now Represented on WMATA Riders' Advisory Council | At its December meeting, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) confirmed MCCF First Vice President Jim Zepp's appointment to a full three-year term on its Riders' Advisory Council (RAC). Besides having a background in planning and research, Zepp actually uses MetroRail, MetroBus, and the County's Ride On services. | [MORE](#)

A History of MCCF's 'Orphaned Roads' Project | Part 3 in a series by Past President Peggy Dennis | [MORE](#)

TO PRINT, USE ["PRINT VERSION"](#)

of note

Next MCFF Meeting

Monday, February 8, 2016, 7:45 p.m.
@ the Executive Office Building in Rockville. "Greening Our Neighborhoods: A Sampler of Grass Roots Environmental Action"

[AGENDA](#) • [PROGRAM](#)
[VENUE](#) • [ONLINE MAP](#)

January Meeting Minutes

MCCF Meeting [SEE MINUTES](#)
Executive Committee Meeting
[SEE EXCOM MINUTES](#)

Membership Application

Join or Renew Now [SEE FORM](#)

Federation Meeting 873

Monday, February 8, 2016

7:45 p.m. | Lobby Level Auditorium

Executive Office Building

101 Monroe St., Rockville, Md.

AGENDA

- 7:45 Call to Order/Introductions
- 7:50 Approval of Agenda
- 7:51 Announcements
- 7:55 Approval of Minutes, January 11 Meeting [READ](#)
- 7:56 Treasurer's Report
- 8:00 Program: "Greening Our Neighborhoods: A Sampler of Grass Roots Environmental Actions" [MORE](#)
- 9:15 Nominations Committee
- 9:20 Committee Reports
- 9:35 Old and New Business
- 9:45 Adjournment

About the Change in Venue

All monthly MCCF meetings are open to the public. They are held on the second Monday of each month, September through June, at 7:45 p.m., *usually* in the First Floor Auditorium of the County Council Office Building in Rockville, Md.

Please note the change of venue for the January meeting! Same time as usual (7:45 p.m.), but it will be held in the **Lobby Level Auditorium of the Executive Office Building at 101 Monroe Street, Rockville, Maryland.**

Free parking is available under the EOB after 6:00 p.m. Drive down the ramp in the front of the building, past the first left. At the bottom of the ramp, turn left into the garage. Buzz security at both the gate and every door for access. ■

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 | Co-Editors

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TO SUBMIT AN ARTICLE, SEE [PAGE 14](#)

February Program: Greening Our Neighborhoods: A Sampler of Grass Roots Actions

By Jean Cavanaugh, Environment Committee Co-Chair

The February 8 program will feature local grassroots environmentalists who have successfully launched neighborhood projects that help protect our watersheds, preserve our trees, and beautify our streets. We think these small-scale, practical initiatives can be duplicated in other neighborhoods.

In order to showcase as many ideas as possible, each presenter will give a “mini presentation.” Our hope is this “sampler plate” will whet your appetite to find out more about programs which could help your neighborhood. The invited panel includes:

■ **Water Watch Dogs**, a simple system for reporting water pollution and getting a quick response from

County investigators;

■ **Urban Ecosystems Restoration**, an emerging 501(c)(3) urban conservation land trust (or conservancy) created to work with landowners in the greater Washington, D.C., metropolitan area to restore natural spaces within new or rehabilitated real-estate developments and then protect these spaces over time;

■ **American Elm Park Project**, an ambitious citizen-built rain garden and conservation landscape project in the neighborhood west of upper Sligo Creek Park;

■ **Woodmoor Green Team**, a group of neighbors interested in greening the Woodmoor community (a Four Corners community in Silver Spring) by encouraging an environmentally friendly lifestyle that is easy on the wallet, family, and eyes;

■ **Wire Avenue Pollinator Garden**, a local traffic circle transformed into a butterfly garden with native plants and butterfly “puddling” tray; and

■ **Cheverly Backyard Composting**, which promotes backyard composting as an easy, cost-effective way to divert residential organic waste from landfills and create healthy soils that can absorb more rainfall. ■

Food comprises the largest percentage of waste going into municipal landfills



Jim Zepp Appointed to Three-Year Term on WMATA Riders' Advisory Council

By Jim Zepp, First Vice President

At its December meeting, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) confirmed MCCF First Vice President Jim Zepp's appointment to a full three-year term on its Riders' Advisory Council (RAC). He had been previously appointed to complete the term of a Montgomery County RAC member, who had resigned. Since he uses MetroRail, MetroBus, and the County's Ride On services—and having a background in planning and research—he can offer a perspective that reflects both professionals and actual riders.

