

Monday, September 9, Monthly Program: Attainable Housing Discussion | The primary agenda item will be a delegate and member discussion of the Attainable Housing Strategies Initiative pending before the County Council (note earlier start time of 7:00 p.m.) | [P. 3](#)

Notice of Vote to Be Held | To establish a Special Committee on Bylaws | [P. 3](#)

County Council Plans Listening Sessions on Attainable Housing | See the schedule for the six sessions around the County | [P. 5](#)

Exciting Opportunities to Lead in the MCCF | Is it time to step up? Why not you? | [P. 7](#)

SPECIAL EVENT
COMMUNITY SYMPOSIUM
ON ATTAINABLE HOUSING
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 5
7:00 P.M.
MORE ON P.4 ZOOM LINK

Should the County Council Make Raising Property Taxes Easier? | An opinion from Gordon Brenne of the Montgomery County Taxpayers League | [P. 8](#)

New Officers Elected | See the team roster! | [P. 13](#)

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TO PRINT, USE [PRINT VERSION](#)

of note

Next MCCF Meeting #955
Monday, September 9, 2024, 7:00 p.m. online. Topic: "AHSI Discussion."

▮ [Join the Zoom Meeting Here](#)
[See further instructions on page 2. No password is required.]

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September's Community Hero
It's Janis Sartucci, of Potomac

[READ PROFILE](#)

Meeting Minutes
June 10 Meeting #954 [P. 11](#)
Executive Committee Meetings
[JUNE P. 12](#) [AUGUST P. 14](#)

Membership Application
[JOIN ONLINE](#) | [MAIL-IN FORM](#)

Federation Meeting #955

Monday, September 9, 2024
7:00 p.m. (NOTE TIME!)
Online Zoom Meeting

AGENDA

1. Call to Order/Introductions
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Approval of Minutes: June General Meeting [P.12](#)
4. Treasurer's Report
5. Announcements
6. Call for Volunteers
7. Affirmation Vote: Establish By-Laws Committee
8. September Program: AHSI Member Discussion [P.3](#)
9. Committee Reports
10. Old Business
11. New Business
12. 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 September meeting will be held online via Zoom (see page 3 for program) at 7:00 p.m.:

▮ To be part of the video conference, first [visit the Zoom website](#) to download the program for your phone or computer.

▮ Date and Time: Monday, September 9, 2024, 7:00 p.m. Eastern Time. **NOTE TIME CHANGE!**

▮ 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 879 2845 2202. No password is required.

We hope you will join us! ▮

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

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

Civic Federation News
civicednews AT montgomerycivic.org

TO SUBMIT AN ARTICLE, [SEE PAGE 15](#)

Notice of Member Meeting September 9 at 7:00 p.m.

NOTE NEW TIME: 7:00 P.M.!

Don't miss this! The regular monthly meeting of the MCCF will be held on September 9, at 7:00 p.m., as an online Zoom meeting. The primary agenda item will be a delegate and member discussion of the Attainable Housing Strategies Initiative pending before the County Council.

The meeting will feature two speakers who will highlight areas of possible agreement or concern and possible items for inclusion in an MCCF resolution:

■ **Liz Joyce**, MCCF 2nd Vice President (and Co-Chair of Housing and Land Use Committee) will highlight relevant elements of the white paper that was adopted as a resolution at the May meeting this year.

■ Additionally, **Matt Pacinelli**, realtor and resident of the Brook-

dale neighborhood, will outline his analysis.

