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CIVIC FEDERATION NEWS

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY CIVIC FEDERATION, INC. NOVEMBER • 2021

TO PRINT, USE PRINT VERSION

of note

Next MCCF Meeting #927
Monday, November 8, 2021, 7:30 p.m. *online via Zoom*. Topic: "Transportation and Pedestrian Safety in Montgomery County."

- Join the Zoom Meeting Here
  [See further instructions on page 2. No password required.]

AGENDA, P. 2 • PROGRAM, P. 3

Federation Meeting #927

Monday, November 8, 2021
7:30 p.m.
Online Zoom Meeting

AGENDA

1. Call to Order/Introductions
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Approval of Minutes: October General Meeting P.26
4. Treasurer's Report
5. Announcements
6. November Program: "Transportation and Pedestrian Safety in Montgomery County" P.3
7. Committee Reports
8. Old Business
9. New Business
10. Adjournment

About MCCF Meetings

All monthly MCCF meetings are open to the public. They are held on the second Monday of each month, September through June.

The November 8 meeting will be held online via Zoom (see page 3 for program) at ***7:30 p.m.***:

- To be part of the video conference, download the Zoom Zoom Client for Meetings here.
- Meeting Name: "MCCF Monthly Meeting."
- Date and Time: Monday, November 8, 2021, 7:30 p.m.
- 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 **871 5533 2480**. No password is required.

We hope you will join us!

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

The *Civic Federation News* is published monthly except 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
civicfednews AT montgomerycivic.org

TO SUBMIT AN ARTICLE, SEE PAGE 30

November Program: Transportation and Pedestrian Safety in Montgomery County

Our November 8, 2021, program focuses on transportation and pedestrian issues in Montgomery County. Our guests are **Chris Conklin**, Director of the MoCo Dept. of Transportation; **Wade Holland**, Vision Zero Coordinator in the Office of the MoCo Executive; and **Kristy Daphnis**, Chair of the MoCo Pedestrian, Bicycle and Traffic Safety Advisory Committee. Transportation and pedestrian safety have been top priority issues for the Civic Federation and we're fortunate to have some of the County's most informed policymakers to join us for our discussion of what neighborhood and civic and homeowners associations can do to make our communities safer.

Transportation. At MCDOT, Director Conklin and a staff of over 1,200 employees manage a myriad of critical projects across the full gamut of transportation modes. Whether it's school bus safety, bus rapid transit services, a reimagined bus network study, street design to improve accessibility for people with vision disabilities, parking enforcement, open streets, road maintenance, street tree protection and replacement, traffic cameras, parking, or bike lanes (among many other things), MCDOT plays the leadership role for building and maintaining County infrastructure such as roads, paths, lighting, garages, crosswalks, sidewalks and bus shelters. Its stated priority areas are safety and vision zero, environment and climate resiliency and economic development and equitable access.

MCDOT has more than 1,200 employees and a dedicated County budget of $230,000,000, of which 65% is for transit; it also operates the Tree Management program which is responsible for street tree preservation, maintenance, and pruning trees in neighborhoods. The department plants approximately 1,800 trees each year in the public right-of-way by public request.

MCDOT maintains 5,350 lane miles of roads which include residential and rural roads in the County. It is responsible for all roads that are not numbered. The County has 390 RideOn buses (scheduled to remain free until at least January 2022), it manages 860 traffic signals including those on State Roads, it manages 40 parking lots and garages, it maintains 1,645 miles of sidewalks and 67,000 streetlights.

MORE

November Program, cont.

Pedestrian Safety and Vision Zero. The Vision Zero Plan will build a county without serious or fatal injuries on our roadways by 2030. To make progress on each action item, the County released its FY 2022 and 2023 work plans. The following were identified as top priorities of County residents to improve road safety: building new and improving existing sidewalks, expanding the bikeway network, more safe cross opportunities for pedestrians and cyclists, safer access to and from bus stops, more proactive and intentional engagement from the County government, and improving driver behavior for speeding and stopping for pedestrians.

The PBTSAC Advisory Committee—comprised of citizens, elected officials and government representatives—has been meeting regularly to provide resident input into the development of policy and implementation of transportation and pedestrian safety projects in the County, and worked closely with county officials to inform the Vision Zero 10-year Plan. The Committee has repeatedly expressed its view that transportation-related deaths and severe injuries are preventable and unacceptable, and that human life takes priority over mobility and other objectives of the road system. The road system should be safe for all users, for all modes of transportation, in all communities, and for people of all ages and abilities. Moreover, the transportation system should be designed for speeds to protect human life.

One of the issues of concern to the Committee is that "equity," and how should equity be included in the Vision Zero 10-year plan. ▮

2022 MCCF Awards Committee Now Forming

By Peggy Dennis, Past President

The Civic Federation's Annual Awards Celebration in June may seem a long way off, but, truly, there is much to be done within the coming months. The work of this committee—soliciting and accepting nominations for award recipients, evaluating those nominations, and making final recommendations on the awardees—should be carried out during the winter. Much of the work can be done by email or phone.

First, we need an Awards Committee. This group will be confirmed at the January Executive Committee meeting. Volunteers, please step forward! Contact our President, Alan Bowser, at *president@montgomery-civic.org* to let him know that you're willing to serve. ▮

Letter to County Council Concerning Thrive 2050 from Taxpayers League, Cosigners

We, the undersigned community organizations, strongly oppose the Thrive Montgomery 2050 general plan and the Council's rush to enact it into law. We object to the undemocratic process and lack of genuine community engagement by which the plan was developed, and to the plan's undermining of homeowners' rights under present law. Convincing evidence from communities such as Minneapolis, Minn., that have passed similar plans—and from our County's own executive agencies — shows that Thrive will not meet stated objectives and would have unintended negative impacts on our County.

We also object to the plan's failure to address the pandemic's impact on County finances, transit, work and commuting patterns, housing, density, the environment, and a host of new challenges the County must meet.

For these reasons, the undersigned ask Council to:

1. Restart the Thrive process to include civic groups and community associations as equal participants from start to finish.

2. Stop the rush to pass Thrive and accumulate the data to make evidence-based decisions about zoning for the next 30 years.