The RAC exists to actively seek input from a broad range of riders and organizations with an expressed interest in public transit on operational and budgetary issues



that affect Metrorail, Metrobus, and MetroAccess; advise the WMATA Board of Directors (Board) on ways to resolve such issues in order to improve Metrorail, Metrobus, and MetroAccess services; advocate for riders to receive timely responses from WMATA regarding their inquiries; and recommend possible solutions to the Board and staff, based on public input, so that WMATA can

effectively address the diverse needs of the riding public.

With projected multibillion-dollar deficits that the agency is likely to be facing over the next 10 years, a major crisis in confidence among riders and participating governments regarding the safety and reliability of its transit services, an equipment and facilities infrastructure that needs substantial maintenance and modernization, and a new General Manager who must successfully address all of these concerns in a very short time, it is an opportunity for the MCCF's leadership and member organizations to have an active voice in these matters and decisions.

However, the greatest challenge for WMATA will be to adapt its operations and services to a rapidly

Zepp Appointed to WMATA Riders' Advisory Council, cont.

changing transportation market. For example, in less than six years, Uber has grown to providing on-demand transportation service in 58 countries and 300 cities. Other technology-based transportation services are also emerging that will attract more "choice" riders (those who have other alternatives) away from traditional mass transit services that are less convenient because they are limited to fixed routes, rigid schedules, and an image of uncomfortable and unattractive vehicles. In Montgomery County, only 15% of commuters use mass transit.

DRIVERLESS VEHICLES

This situation will get worse as driverless technologies begin to proliferate on the nation's roads. The

U.S. Transportation Secretary has recently predicted that he expects "driverless cars to be in use all over the world within the next 10 years." The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) has determined that "driverless vehicles will be the most viable form of intelligent transportation." The IEEE estimates that up to 75% of all vehicles will be autonomous by 2040. Given the long timeline for funding and implementing transit capital projects, WMATA's vision for its future must include these developments or face obsolescence.

If your community has concerns with WMATA's Metrorail, Metrobus, or MetroAccess (not the County's Ride On bus service) services, tell jzepp@mindspring.com. Also, the *RAC monthly meetings* have time set aside for a public comment period for individuals to talk about

any service problems or to make suggestions. Meetings are held the first Wednesday of each month from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. in the lobby level Meeting Room at Metro's Headquarters located at 600 5th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C.

WMATA can be contacted directly for individual complaints or information requests either by phone (202.637.1328) or [online](#). Information and comments about the County Ride On service can be handled by calling 311 or online through the [MoCo DOT website](#).

Other transportation issues can be directed to Jerry Garson, Chair of the MCCF Transportation Committee, at garson@comcast.net. Finally, each of the five County Regional Services Centers have [Citizens Advisory Boards](#) with committees that focus on issues involving County transportation services. ■

County to Weaken Green Building Standards

PROPOSED EXECUTIVE REGULATION DRAWS CONCERN FROM INDUSTRY AND ACTIVISTS ALIKE

By Danila Sheveiko, Co-Recording Secretary

In a surprise move, Montgomery County is proposing to lower green building standards using Executive Regulation 21-15. Four years in the making, ER 21-15 will adopt the 2012 International Green Construction Code as amended by Department of Permitting Services. Despite years of public and agency input, the public comment draft submitted by DPS last month *weakens the 2012 IgCC baseline of minimum sustainability requirements* to the point where both environmental activists and local industry leaders alike are concerned that the bill as proposed by County's executive branch is a step backward for green building standards in Montgomery.



The move comes nearly a year after official County reports acknowledged that energy use and *green-house gas emissions continue to increase despite a mandate to reduce emissions* by 10 percent compared to 2005 levels. **Buildings account for two thirds of Montgomery County's energy consumption,**

so lowering green building standards will only reinforce the abject failure to meaningfully address climate change in this large, progressive, and affluent jurisdiction.