A delegate and member discussion will follow. ([Link Here](#))

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8. September Program: AHSI Presentation and Member Discussion
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12. Adjournment ■

Notice of Vote to be Held

A membership vote will be taken at the September meeting to affirm the establishment of a Special Committee on Bylaws. The purpose of this committee? The MCCF bylaws have not been reviewed in over 10 years. Best practices recommend review of bylaws every 2-3 years. The Special Committee on Bylaws will ensure that bylaws conform to state law; follow established best practices for nonprofits; facilitate the efficient and equitable conduct of business for the MCCF; and identify and resolve inconsistencies, gaps, or unnecessary obstacles or difficulties in the conduct of business. The Committee will draft amendments as necessary to be published in October 2024 and presented to the membership for consideration and adoption at the November 2024 meeting. ■

MCCF Community Symposium on Attainable Housing on Thursday, September 5, at 7pm

On September 5, 2024, the Civic Federation will host an online symposium on Attainable Housing issues in Montgomery County.

The Attainable Housing Strategies Initiative (AHSI) would eliminate single-family zoning in most of the county and allow multifamily homes to be built on single-family lots in most neighborhoods. The goal of the Planning Board is to increase housing supply, typologies, and affordability.

So far, many residents know little about AHSI, although the implications for neighborhoods, the built environment, and adequacy of public infrastructure may be very significant, particularly along growth corridors. Our speakers will analyze the details, assess how well AHSI will meet the stated goals and



ELRICH



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the needs in the county and impact on neighborhoods and implications for residents.

Our guest speakers are **Marc Elrich**, County Executive, Montgomery County, Maryland; attorney **Michele Rosenfeld**, Law Office of Michele Rosenfeld; and Dr. **Glenn Orlin**, former Deputy Staff Director for the Montgomery County Coun-

cil.

[Here is the Zoom link for the meeting.](#)

The call-in number for the D.C. area is 301.715.8592.

Under the AHSI proposal, duplexes and triplexes would be permitted by right in most neighborhoods on single-family lots, and



Attainable Housing, cont.

quadplexes on single-family lots within a mile of Metro, Purple Line, and MARC stations. In addition, townhouses, 4-story stacked flats, and apartment buildings (up to 19 apartments) would be permitted within 500 feet of designated major roads, and these “medium density” structures will extend into single-family home blocks in many areas.

It is our goal that MCCF delegates are prepared to answer questions and educate residents in their own Civic and Homeowner Associations and participate in MCCF advocacy efforts.

This September 5 symposium is open to the public and we encourage MCCF delegates to invite their neighborhood residents. ■

Council Plans Listening Sessions on Attainable Housing

The six listening sessions hosted by Council President Friedson, chair of the PHP Committee, and Planning Department Director Sartori will be held in each of the County’s five regional service areas, followed by a virtual meeting. The five in-person events will be held from 7 to 9 p.m. The virtual session will be held on October 2 from 12-1:30 p.m.

The listening sessions are scheduled on:

■ Wednesday, September 11, from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Silver Spring Recreation and Aquatic Center (1319 Apple Ave., Silver Spring, Maryland)

■ Thursday, September 12, from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Wheaton Communi-

ty Recreation Center (11701 Georgia Ave., Wheaton, Maryland)

■ Tuesday, September 17, from 7 to 9 p.m. at the White Oak Community Recreation Center (1700 April Lane, Silver Spring, Maryland)

■ Monday, September 23, from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Germantown Community Center (18905 Kingsview Road, Germantown, Maryland)

■ Wednesday, September 25, from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Center (4805 Edgemoor Lane, Bethesda, Maryland – Wisconsin Room)

■ Wednesday, October 2, virtual on Zoom 12-1:30 p.m.

Residents can also comment on the Attainable Housing Study by [providing feedback at this link](#). ■



Janis Sartucci is This Month’s Montgomery County Civic Federation Community Hero

Ms. Sartucci is well-known for her community activism on behalf of Montgomery County’s residents, and particularly for her calls for transparency in and accountability of the Montgomery County Public School (MCPS) system. She has been the driving force behind the Parents’ Coalition of Montgomery County, Maryland, blog which is dedicated to improving responsiveness and performance of Montgomery County Public Schools.

Recently, she brought to the attention of the public and the Montgomery County Board of Education the failures of MCPS with regard to its procurement of an electric school bus fleet.