3. Develop a strategy of pursuing pilot projects such as at White Flint, Lake Forest, and Burtonsville that adhere to a master planning process and serve as "low-hanging fruit test cases."

Although this letter treats Thrive Montgomery 2050 and the Attainable Housing Strategies Initiative (AHSI)[1] as separate initiatives, we reject the Council's insistence that Thrive "has nothing to do with zoning." Thrive Montgomery 2050 eliminates the 1964 and 1993 "wedges and corridors" general plan and all its associated regulations, opening the door to profound rezoning through zoning text amendments (ZTAs). Although the Council's PHED committee has recently tried

[1] The industry definition of attainable housing is "for-sale, unsubsidized housing that can be bought by people with incomes at 80-120% of area median income." The Planning Board dropped income levels from their definition, substituting a more nebulous, unaccountable definition for attainable housing as "unsubsidized market housing that is appropriate and suitable for the households that live here."

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MCTL on Thrive 2050, cont.

to purge from the Thrive draft any evidence of intended implementation strategies, it is clear from Council President Hucker's and CM Riemer's March 4, 2021, letter to the Planning Board that the Council wants ZTAs ready to be presented immediately.[2] AHSI work has continued at a brisk pace, despite the County Executive's June 10 request for an immediate halt because of the public's confusion about Thrive and AHSI. The vast increase in scope of AHSI upzoning recommendations, as compared to CM Jawando's December 2020 ZTA 20-07, suggest a determined march toward more widespread densification. Therefore, we view Thrive and AHSI (with its planned rezoning initiatives) as complementary strategies, both ready to enact into law.

THRIVE MONTGOMERY 2050

We object to the lack of analysis behind Thrive's poorly substantiated "vision" and "philosophy." The document describes ideal outcomes with almost no roadmaps or cost/benefit analyses from County executive agencies on how to achieve them—nor benchmarks and metrics to evaluate progress toward goals. For example, the County Office of Management and Budget's recent fiscal impact statement (issued as required by law) estimates that Thrive will cost at least $8.16 billion, with ongoing annual costs of $333.8 million. However, even OMB admitted that a true analysis of Thrive was impossible owing to lack of details in the Plan. It omits analysis of the costs of 32 centers of activity central to the plan; how the Plan will attract jobs and economic development crucial to supporting the plan; and the costs of additional schools, public services, and infrastructure that would be required to accommodate growth the County anticipates within the next 30 years. Instead, the plan anticipates massive savings from increasing density, but has not considered the well-documented high costs of infill development and relies on projections of increased tax revenue and economic investment not backed by solid analysis. Although the Planning Board and PHED chairs deny the significance of OMB's findings, they have no numbers of their own and no "Thrive vs.

[2] Letter requested that "the Planning Board consider zoning reforms that would allow greater opportunities for Missing Middle Housing in Montgomery County and transmit to [Council] a zoning text amendment with your recommendations."

MORE

MCTL on Thrive 2050, cont.

No Thrive" analyses to counter them.

The Council relies on vague, opaque language to obscure the real intentions of Thrive, such as the plan's likely impact on communities. For example, when CM Friedson asked for clarification of growth maps terms and more details on plans for specific communities at the September 20 PHED meeting, CM Riemer responded, "not everything is on here," and "we don't do planning from this map.... You need to look at what is beneath it to understand our intent." When pressed on complete communities and 15-minute walkability, CM Riemer and Planning Board Chair Casey Anderson explained that the plan doesn't envision complete communities everywhere and that few areas offer 15-minute walkability. Though central to the Thrive document, they said these concepts are "not to be taken literally." Then what *is* to be taken literally?

Finally, a main goal of Thrive was to increase home ownership to a more diverse population and to increase home affordability. But, as the *Silver Spring Marketing Study on Missing Middle Housing* (MMH) (3/4/2021) clearly showed, allowing developers to build a wider range of houses by right will NOT achieve these goals because no MMH types were found to be feasible in downtown Silver Spring except for townhouses that would sell for $715,000 to $855,000. A study by home builder EYA showed that triplexes in Chevy Chase would cost $875,000 at least. But instead of seeking better tools to encourage affordability, the Planning Board doubled down on its flawed MMH strategy.

TAX IMPACT

We are concerned that millions in Planning Board staff time have been spent developing these plans that lack any financial estimates. We fear that already burdened County taxpayers will end up shouldering these costs through higher property taxes. Although we await an official determination from a qualified SDAT official, the potential for higher real estate taxes is certainly realistic, especially as competition for properties drives up home prices and valuations. This is exactly what happened in less wealthy sections of Minneapolis (see below), preventing many lower-income families from becoming homeowners. This defeats the affordability and equity objectives of Thrive. In addition, the County already is finding its policies to promote density,

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MCTL on Thrive 2050, cont.

affordable housing, and transit require offering significant property tax/fee waivers to developers, which reduce County revenues that likely will be paid for by higher property taxes for residents.

But even if property tax increases turn out to be modest, the funds to pay for Thrive must come from somewhere. A recent (9/28/2021) Council staff memorandum to the PHED Committee on OMB's fiscal impact (p.3, last paragraph) says, "The total increased burden (to implement Thrive 2050), including the increase in net operating costs, would be $623 million annually, which is equal to raising the County's annual operating budget by 12%. The Plan needs to explain how it will pay for these added expenses.

LACK OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The Planning Department claims to have "reached" one million residents through digital ads; surveyed 1,500 residents; made 32 presentations; and conducted meetings and community events. But these engagements were "after the fact"—i.e., after all the working meetings had been held and priorities established, after claims were made without review or oversight, and after decisions had been voted on and the final plan written. Most presentations consisted of the Planning Board describing their plans and taking questions. The most important stakeholders—the residents and their representative civic groups—were left out of the process. To date, the Planning Board hasn't altered the Thrive drafts to reflect residents' concerns. Instead, they have denied the factual basis for these concerns via misleading campaigns such as the Planning Board's "Myths Versus Truths."

On the other hand, the engagement of pro-upzoning lobbyists—such as the developer-friendly Coalition for Smarter Growth (CSG)—has been steady and robust. At his April 16, 2021 "Talking Thrive 2050 with Hans Riemer," CM Riemer congratulated CSG for helping to "tie the bow" on 10 years of work on these concepts and for not only "being at the table" but actually "chairing the conversation" that led to Thrive. For the tens of thousands of County residents with no seat or voice at CM Riemer's table, such undemocratic influence seems an embarrassment, not a cause for celebration.