Following a legislative alert, local builders met last month to discuss the ER 21-15 draft. According to U.S. Green Building Council's [official blog](#):

"The meeting was convened in response to concern from local professionals and industry leaders that the law as written ... risks weakening green building expectations across the county and penalizing (rather than rewarding) businesses that choose to invest in green building leadership.

...While the room held various

County to Weaken Green Building Standards, cont.

perspectives, several general consensus points could be identified by the end of the meeting. These points included ... [t]he desire for at least maintaining the stringency of the minimum requirements that currently exist (and about gaps that may need filling)."

A **sign-on letter** asking DPS, County Executive Ike Leggett, and the County Council to "ensure the County's exemplary green building baseline is not compromised with this new code" is being circulated by local industry professionals, and civic activists are promoting a more **strongly worded petition** demanding the County walk the talk on climate change and other environmental mandates.

The County Executive and County Council have so far stayed

largely silent on the ER 21-15 public comment draft, with exception of **Councilmember George Leventhal**, who authored the County's modest 2006 Green Buildings Law. **Not mincing words in a letter sent last week**, he said, "It is imperative that the Department of Permitting Services transmits to the Council the strongest regulation possible.... Environmentalists as well as representatives from the building industry have acknowledged that the proposed new code is less demanding than the current one. This regulation needs to start from a position of strength."

A strong draft is crucial because ER 21-15 will be submitted by County Executive's Office as Method 2 legislation, which means the Council can only take an up-or-down vote



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without possibility of amendments. In the event the Council does not take a vote, the bill will automatically become law after 60 days.

MORE

County to Weaken Green Building Standards, cont.

Nearly five years ago, Maryland became the nation's first state to embrace the 2012 International Green Construction Code. Hailed as "**pro-business and pro-environment**" and designed to supplant the voluntary and expensive LEED certification system, it is the first building code to include sustainability requirements for the entire development project and site—from design and materials selection to construction, operation, maintenance and beyond—comprehensively addressing everything from climate change to formaldehyde and other toxics in building materials.

The 2012 IgCC matches the full spectrum of environmental challenges from stormwater pollution to urban heat island effect with proven real world technologies like **green**

roofs that both capture stormwater at the source and mitigate the heat island effect, while decreasing heating and cooling costs, creating wildlife habitat, reducing infrastructure and operating costs, increasing property values, **improving economic competitiveness**, and **creating local green jobs**—all at the same time!

As it stands, Montgomery County government is wasting this unique opportunity—despite the **undeniable environmental and economic benefits**—by **simply deleting** the green roof and other minimum sustainability requirements from base code. So turning the tide on Executive Regulation 21-15 will take nothing less than a groundswell of public sentiment **demanding immediate action** by County Executive Leggett and the Council. ■

A History of MCCF's 'Orphaned Roads' Project, Part 3

*By Peggy Dennis, Past President
[Continued from the **December** and **January** issues]*

When I had completed my survey of all the possible "Orphaned Roads" and deleted those which were, in fact, maintained by the County or improved and maintained by homeowners associations, schools, or parks, I was left with about 100 roads. Half of these roads, as explained in Part 2, had been surreptitiously improved but not to County standards and with the homeowners still maintaining them. The other 50 were a mixed bag of "the good, the bad, and the ugly." Most were cul-de-sacs. They were spread throughout the councilmanic districts with plenty, to my surprise, in the down-

MORE

Orphaned Roads, cont.

county.

As I worked on the survey of the County's orphaned roads, we discussed in the Civic Federation's Executive Committee what we might do with the data. We considered waiting for the RFP for a private consultant to be issued and bidding on it. Had we offered to do the project for a nominal fee—say, \$50,000—that would have been far less than the \$250,000 allocated in the budget. But would the powers that be have taken us seriously? We decided that I should just do the work, turn it in, and essentially do an end run around the contracting system.

I spent many hours documenting my findings and money copying the photographs and texts describing each street. A dozen binders were made and turned in to the County

Executive, the Director of DOT and each of the Councilmembers. The survey was accepted as valid, and Mr. Leggett acknowledged our contribution with his surprise visit to the MCCF's January 2008 meeting. He then directed that a working group be established within DOT to devise a plan and policy for various ways of allowing the residents to improve their roads. It took a year for the Working Group to create the "Dedicated but Unmaintained Roads Policy" and another year for the policy to be discussed at public hearing, approved by the Council in December 2009 and signed by the Executive in 2010.