Her efforts exposed improprieties in the bidding process that

awarded the large electric bus contract by MCPS. Recently released



JANIS SARTUCCI

reports by the Montgomery County Inspector General and local press have revealed that the actual cost of owning and operating the electric bus fleet remains unclear and the procurement budget process was constructed on false assumptions and estimates. The Appellate Court in Maryland has ordered the remanding of the contract award review back to the Montgomery County Board of Education.

For bringing needed attention to the deficiencies of the MCPS procurement process and for all she and the Parents’ Coalition has done for the residents of the County, the Civic Federation expresses its deep appreciation for the valuable work of Janis Sartucci, this month’s Community Hero. ■

Exciting Opportunities to Lead in the MCCF!

We need volunteers to help us in several important areas. Please consider lending a hand to build a stronger organization. Here are some examples:

MCCF 100-Year Anniversary Celebration is to be held early next year. We are looking for folks with a strong interest in working with the Executive Committee to plan and execute tasks for an event suitable for this auspicious occasion—our 100-year celebration!

Awards Committee. We are seeking volunteers to serve on this year's Awards Committee. The Committee selects award recipients for the June meeting.

Database Management volunteer

to help us maintain accuracy of our membership records. This is unlikely to require more than a few hours a month.

Communications Assistant to help us with Constant Contact for routine notices and legislative alerts, plus posting on social media.

Chairs for the following Standing Committees:

- Education
- Public Finance
- Public Safety
- Utilities

If any of these are your area of expertise, we need you!

To volunteer or to learn more, contact MCCF President Cheryl Gannon at president@montgomerycivic.org. ■

From the June Awards



Opinion: Should the County Council Make Raising Property Taxes Easier?

Requiring a unanimous vote makes good fiscal sense, says Montgomery County Taxpayers League

By Gordon Brenne

The Charter Review Commission's recent report recommended several changes to controls over how the County Council approves spending and revenues. Among these was a recommendation to reduce the number of councilmember votes required to approve a property rate increase—from unanimous to just eight of the 11 votes. Without a public hearing, the Council is expected to vote on this recommendation on July 9 and seem likely to agree with the lower bar of eight votes and place it on the November ballot as a referendum.

Be wary. In 2020, the council placed its own referendum (Question A) on the ballot that was deceptively labeled as "Limit Tax Rate Increas-

es," while a competing grass-roots citizen petition (Question B) to prevent property tax revenue increases from exceeding the CPI (Consumer Price Index) rate was placed second on the ballot, and pejoratively labeled "Prohibit Override." Inevitably, Question A passed.

The Montgomery County Taxpayers League is a nonprofit, non-partisan organization comprised of county residents and focused on good government by the county to achieve efficient and effective operations and tax equity. We believe a unanimous vote to increase property taxes is an essential control over county spending. We do not stand alone. County voters have repeatedly voted—in 2008, 2018, and in 2020—to require a unanimous vote

to increase property tax rates and they should not be ignored.

Here are six reasons why you should ask councilmembers to retain the unanimous vote requirement for tax rate increases before the council votes on a proposed referendum:

1. The county has excess reserves: Last year the council approved a 4.7% tax rate increase with just seven votes and that, combined with huge appraisal increases, clobbered homeowners and renters with what amounted to the maximum tax increase permitted under state law of 10%. The tax rate increase was unnecessary because it produced a revenue gusher this year, and next year's was forecast to yield excess reserves of 15.4%. A unanimous vote

MCTL Opinion, cont.

would have prevented this.

2. The one-person veto is a myth: The upcounty would be most impacted by weakening the unanimous requirement because the three upcounty council members could get drowned out by a super majority of the eight down-county members. We agree with the minority opinion in the commission's report (pg. 22) that a unanimous vote makes each council member accountable, increases their impact, and the voice of under-represented parts of the county. A unanimous vote would give undecided members the opportunity to join that member and be heard, rather than be trampled by the majority.