Even more disturbing are recent Planning Board statements of their intentions to push even more

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MCTL on Thrive 2050, cont.

extreme measures once Thrive is passed (although the negative impact of densification is now clear from the highly documented experience of Minneapolis and other jurisdictions such as New York City, Los Angeles, Seattle, and Newton, Mass.). For example, "Staff believes that its recommendations are among the boldest being pursued in jurisdictions across the Country…and that the additional bolder changes can and should be pursued through the master plan process, using tools like upzoning and rezoning to increase density and housing diversity" (7-8-21 AHSI meeting)." Apparently, setting new records for boldness justifies ignoring public input on these profound changes to our County zoning.

AHSI—BASED ON A FAILED STRATEGY

As noted above, both Thrive and the AHSI implementation strategies are being developed simultaneously. Unlike D.C. and other jurisdictions that plan zoning literally block by block, the Planning Board's proposals impose one-size-fits-all modifications throughout the County. Under these proposals, citizens' associations would lose their current right to negotiate with developers on large changes, and former suburban communities and residential wedges would be subject to urbanization, undermining one of our County's greatest "draws." The impact of all this on property taxes, future home values, the character of communities, future economic development, and revenues has not even been addressed.

Even more concerning are the unfounded assumptions that eliminating single-family zoning will reduce racial and economic disparities. But, as award-winning architect and former Minneapolis Planning Commission Vice President Alissa Luepke Pier told the Montgomery County Civic Federation on October 11 (see page 19), her community's adoption of the same kind of measures promoted by Thrive and AHSI have "permanently damaged Minneapolis and wiped out the prospect of home ownership for thousands of [her city's] deserving residents, especially families needing standard homes rather than small efficiencies."

In Minneapolis, the Thrive Plan relies on the misconception that single-family zoning, rather than a complex brew of toxic policies, is the

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MCTL on Thrive 2050, cont.

fundamental cause of home ownership disparities. The Minneapolis experience has demonstrated that this assumption was not true. Minneapolis policymakers also assumed that simply building more units would reduce overall prices because of the "law of supply and demand." But other factors came into play, with disastrous results. Minneapolis planners had not anticipated how absentee speculator investors and builders would damage prospects for home ownership. Flush with cash, these speculators outbid new would-be home buyers and either converted single-family homes into two or three cheap rental units or simply rented out the homes as is.

THE RESULT

In North Minneapolis, one of the poorer sections, home prices doubled, and property taxes increased by 15%–20% a year. The effect has been a disaster for affordable housing and home ownership goals. Renters pay for the mortgages, property taxes, insurance, and profits of the speculator-owners in the form of rent, and the hard-earned payments of these rent-burdened residents go to out-of-state investors rather than being spent in Minneapolis. The loss of wealth and taxes has left Minneapolis less able to provide basic services, let alone build the complete communities Minneapolis (like Montgomery County) had hoped to build.

Even the environmental promise of these measures did not materialize. In a sample Ms. Pier studied, of the 63 acres developed during the first year of this program, 44.9 were impervious surfaces. Probably because of variances (like ZTAs) sought by developers, only 57% met the city's mandatory tree and bush requirements.

In summary, the many significant shortcomings and flaws of the current Thrive Montgomery 2050 plan—and the absence of tools to prevent unintended consequences—will prevent Thrive/AHSI from meeting its goals. We feel strongly that the Council must:

1. Restart the Thrive process to ensure that civic groups and community associations can participate as equals in ensuring a successful and democratically devised plan;

2. Gather empirical data from solid research and from pilot projects to make evidence-based decisions on zoning for the next 30 years; and

3. Ensure transparency, hon-

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MCTL on Thrive 2050, cont.

esty, and accountability throughout the entire process.

We are also deeply concerned by recent statements by some Councilmembers that, once the PHED submits Thrive to the Council, there will be no further hearings. Given that the plan has been completely rewritten since it was originally submitted to the Council, this lack of transparency is unacceptable. Thrive Montgomery 2050 is a 30-year plan. There is no excuse for not taking the time to involve the community in finalizing it and making sure to get it right.

We look forward to your immediate response to our urgent request.

Signed,
The Montgomery County Taxpayers League and Cosigners ▮

Resolution of the MCCF on the Proposed Rezoning of Residential Neighborhoods Passed on October 11th

Whereas, the Montgomery County Civic Federation, Inc., (Civic Federation) has been proud to represent civic associations and homeowners' associations throughout the County for nearly 100 years; and

Whereas, the Civic Federation has expressed concern that current proposals may not lead to desired outcomes for improvements in meeting affordable housing targets set by the Council of Governments; and

Whereas, the Civic Federation has expressed concern about the emphasis on upzoning residential neighborhoods in the Montgomery County Planning Board's Thrive 2050 Draft Plan currently before the Montgomery County Council; and

Whereas, the Civic Federation remains greatly concerned about the accelerated time frame established for the development and approval of these drastic and unprecedented changes in County zoning policies affecting residential neighborhoods; and

Whereas, the Civic Federation has previously expressed its view that there needs to be a substantially expanded process of community engagement and discussion about the proposed changes; and

Whereas, the members of the Civic Federation have many substantive concerns about the impact of the proposed Planning staff recommendations on the quality of life in the County's residential neighborhoods that include likely residential tax increases, the growing inadequacy

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Rezoning Resolution, cont.

of public facilities available to residents, gentrification, and likely serious environmental impacts associated with reduction of tree canopy and the increase in impervious surfaces; and

Whereas, the Civic Federation has serious reservations about permitting less-regulated residential building construction in single-family neighborhoods "by right," with little, if any, regard to prevailing size, massing, and architectural styles; and

Whereas, the Civic Federation notes that the Planning Department staff has continued to redefine the goals of a new housing strategy away from affordability toward "attainability"; and

Whereas, Civic Federation notes that some jurisdictions around the United States have pursued and regretted similar upzoning development strategies that have had unintended negative consequences for their communities and, particularly, adverse impacts for low-income residents and communities of color; and