Then came the community meetings. Each property owner on an orphaned road received written notification about the new policy and invitations to three community meetings where DOT explained the policy

and answered questions. There were unwarranted anxieties among some that DOT might come in, improve their road, then stick them with a big bill. In the end, DOT made it very clear that they would only initiate the process if requested to by a majority of the property owners, and that, once a solid cost estimate was provided, the owners would have a second chance to vote on the project.

Twenty years earlier, DOT had estimated that improving Fawsett Road (my road) would cost a million dollars. With the formal policy in place, the residents petitioned DOT to start the project. When the survey, geotechnical testing and engineered studies had been completed, we were given an initial cost estimate of \$860,000. On the basis of this, a solid majority voted in December 2011 to approve the proj-

MORE

Orphaned Roads, cont.

ect. This triggered the much longer process of DOT refining the plans, obtaining approvals and permits for tree conservation and stormwater management, getting easements from several residents, and putting out requests for bids. Bruce Johnston, head of DOT's Engineering Division, tasked Dan Sheridan and Rebecca Park to work with us on the plans. They were endlessly patient as we questioned various line items in the standard contract. Did we really need two flagmen to control the traffic on our little cul-de-sac? Did we have to spend \$50 for each mailbox to be moved when we could do it ourselves?

Finally, in September 2014, the work commenced. We watched as our roadsides were dug up and storm drains built to accommodate



IKE LEGGETT (CENTER RIGHT) JOINED PEGGY DENNIS (CENTER LEFT) AND HER NEIGHBORS FOR A RIBBON-CUTTING WHEN THEIR 'ORPHAN ROAD' WAS PAVED.

stormwater runoff. We worried that grass seed put down in November would not germinate until spring, then saw thick rolls of luscious green turf put down to dress the swales. "Speed Limit" and "No Parking" signs went up. Mail boxes returned

to their rightful places.

In December, the work was completed and, in 2015, we got the final bill: \$557,000. This worked out to \$28,000 per household, or \$1,600 added to our annual real estate taxes over the next 20 years. Now, how often do we hear about DOT completing a project well under budget?

Was it worth it? No more dust. No more mud. No more noise from every vehicle crunching corn flakes (loose gravel) at all hours of the day and night. Most of us are very happy with the outcome.

On October 25, 2015, Ike Leggett, Bruce Johnston, Howie Denis and Delegate Mark Korman joined our neighborhood for an official ribbon-cutting ceremony and potluck party: a wonderful ending to the odyssey begun with Fawsett Road. But not the end of the MCCF's Orphaned Roads Project. ■

Minutes of the January 11, 2016, Meeting #872

By Jean Cavanaugh, Co-Recording Secretary

Call to Order: President Paula Bienenfeld called the meeting to order at 7:55 p.m. **Introductions** by attendees followed.

Agenda: Paula Bienenfeld called for and received approval of the agenda with amendments to add discussion about a newsletter meeting.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

■ MCCF's Carole Ann Barth will run three **rain garden workshops in Prince George's County** January 30, February 27, and March 19.

■ MCCF's 4th Annual Budget-palooza will review the MCPS operating budget on February 4, 7:00 p.m. at the **B-CC Regional Services**

Center, Room D. **Sign up here.**

■ MCCF's Annual Awards ceremony will be held Thursday, May 5, 2016, at **McGinty's Public House** in downtown Silver Spring. MCCF needs people to serve on the awards committee.

■ State Senator (D19) Roger Man- no and State DOT Secretary Peter Rahn are requesting funds to remedy safety issues on the overcrowded platform and trains at Shady Grove Metro Station.

COMMUNITY HERO

Tom Hearn, a local parent, became an advocate for student athletes after his son suffered a concussion in school sports. Using the microphone as a tool, Hearn's public testimonies and advocacy led to the Maryland State Department of Edu-

cation requiring all school coaches be trained in concussion risk management, and all students receive a medical assessment if there's a suspected injury to them. Hearn's efforts also led to Montgomery County placing certified athletic trainers at all 25 of its public high schools.

Hearn uncovered a culture in MCPS that didn't appropriately treat athletes' health issues, from concussion to heat stroke. Should MCPS support a sport that causes repetitive brain trauma, sometimes 600–650 hits per season?

Hearn now is tracking and bringing to the attention of the County's Board of Education an initiative at Whitman High School that uses students as human research subjects. Hearn manages Twitter account @ **concussionMCPS**. **MORE**

January Minutes, cont.

Minutes: Paula Bienenfeld called for and received approval of the December 14, 2015, minutes as published in the **latest newsletter**.

Treasurer's Report: Jerry Garson reported MCCF's bank balance is \$13,556.72.

PROGRAM

Jim Zepp, MCCF Vice President, was appointed to the WMATA Rider Advisory Council (RAC) in 2015. While much of the County government's attention for the last three years has been focused on creating a new transit agency and services, the Washington Area Metropolitan Transit Authority (WMATA) operations and finances have reached a boiling point for citizens and D.C.-area governments. The program

explored the issues that the agency's management and participating governments must successfully address as transportation and transit services are moving into an uncertain future with new alternatives challenging old assumptions and approaches.

■ Guest speaker **Shyam Kannan**, LEED AP, Managing Director of the WMATA Office of Planning, focused on WMATA challenges going forward embodied in "**Momentum**," Metro's strategic plan until 2025.

Metro's first big problem is in its "core"—downtown D.C. stations. Metrorail was designed to ferry commuters into and out of downtown D.C. D.C. has added 80,000 to its population in the last 15 years, leading to core ridership overcrowding in excess of what the system was designed to handle. Unloading trains takes twice as long as it should due to platform crowding. Metro has



KANNAN

lost 10% of its rail capacity because of offloading challenges. The Red Line stations are in dire need of enhancement.

Metro's second big problem is road congestion. Road congestion has doubled since the 1980s. Buses often travel at less than 5 mph.

Other challenges include the poor design of the Silver Line, which causes a ripple effect of over-crowding and delays on other lines. Metro also needs more trains and solutions to its bus service, e.g., paying before boarding. Metrobus needs a way to get through traffic congestion, including priority signalization. Metrorail needs a better communications system and improved fare machines (which are from 1974).

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January Minutes, cont.

Lastly, the Rosslyn portal causes congestion throughout the system and must be fixed. WMATA is a regional authority and is responsible for expanding Metrorail stations. Capital costs are divided into thirds (Md., D.C., and Va.). Operations funding is a more complex formula which depends on usage, population, density, and other factors.

Email WMATA board members with issues and questions at boardofdirectors@wmata.com. Email Mr. Kannan at planning@wmata.com. Follow Mr. Kannan's blog at planit-metro.com.

■ The second speaker, Bob Fogel, is a member of the **WMATA Riders' Advisory Council** (RAC). The RAC has six members from the Maryland suburbs, Virginia suburbs, and D.C., two at large members, and



one member representing the Americans with Disabilities community.

RAC meetings are open; the public can attend and comment. Meetings are held the first Wednesday of each month from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. in the lobby level Meeting Room at Metro's Headquarters, located at 600 Fifth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. Metro stop is Gallery Place. The February 3 meeting will focus on transit crime.

RAC's mandate is to listen to riders, get their feedback, and make recommendations to board directors. Fogel recalls how Metrorail was a gold-plated system when he arrived in the Washington area 28 years ago. Now, Metro systems suffer from safety and reliability problems, crime, a reduction in transit

benefits, lousy customer service, cheap gas, ridership loss, and financing challenges.

Fogel's focus is customer service. He supports adding to the current level of one staff at Metrorail stations, and encourages station masters to leave their kiosks frequently to interact with riders, especially during rush hour. Fogel also supports replacing loudspeakers.

The RAC has no official power; they can only make recommendations to the WMATA Board. There is no codified process for recommendations.

Fogel noted recent federal transportation legislation included five-year highway and transportation authorization, as well as a significant funding increase each of those years. The FY2016 Transportation Appropriations Bill included \$150M

MORE

January Minutes, cont.

for WMATA in 2016, and doubled transit commuter benefits.

NEW BUSINESS

■ The Maryland State legislative session starts Wednesday, January 13, 2016.

■ The County Executive is holding **budget forums** throughout the county.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Environment

■ Next month's program will feature grassroots neighborhood environmental projects that can be replicated in other neighborhoods.

■ County Department of Permitting Services supports adopting a modified version of the 2012 International Green Construction Code (IgCC), moving several requirements

to an optional appendix, thereby lowering green building standards ([see story, this issue](#)). See **proposed Regulation 21-15**.