Whereas, the Civic Federation, recognizing the critical need to provide suitable housing for tens of thousands of future residents, believes that Montgomery County must adopt an aggressive strategy for truly affordable housing that would serve the needs of working families;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY CIVIC FEDERATION, INC.:

1. Does not support the Montgomery County Planning Department's preliminary recommendations to eliminate zoning regulations affecting established single-family neighborhoods throughout the County through a global Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) to the County Zoning Ordinance; and be it further resolved,

2. Does not support allowing new residential construction in single-family neighborhoods "by right," with no review and approval by appropriate County development authorities; and be it further resolved,

3. Calls upon the Montgomery County Council to examine, refine, and make broadly available to the public:

(1) a fiscal impact statement describing the expected consequences of Countywide

MORE

Rezoning Resolution, cont.

upzoning for Montgomery County annual revenues and expenditures,
(2) clarification of details regarding any possible residential tax increases associated with the upzoning proposals,
(3) a racial equity and social justice impact statement regarding the proposed ZTA, and
(4) detailed information regarding the likely environmental impacts of the upzoning proposals;

and be it further resolved,

4. Calls upon the County Council to develop and propose a significant new affordable housing strategy that will provide suitable accommodations for Montgomery County's low- and middle-income residents and families to meet the Council of Government's targets for the net number of affordable units needed; and be it further resolved,

5. Calls upon the County Council to establish metrics for success for tracking and meeting the Council of Government's targets for net additional affordable units; and further be it resolved,

6. Calls upon the Montgomery County Government to establish a policy of no net loss of naturally occurring affordable housing through new development; and be it further resolved,

7. Calls upon the Montgomery County Government to ensure that master and sector planning is used to modify existing zoning in single-family neighborhoods, rather than by global zoning text amendments; and be it further resolved,

8. Calls upon the Montgomery County Government to require that a property being converted from a single residential unit to a multiplex be the primary residence of the owner; and be it further resolved,

9. Calls upon the Montgomery County Council to undertake a broad public engagement and consultation process necessary to secure community ownership of any new upzoning policy, along with additional public hearings to solicit community input.

Approved this 11th day of October 2021
Karen Cordry, Secretary ∎

Breaking WSSC in Two Will Improve Accountability, Lower Costs and Rate Increases

By Gordie Brenne, Treasurer, Montgomery County Taxpayers League

The October 23 *Bethesda Beat* opinion letter covers the basics of the Council T&E committee's conditional approval of a 6% rate increase for next year. On October 26, the Council adopted a 6.5% rate compromise with Prince George's County. The Council meets again next spring and could approve a different rate increase if WSSC's financial status changes. Ironically, this above-inflation increase continues a string of above-market-rate increases since *per capita* demand began decreasing because of more efficient water appliances over a decade ago.

This article expands on the *Beat* letter to make the case for splitting WSSC between the two Counties, creating two new utilities with fresh balance sheets, lower cost structures and lower rates, and better management incentives and governance standards.

Chronic cash balance problems have peaked because of Covid, but were a problem before Covid delinquencies. WSSC is now at an important inflection point, coming full circle from the 1998 State intervention. Then, like now, debt service costs were too high and operating costs were climbing, forcing rate increases to meet underwriter standards for AAA bond ratings, obtain lower interest costs, and to have enough cash after debt service to pay their bills. Then, like now, WSSC had imposed rate increases on customers for years, treating customers like an ATM machine, but without cutting costs. They got away with that because the governance structure is divided between the two Counties (which have very different needs), and the enabling state law says WSSC gets its requested budget and rate increase if the two Counties can't agree. Also, WSSC can levy an *ad valorem* property tax increase to raise cash to pay its bills in an emergency. That's blackmail!

WSSC governance was split in its enabling legislation between Montgomery and Prince George's Counties when it was created by the state in 1918. This weak and divided governance structure was left largely unchanged following the state intervention in 1998. The broken governance system was reported by *The Washington Post* as early as 1993.

Some more history will show you

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Breaking WSSC in 2, cont.

why cost-cutting alone won't get the job done. Basically, the 1998 state intervention task force offered WSSC three choices: privatize, break in two by County, or cut costs. WSSC and its Commissioners—appointed by our county politicians—selected door number three, the so-called "competitive action plan plus," replacing an earlier failed cost-cutting program called the "competitive action plan." The new plan was prematurely praised by water and sewer experts, and worked for a couple of years, according to underwriter Fitch. Following the intervention, WSSC cut its workforce by one-third and rate increases were zero for six straight years.

However, by 2005, WSSC began raising rates again to pay for new EPA consent decrees and to fund new hires and contract awards. WSSC at that time looked lean and the County's and Commissioners readily agreed to let it take on enormous debt to pay billions to address EPA findings, rather than negotiate to match spending to what rate payers could afford in future years (a practice that now, out of necessity, is finally happening). That legacy debt has meant WSSC has had to raise rates every year to stay within the underwriters ceiling for debt service costs and to raise cash balances eroded by high operating costs. Worse, every year WSSC adds more debt for more projects that go well beyond preventative maintenance and growth needs.

Now growth and expansion of the system for Montgomery County is nearly over, while Prince George's has the largest growth needs. But this behemoth, the largest water/sewer monopoly in the State and ninth largest in the Country, has reached *dis*economies of scale. WSSC rates are now double Fairfax Water's. This makes economic development in our County harder, and is part of the death by a thousand cuts our businesses face. Low-income customers can only reduce their consumption to the point of minimum sanitary needs.[1]

RECKLESS SPENDING ON OPERATIONS IS STRUCTURAL

The *Beat* October 23 opinion letter shows where reckless spending takes place in high payroll, contract labor, and IT costs. An earlier 2016 benchmark study the Taxpayers League was able to get approved, provided limited insight on employee levels, but did show a careful reader that there were excessive

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Breaking WSSC in 2, cont.

management, IT, and engineering employees. However, management was able to bury that finding on page 11 since, contrary to our request that the study be done independently of management, the consultants who did the work reported to them and weren't precluded from doing subsequent work for WSSC.