Transportation

■ MCCF Transportation Committee released its response to CE Leggett's proposal for an Independent Transit Authority to fund Bus Rapid Transit and other transportation projects.

Education

■ On February 4, 7 p.m. at the B-CC Regional Services Center, MCCF is cosponsoring the 4th Annual Budgetpalooza to review Montgomery County Public School's FY17 budget. **Sign up to review a chapter or appendix.**

Planning and Land Use

■ The deadline for Costco to ap-

peal the denial of its proposed mega gas station in Wheaton is Tuesday, January 19, 2016.

■ The Planning Department is holding a community meeting on the **Subdivision Staging Policy** rewrite on January 12, 2016. The Planning Department will send to the County Council by August 1, 2016.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 9:55 pm. ■

ARTICLE SUBMISSION?

Submit contributions for the March issue by **Thursday, February 25, 2016**. Send it to Jacquie Bokow, Co-Editor, at cfnceditor@verizon.net.

ADDRESS CHANGE?

Please send all address corrections to mccivcfed@gmail.com.

VIEW PAST ISSUES ONLINE [HERE](#)

Minutes of the January 21, 2016, MCCF Executive Committee Meeting

By Jean Cavanaugh, Co-Recording Secretary

Call to Order: Paula Bienenfeld, President, called the meeting to order at 7:52 p.m. via teleconference.

Present: Dean Ahmad, Carole Ann Barth, Paula Bienenfeld, Jacquie Bokow, Jean Cavanaugh, Peggy Dennis, Jerry Garson, Luella Mast, Harriet Quinn, Virginia Sheard, Danila Sheveiko, Sandy Vogelgesang, Louis Willen, and Jim Zepp.

Adoption of Meeting Agenda: Paula Bienenfeld called for and received unanimous approval of the proposed agenda with two amendments: Add discussion of special meeting on the newsletter, and

change newsletter article due date to January 24.

Approval of Minutes for December ExComm Meeting:

Approved minutes for December 17, 2015, ExComm Meeting.

Treasurer's Report: Jerry Garson noted former MCCF website manager Jim Humphrey sent an invoice for the Yahoo domain of the old website. Paula will work with Jim to cancel the account and reimburse Jim. ExComm members will share information on new website hosting details.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

■ On February 2, 2016, at 7 p.m., the County Department of Transporta-

tation will host a public meeting at the Silver Spring Civic Building on a **proposed bicycle track**, the second in the County, planned for Cedar and Spring Streets on the northern border of downtown Silver Spring.

■ On February 3, 2016, the County Department of General Services will host a community meeting on reuse of the old Silver Spring Library. The meeting will be held at 7 p.m. at the Silver Spring Civic Building.

■ Costco appealed to the State Court of Special Appeals in Annapolis for consideration of its request for a special exception to build a mega gas station at Westfield Wheaton next to homes, a community pool, and a school for physically fragile children.

■ The Crossway program that has

MORE

Jan. ExComm Minutes, cont.

provided residential life skills training for single mothers at a former elementary school is continuing after a controversial shut down last fall. HUD announced it would stop providing housing vouchers for the apartments converted from classrooms. Virginia Sheard is to monitor and provide updates on current status. A broad issue that comes out of this is how the county does or does not oversee its grant program to verify outcomes and accountability for funds.

■ The WMATA-Metro Working Group, founded by members of the Maryland General Assembly, has established its **meeting schedule**.

■ The MCCF Transportation Committee released its report in response to the County Executive's proposal to establish an Independent Transit

Authority to fund Bus Rapid Transit and other transportation projects. The report will be placed on the MCCF website after MCCF Executive Committee review and distributed to elected and appointed officials.

PROGRAMS

■ **February:** Program will feature several small-scale neighborhood environmental initiatives.

■ **March:** Meeting will feature a tour of Open Data Montgomery, which provides direct access to County datasets in consumable formats, offering the public an opportunity to review and analyze raw data, and the opportunity to use it for a variety of purposes.

■ **April:** Program will focus on the County's budget. Jerry Garson will look into moving the MCCF Meeting venue back to the County Council auditorium for April only.

ISSUES DISCUSSED

■ MCCF's annual awards event will be held at McGinty's Public House in downtown Silver Spring. Paula Bienenfeld will make the reservation.

■ State Legislature and MCCF priorities include the proposed referendum on the County's Department of Liquor Control and a bill to establish an independent County student loan authority.

■ MCCF is discussing legislation to support a task force on the use of self-driving cars, a plastic bag ban, stormwater management fees, pollinator protection, automated vehicle registration, changing the words of the state song, and **HB 129**, a bill to stagger election cycles of chartered county councils including Montgomery.

■ The Commission on Common Ownership Communities (CCOC)

MORE

Jan. ExComm Minutes, cont.

will increase its rate to an amount equal to or less than \$5/unit. The County Executive proposed **Bill 50-15** to move CCOC into the County Department of Housing and Community Affairs (DHCA) and change the composition of the CCOC Board. CCOC recently sent out a letter to all HOAs requiring annual registration of rental units and their contact information.

■ There was a Charter Review Commission hearing on January 20, 2016. Council member Elrich has stated at two County Executive Budget Forums that he plans to submit **an amendment to the Charter** to repeal the provision that requires Council unanimity in voting for property tax increases above the Charter limit.

■ Weather permitting, at a January

26, 2016, public hearing, the Council is scheduled to receive public comments regarding proposed spending affordability guidelines for the FY17 operating budget. (see **memo**). Council staff recommends property tax increase up to the Charter Limit. MCCF supports the staff recommendation.

■ The current County Snow Plow Policy is to wait until the snow is over to plow neighborhoods. In older neighborhoods with narrow streets, they can't always use a regular plow. However, people need emergency access to main roads. MCCF will write a letter to County to bring the policy intention to light.

COMMITTEE REPORTS*Planning and Land Use*

Council rescheduled January 26, 2016, public hearing of the Westbard Sector Plan to February 2 due to the

weather. Council member Berliner opposes densities and heights proposed by the Planning Board.

■ **Subdivision Regulations Rewrite** will be reviewed by Council PHED Committee soon.

■ MCCF received an email regarding concerns over open space plans in the proposed **Montgomery Village Sector Plan**. The Council is reviewing the plan now. P&LU will review the plan.

■ Councilmember Riemer may be resubmitting legislation to allow short-term (daily) rentals such as Airbnb bed-and-breakfasts and boarding houses by right in residential neighborhoods. Currently these are allowed by special exception only. Neighborhoods are concerned with licensing, parking, and other impacts of commercial use of a residence. There is no infrastructure

MORE

Jan. ExComm Minutes, cont.

for consumer recourse, licensing, or measure of impact on housing supply and affordability. Some landlords are reserving apartments for lucrative short-term Airbnb use, reducing affordable housing. Short-term rentals are not permitted by right in any other local jurisdiction.

Transportation

■ The Transportation Committee will write a letter to MCDOT about snow removal policy.

■ Peggy is representing MCCF on the Community Advisory Committee for the Bicycle Master Plan and will attend the Planning Department's first meeting on January 26.

■ Jim will meet with the new WMATA director to discuss better cross-jurisdiction coordination.

■ The University of Maryland **Center for Advanced Transportation Technology** has online interactive traffic data for 30 states. They offered a demonstration to MCCF members; Jim Zepp will organize.

■ The MoCo Planning Dept. has a **new map with intersection data and CLV count**.

Environment

Danila Sheveiko is working with the local building community and others to encourage the County to conform to IgCC (see **story**).

OLD BUSINESS

■ Jim continues to work on a regional Civic Summit.

■ **Budgetpalooza!** will be held February 4 at the B-CC Regional Services Center. Please **sign up to review a chapter**.

NEW BUSINESS

■ Please send MCCF newsletter articles to Peggy Dennis at **mccfnews-letter@gmail.com**. Copy to Jacquie Bokow at **cfeditor@verizon.net**.

■ Peggy Dennis proposed a special meeting on the newsletter format. The Executive Committee and guests discussed urgency of the issue and potential dates given the weather and vacation plans. Sandy will host an open meeting this Wednesday, January 27, at 7:45 p.m.

■ The next two Executive Committee meetings will be held February 18 at the B-CC RSC and March 17 by teleconference. We will publish the phone number and access code in the newsletter for maximum participation.

Adjournment: The ExecComm adjourned at 9:55 p.m. ■