WSSC's cost controls work poorly at best. Why, you ask? Surely, WSSC has public meetings, hearings, and budget controls. But, the Commissioners, Council, and Executive staff in governance don't have public utility or financial expertise, and WSSC has no incentives to control costs because management gets a pay raise when costs go up. Management has successful lined its pockets while speciously arguing that the rate of inflation shouldn't be a standard because capital projects are multi-year spending and it will somehow all work out- it hasn't. Worse, there have been no OIG reports about WSSC's deteriorating financial condition.

WASTED CAPACITY IS STRUCTURAL

WSSC has huge capacity that doesn't generate revenues: 20% of water production and 43% of sewage treatment (page 33 of the Cost of Service Study cited above). Consequently, as volume increases, its unit costs increase. This is what economists call diseconomies of scale. D.C. has much older pipes but makes up for those costs with economies of scale from its economical sewage treatment operation. Blue Plains is a world-class modern treatment facility with daily capacity of 300 million gallons per day and a peak capacity of one billion gallons per day. This is five times WSSC's capacity of only 45 million gallons per day. Blue Plains

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[1] This burden falls heaviest on large families who, under WSSC's graduated rate structure, pay higher rates for their greater consumption under that structure. WSSC disputes Fairfax's calculations, but WSSC's calculation is rigged to look at rates for a three-person family. But the difference is greatest for six-person families under Fairfax's uniform rate structure, which is good since they are more likely to be in poverty. Even WSSC's 2017 Cost of Service Study (tables 37 and 41) showed larger families and other larger users have lower costs. The Public Service Commission looked at this dilemma based on a complaint but, amazingly, last spring, still found WSSC's rates are reasonable. No, the Public Service Commission can't help us, because the enabling legislation limits their jurisdiction and their experience is with much smaller water and sewer utilities in the State.

Breaking WSSC in 2, cont.

has achieved economies of scale treating WSSC and northern Virginia sewage in addition to its own, and negotiating competitive contracts to provide those services. That includes 85% of Montgomery County's waste water, but only 45% of Prince George's, according to a Council analysis. Sewage treatment retained by WSSC is a big reason why WSSC costs are driving both excessive capital investments and operating cost increases. The latest capital plan doesn't even talk about lost water and groundwater problems for sewage treatment, even though fixing them would increase revenues and decrease costs.

A major reason for this planning disconnect is that WSSC is subject to a higher 40% underwriting debt ceiling—unlike the county, which has a 10% debt ceiling—and WSSC treats the ceiling as a target, not a danger zone. This flexibility, combined with poor governance and weak management incentives, allows WSSC to get away with not using return on investment calculations to justify capital projects. Consequently, low rate of return projects crowd out investments in preventative maintenance.[2]

CONCLUSION

Major restructuring is needed to cut costs, better manage assets and capacity, and reduce financial liquidity risks. Splitting the organization in two, by County, can be done by dividing up the assets. Water and sewage treatment assets break closely by County, making this feasible. The improved accountability that would result from better cost controls tailored to each County's needs will pay dividends to our residents in improved service and lower costs and rate increases. ▮

[2]Details in WSSC's capital plan provide some insight into the spending control problem. One of the largest projects is for the Piscataway sewage treatment plant bioenergy upgrade now under construction ($333M and counting, pg. 4-8). Piscataway is one of four Prince George's County (vs. two in Montgomery County) that operate independently of Blue Plains. Justification for the Piscataway project shows $3.7M in annual savings. It is one of a very few projects where positive benefits are projected. Those benefits (approximately 1%) are way below WSSC's cost of capital (approximately 4%), requiring rate payers to come up with the difference. Worse, the analysis of "rate impacts" that management and the Commissioners rely upon for project approvals understate the value of preventative maintenance (e.g., on page 3-8, upper right hand corner, the 7¢ cited rate impact for large pipe and vale rehabilitation should be negative since this work reduces operating costs; same for trunk sewer reconstruction on pg. 4-11).

Update on Shared Use Path Along Pepco Transmission Corridor in County

By Peggy Dennis, Transportation Committee member

Some years ago, the Civic Federation prevailed on Pepco to create a "shared use path" along its transmission corridor in western Montgomery County. Pepco insisted this was something it would never do. But we prevailed on the chair of the Exelon Corporation (then in negotiations to acquire Pepco) to support us, and Pepco quickly did a 180-degree turn. Pepco agreed to a 14-mile combined natural and paved trail starting just west of Westfield Montgomery Mall and ending close to the Montgomery County SoccerPlex in Germantown.

Since then, the natural surface trail from North Potomac to the SoccerPlex has been opened, a step in the right direction. But it is just a mown section of the right-of-way which is of a quality appealing only to walkers and mountain bikers, not a broad range of cyclists from families with young children to commuters.

With the help of Del. Marc Korman, funding has been provided for the paved section of the path running southeast to the mall. Michael Zelaski, an engineer at the Montgomery County Parks Department, has been tasked with moving this project forward. He provided the following update:

"At this stage, progress includes:

▮ Regularly occurring coordination meetings have been established with Pepco.

▮ The access application has been filed and is pending with Pepco. This will allow Park staff and designers to access the right-of-way.

▮ The Parks Department has initiated a preliminary internal review of data received from Pepco to help identify potential challenges.

▮ The Parks Department will be conducting site visits this fall/winter to develop scope for design consultants.

▮ The Parks Department is in the process of filing a grant application to secure funding through the State for initial construction.

"There is a tremendous volume of work to complete prior to the start of construction. Once access to the right-of-way is permitted, the design process will begin in earnest, in-

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Shared Use Path, cont.

cluding: numerous site visits to get detailed visualization, topographic survey of the terrain, delineation of environmental assets, documentation of streams to be crossed, selection of points of connection to existing travel-ways, and design of the alignment.

"The goal is to retain a consultant and begin detailed design in 2022, which will include public outreach efforts. The construction schedule and phasing will be developed as part of the design process and will be dependent on permitting."

So (my comment) progress is glacially slow, but someday we will have a splendid shared use path. And the MCCF will have played a major roll in bringing this to fruition. ∎

Alissa Luepke Pier's Reflections from Minneapolis: Getting to Affordable Housing is Not as Simple as It Seems

INTRODUCTION

For the last year or two, the County Council and the Planning Board have been working on updating the County' Master Plan for the next 30 years, under the name Thrive Montgomery 2050 ("Thrive"). A big part of that analysis deals with making housing more affordable; no one disputes that this is often a prohibitively expensive place to live so for those making less than the median income. And we'd all like to find some easy (and hopefully inexpensive) ways to make that happen.

The County has an Moderately Priced Development Unit (MPDU) program, but that only applies to larger-scale projects, is pitched to the very low end of the income scale, and comes nowhere near meeting the need. One solution that increasingly is being proposed nationwide is the idea of bringing back "Missing Middle Housing." The idea is that rigid single-family home zoning eliminate other options—such as duplexes, triplexes and quadplexes—as well as mini-apartment buildings that used to provide more density and, as such, could allow each unit to be less expensive. It was also argued that single-family zoning had often been implemented in aid of racial covenants and restrictive land use policies and should be removed in order to erase those issues. And, finally, it was also argued that increasing density around transit and traffic corridors could contribute to "complete communities," i.e., areas where

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Alissa Luepke Pier, cont.

all the necessary amenities were available within a 15-minute walk or so.

At first glance, who could disagree with those goals? Yet, this issue, as discussed generally in Thrive and in more detail in the "Attainable Housing Strategies Initiative" ("AHSI") of the Planning Board, has become a huge controversy in the County. The basic approach of the AHSI is to to "upzone" the great bulk of residential areas in the County to allow multiplex units "by right." While they would still have to meet setback and height requirements and be compliant with a "pattern book" of designs, the maximum square footage (as much as 4,200 square feet in an R-60 zone) could be far larger than surrounding homes. In addition to the compatibility concerns, there could also be a variety of overcrowding issues arising from retroactively increasing density in areas that are already fully built out.

But, perhaps the greatest concerns come from the simple uncertainty. Will this work? Will such buildings get built or is this just an exercise in futility? Conversely, will the ability to greatly increase the number of units on a given space prove irresistible to developers such that there will be a growing momentum that will quickly convert an entire neighborhood? And, what are the economics of these units? Will they actually result in affordable housing? Or even "attainable" housing in the sense of being at least somewhat less expensive than what now exists? Will it result in increased housing values (and increased property taxes for all) as developers compete to buy up and replace older homes? Or will it make the neighborhoods undesirable and cause property values to fall? Who knows?

ALISSA PIER'S PRESENTATION

And that's why the speaker at the October Civic Fed meeting was so important to hear from. Alissa Luepke Pier is an award-winning architect who served on the Minneapolis City Planning Commission for 13 years, and was Vice-Chair for the last few years. Minneapolis did enact this kind of policy a couple of years ago so they have been able to see at least initially whether just removing limits on housing types actually solves these problems. This article will summarize her remarks. The YouTube of her MCCF presentation is available here; view her PowerPoint slides here.

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Alissa Luepke Pier, cont.

She began by giving a quick overview of the demographics of Minneapolis and, sure enough, there was clear evidence of historic redlining that had taken place in the city for decades. The areas with high concentration of racial diversity—ranging from Black to Hispanic to Native American to Asian and more—lined up very well with the areas that had been subject to such redlining. And other barriers, such as railroad tracks and highways, blocked those areas off from easy access to many city amenities. Those areas also correlate with areas of poor air quality, lower income and home ownership rates, and higher numbers of persons who are cost-burdened with respect to their housing costs. There has been subsidized housing provided in those same redlined areas, but, again, the result is the same separation and consolidation of poverty that has long existed.

Ms. Pier explained that the issue was not just the amount of affordable housing, but whether it was *equitable* affordable housing. That means, for example, that one must look not just at the number of "units" per acre, but also how many of those units were of a size that could accommodate families, as opposed to just studios, one bedrooms, and the like. (And, that's particularly true if, after COVID, it remains the case that many people continue to work out of their homes.) She noted that Minneapolis had provisions that appear similar to MoCo's MPDU requirements but with three loopholes. One, they could pay money "in lieu" of including the units and the money tended to get sent back to the same low-income areas. Two, they could also locate "nearby" or wherever the Council allowed them to build (anywhere), or three, they could donate land. So, the idea of mixing income and giving everyone access rarely occurred. In addition, there is the question of whether that housing is built to quality standards; when everything is done in the cheapest, quickest way possible, the result is often construction that doesn't hold up over time. A lot of new money has to go to fixing up old housing and retrofitting it for energy-efficiency and the like so it doesn't cost so much to operate.

She then turned to single-family zoning, and noted that it did *not* correlate to the diversity and amenities maps. There was discrimination to be sure, but single-family zoning was in place across the city. *It was not the tool that was used to keep*

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Alissa Luepke Pier, cont.

out minorities and low-income residents; that was done with other, more direct tools. So now, if one seeks to use upzoning as a way to reduce costs as a way of supposedly helping with diversity, anyone (of whatever race) seeking to buy a single-family home must compete with developers planning to buy and replace that single-family home with a duplex or triplex (or even a quad in MoCo). Not surprisingly, she said the result is a bidding war (and developers can usually win that).

Density is a tool for a variety of outcomes, she said, not necessarily a goal that is inherently good. She noted that prices had been soaring for the last five years [although some of that predates this ordinance] and that only made the problem worse. Absentee landlords owning and failing to maintain properties were also a huge issue in their area, unlike local landlords who might be more attuned to the concerns and rent dollars leaving the community also created a cash drain. The problems are even greater when existing family-size homes are divided up into multiple efficiency units with no guarantees that they would rent for anything less than the prior occupant was paying for the whole house. And the lack of sufficient parking leaves many residents forced to pay for Uber costs every time they need to do their grocery shopping.

She noted that, while the zoning changes were being put into place, parties could seek variances based on what the new law would allow, and the results showed that the projects were significantly more dense and greatly increased the impervious surfaces from what would otherwise be allowed and decreased the shrub and tree coverage. She indicated that she was not opposed to rental housing and that it was clear that a wide range of options were desirable for people at different life stages She also suggested that local ownership was likely to result in lower rents due to greater interaction with the tenants and knowledge about them. As far as whether more units would automatically "trickle down" into more competition and lower rents, she joked that hadn't necessarily worked for Reagan. Moreover, unless (a) there were really large numbers of units being built and (b) they were not being controlled by large corporations that could essentially manipulate the market, there was no guarantee any change would really come. She also noted that removal of maximum-occupancy limits was usually not to

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benefit extended families, but rather simply to cram more unrelated persons into a single small home without any decent living space.

She further noted that two other drivers for increased housing costs are higher insurance rates (often tied to the growth in climate change-related disasters) and higher taxes. And, those taxes are, themselves, a consequence of the higher prices that occur as a result of competition for reasonably priced houses (including by developers under the new zoning). So, those increases—that apply even if you don't sell your house—put added strain on those who try to stay put.

As far as best practices for this type of zoning analysis, she first noted that one should not be reflexively opposed. There is not that much difference between a single-family home and the other types if done well and if the overall result is not to displace everyone in the neighborhood.

So, the question is: how does one incentivize the process to get the results that we want? If one is not careful, passing these provisions without adequate safeguards is likely to result in the same effective red-lining as the earlier provisions. "Owner-occupied" could be one safeguard. Another is to know in advance what you are actually trying to create and who needs what kind of units, i.e., is the need for senior living? Or for young families with multiple kids? Those create very different unit needs and advance data is crucial to get the right mix. As she stated, "Design defensively. You can't just design for the rainbows," you have to think "where are the cliffs?" The original proposal would have required owner-occupancy but that was eventually dropped and no economic studies have been run to see whether the plans will actually work.

In any event, her bottom line was first, "ask for accountability." What is expected to occur, what metrics are being tracked, what does "affordable" (or "attainable") actually mean, and how do we know whether we got what we were planning for. If this results in pressures on the whole community, have a way to prove they are actually getting benefits too. Second, ensure that it's built right; if you're already spending billions, take the time and spend a bit more to do it well. Doing away with parking minimums, for instance, doesn't affect high-priced neighborhoods, which pay for garages anyway, but is a real detriment to low-income areas

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if they can't keep cars to get to work, to stores, to school, etc. We need to reduce emissions but we also need to deal with the situations as they actually exist. There may be ways to accommodate both concerns but they have to be planned for. So, in the end, we're all in favor of affordable housing but we have to think long and hard about how to get there.

LESSONS FOR OUR COUNTY

In an article, Ms. Pier reflected on some of the safeguards that could have been built in, but that weren't, in the Minneapolis ordinance. These are some of the same concerns we need to look at here. In a recent lunch with a supporter of the AHSI, he said, essentially, "We can't compromise on this because there is nothing between a duplex and a single family home." Leaving aside the fact that, of course, the proposal isn't limited to duplexes, that misses the point that the current AHSI would upzone these provisions as a matter of "by right;" i.e., one wouldn't have to get special permission to build one of these. And that status does have all sorts of ways in which it could be treated to create those safeguards. I have characterized the largely unconditional "by right" upzoning proposal as being akin to the approach in "Field of Dreams"—"If we pass it, they will build it." What Ms. Pier notes is that there is nothing that guarantees that what gets built is what we actually want or that it won't have unintended consequences.

What are some of those controls? Well, for instance, allowing this "by right" only on vacant land. While there are not huge amounts in the down-county, some such lots do exist and it would not be overly problematic to allow this there. Or allow it as part of the tool-kit in the Master planning process that does look at an area and decides what can be allowed there. That could do the analysis once for the entire area, so any given home-owner would not be burdened with the time and costs. Or, allow only a certain number/percentage in a given area, so there will not be the potential for a snowball effect if more and more are done close together. Owner-occupancy is another possible control; since it is likely that a great many of these properties will be primarily rental (due to the complexities of multi-ownership), why not ensure that owners stay in one unit while they rent out the rest? Or a "no net loss of affordable housing" requirement; the Planning Board has already

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Alissa Luepke Pier, cont.

conceded that the most likely result is that developers will buy the cheapest properties in the neighborhood to build bigger and more expensive homes in which each unit may well rent/sell for more than the original price. Why not include a requirement that at least one unit in the multiplex must remain in the same general price range as the prior, existing unit?

Or the County could try some pilot projects. Take land in an area such as the White Flint area that now stands vacant and see what kind of proposals might be bid for that land. It could also think and work much harder to relocate and/or rebuild areas that greatly underuse space on transit corridors. In Wheaton, for instance, the blocks leading up to downtown from the south are filled with one-story buildings, including a huge self-storage area. Replacing such uses with multistory buildings (even if one leaves retail on the first floor such as the Best Buy that's next to the self-storage) would still allow for creation of hundreds of units that could be of many different configurations.

Even if one wants to push the multiplexes into the communities, the County can't bury its head about the crowding and parking issues that arise. If you don't want people to have cars, then maybe there need for carsharing stations set up or better on-demand bus service in neighborhoods. There are a lot of ways to make this happen, but they need to be thought about and planned for. No one is going to magically drop from the heavens and make this happen for us. We have to make sure it's done right ourselves. ▮

Who Should Win in 2022?

All MCCF delegates and members should start thinking about individuals and/or groups you would like to nominate for this year's awards. Here are the descriptions and the rationale for each award:

▮ **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; and

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

Haven't renewed? See page 1! ▮

Minutes of October 11, 2021, MCCF General Meeting #926, 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 79 persons attended on the Zoom platform.

Call to Order: Alan Bowser called the Meeting to order at 7:31 and led introductions.

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

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

Treasurer's Report (Jerry Garson): Over the course of the previous year, we had receipts of $554, with $185 in the last month. Net receipts of $253 to date. Bank balance of $9,366.00.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

▮ Cary Lamari uploaded PHED Committee meeting to Responsible Growth website along with the 50+ page staff report.

▮ County Thanksgiving parade will be at 11/20/21 at 10 a.m. The Civic Fed will have vehicle in parade; all are welcome to join us.

▮ Carole Barth said that State Senator Ben Kramer would reintroduce a bill requiring development plans to be certified under penalty of perjury.

PROGRAM

▮ **Speaker 1:** Director of Housing and Community Affairs, **Aseem Nigam** (housing policy, rental assistance, etc.), spent 15 years with Fairfax County Housing Authority before coming to Montgomery. First County to come up with MPDU program to ensure affordable housing being produced. They are working with many organizations to do outreach to tenants and landlords to get rental assistance information out to those who need help. $58 million so far; $35 million in federal funds and several million more from state. County doesn't look to immigration status so people should feel free to inquire.

About 5% of households are currently delinquent; County has had about 9,000 requests for assistance so far and helped about 7,000 households. Median income

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of households receiving assistance has been about $18,000. Unemployment peaked at 9.7%, down to about 5.8%, but still elevated and people still needing help.

For housing stock, the three goals are: production, preservation, and protection. Looking at households at 50% of median income or below. They're expecting 60,000 new jobs (and residents) by 2030, creating 40,000 new households, of which half by definition will be below the median income. Trying to help developers access capital and financing. "No net loss" policy for affordable housing as developments proceed. Land use policy tools meant to push developers towards building affordable housing for that 50% level, and to work towards low-cost MPDUs across the County.

County Executive wants to increase minimum wage and we also need to attract high-paying businesses to come here so we get jobs that pay people what they need to live here. Working with MCC and reaching out to other colleges to help leverage the development and job creation process and County resources to help with both housing and jobs. They also need to keep equity considerations in mind as well. They're looking at all the pieces—permitting, regulatory structure, and educational system—an integrated package.

- **Speaker 2: Alissa Pier**, an architect who has been involved in the zoning changes made in Minneapolis planning and served on the Planning Commission, most recently as Vice-Chair. She presented a PowerPoint and spoke for about a half hour and then answered questions for another 35 minutes plus. The article in this issue (see page 19) has a discussion of the issue as it affects Montgomery County and a full summary of her presentation and the questions. It also has links to the YouTube of her presentation.

RESOLUTION DRAFT

A draft resolution on Thrive 2050 written by Alan Bowser was published in the October newsletter. it was read to the audience and then it was moved and seconded to open discussion on whether it should be approved.

There was initial discussion about how it should be disseminated. Alan noted we have been discussing a media plan and have members with media involvement.

There was general discussion about its terms. There was gen-

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eral support for its terms and a few minor wording tweaks that were accepted as friendly amendments. (See page 11 for final version.) It was noted that not all persons present felt they had enough time to consult with their communities to be able to vote on the language yet. It was suggested and agreed that those who could vote should do so and we would make a recommendation to other groups to indicate their support later when they did have time to talk to their members.

The question was called. Vote will be to use a process of approving the resolution and recommend to all member associations to approve as well and report back. Vote was 32 Yes; 0 No; and three abstentions—Jeff Griffith, Elizabeth Joyce, and Sheldon Fishman. The actual resolution text (as amended) was then moved, seconded, and approved by voice vote. It will be transmitted to Council and legislature, and various media contacts. We expect an article in *The Washington Post* next week in the Metro section after a walk around the Woodside area. Ms. Pier noted that it was important to make clear to policymakers, the media, and the public that the unintended consequences are far too likely to result.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

- None tonight.

Adjourned at 10:02. Next meeting will be on Pedestrian Safety issues. ∎

Renew Your Membership, Update your Contact Info

By Peggy Dennis, Past President

Our new year began on July 1st. Delegates to the Montgomery County Civic Federation are asked to verify that their treasurers have sent in the Membership Form with a check for your associations' dues, or filled out the online application/renewal and paid via credit card or PayPal.

Many civic, neighborhood, and homeowners associations elect new officers or boards during the summer or autumn. Please remember to provide updated contact information to those who need to be able to reach you. For the Civic Federation, email your changes and corrections to *membership@montgomerycivic.org*. We're only as strong as you make us. ∎

Minutes of the MCCF Executive Committee Meeting October 21, 2021

By Karen Cordry, Recording Secretary

Call to Order: 7:05 p.m. Present: Alan Bowser, Karen Cordry, Jerry Garson, Peggy Dennis, Jacquie Bokow, Elizabeth Joyce.

Approval of Meeting Agenda: The agenda was moved, seconded, and approved on voice vote.

Treasurer's Report: Jerry Garson reported $879. Website: $96, Committeee for Montgomery Membership: $300; $479 from July 1 to October. Bank balance $9,558 (subject to any PayPal fees).

NOVEMBER PROGRAM

Nov. 8 will be transportation and pedestrian safety. Greg Slater's office, State Dept. of Transportation, invited by Jerry Garson. Wade Holland, Co. Exec. Vision Zero Coord., Office of Co. Exec., has confirmed; and Kristy Daphnis, Head of County PBTSAC Committee, has been invited. Will also be asking for someone from County Transportation Dept.

DECEMBER PROGRAM

Tentatively was to be General Assembly preview meeting. But, there are already scheduled meetings of full delegation that day, so we need a different topic. January meeting was on economic development. Jan. 10 could still be okay for the timing for the General Assembly meeting; it won't start until after that. Note: redistricting maps were voted on last night, adopted by 6–5 a version that did not strictly correspond to any of the maps. (Closest to Map 1, but not identical to any of them.)

OCTOBER PROGRAM

Got a lot of favorable feedback on Alissa Pier's presentation on Nextdoor and other discussions. Alan has had a discussion with a *Washington Post* reporter; he's hoping the interview will result in a nuanced piece in the newspaper about the issues raised by the similar program in Minneapolis.

MEMBERSHIP EFFORTS

Elizabeth is in charge as our second VP. She will be concentrating on helping us figure out how to increase those who are participating and paying dues.

We noted that Park and Plan-

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ning has a list of home owner associations and civic associations but it's not overly up-to-date. Alan has prepared a "Civic Fed Basics" sheet that could go with an email to these groups, encouraging them to updated their information with the County.

NEW OFFICER

Joshua Montgomery, as First VP, is supposed to be in charge of programming and, since we're set on that, he will work with him to start working on recruiting for slots on the Board, outreach and press, and other tasks.

NEWSLETTER

- As always, the deadline for stories remains the 26th of the month.
- Executive Committee members volunteered to write various articles for the November issue of the *Civic Federation News*.
- I will pull out report on the October meeting discussions (so the minutes can be short). [See the summation of remarks by October speaker Alissa Luepke Pier on page 19.] ∎

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

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

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