3. Housing costs are skyrocketing as assessments increase: Property taxes are a significant driver of housing cost increases.

Homeowners' Credits do not adjust property taxes for inflation to protect low-income residents. Higher housing costs and scarcity underpin racial segregation in schools and make it harder for seniors to retire in place. Assessments are controlled by the state, but a unanimous vote would increase the council control over tax increases.

4. Structural deficit fail-safe: Of the three decision points in the charter that control spending and revenues, tax rate increases are the last control and should have the strongest vote hurdle. As happened last year, less-than-unanimous spending control overrides could result in higher recurring costs and structural deficits in future years without a unanimous vote for tax rate increases. Last year's tax rate increase was approved with only seven council votes and was sup-

posed to be for an education emergency that justified overriding the charter's unanimous vote requirement. But most of the spending was for recurring county costs. MCPS got only 37% of the additional money raised—approximately \$100 million, according to our analysis. County employees got above-market pay raises (estimated cost: \$38 million) advocated by powerful county unions, but not supported by a comparative salary survey last done 13 years ago; and county supplemental appropriations approved during the year (\$25 million so far) were not justified in the budget process, for a total of \$63 million for the county, not MCPS.

5. Accountability and transparency: Increased public confidence in county governance is reinforced with a unanimous vote.

MORE

MCTL Opinion, cont.

Confidence stems from a better county and MCPS budget process that justifies spending with numbers, not words, for outcomes. The public should be able to see how spending links to objective returns on investment to conclude its money is being spent wisely. Moody's bond underwriters just placed a "negative outlook" on the state because of likely structural deficits from growing costs for education reforms under the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. This puts increased pressure on local county funding sources.

6. MCPS spending trade-offs: A unanimous vote for tax increases will assure these tradeoffs are fully and publicly debated, consistent with the "fair and predictable" governance process argued in the commission report. A growing

bureaucracy that doesn't dramatically improve literacy and math proficiency is not sustainable. The state's Maintenance of Effort law prevents any council debate over what's in the base of the MCPS budget, where most of the achievement gap strategy money is buried along with overhead costs (we estimate 45% for non-instruction), according to our analysis. Spending that doesn't improve literacy and math proficiency takes money away from our kids, and squeezes funding for other county programs that could better improve the lives of lower-income residents, such as affordable housing, public health and safety.

[Silver Spring resident Gordie Brenne is treasurer of the Montgomery County Taxpayers League. This article first appeared on MoCo 360.] ■

CIVIC FED TONIGHT!**SEEKING POSSIBLE SPEAKERS
FOR YOUR CIVIC ASSOCIATION
MEETINGS?**

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

Minutes, MCCF June Annual Meeting, American Legion Post 41, Silver Spring, Md.

By Alan Bowser, Acting Secretary

1. Call to Order. The meeting was called to order at 7:15 p.m. on Monday, June 10th, by President Alan Bowser.

2. 2024 MCCF Officer Election Results. Nominations Committee Chair Jerry Garson announced the results of the 2024 MCCF Officer Elections:

▮ **President:** Cheryl Gannon

▮ **1st Vice President:** Vacant

▮ **2nd Vice President:** Elizabeth Joyce

▮ **Secretary:** Alan Bowser

▮ **Treasurer:** Jerry Garson

3. Special Remarks. Former MCCF President Paula Bienenfeld made remarks about the Montgomery County Civic Federation, Inc.'s value to the Montgomery County community. Her remarks have been posted to the Federation's Facebook page.

4. Presentation of MCCF Annual Awards. The following MCCF Annual Awards were presented:

▮ **The Star Cup** to MCCF President Alan Bowser, presented by Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich.

▮ **The Wayne Goldstein Award** to Conservation Montgomery, Inc., and Tree Friends United, presented by Delegate Lorig Charkoudian. Caren Madsen of Conservation Montgomery, Inc., and Carl Gunter of Tree Friends United accepted the Awards on behalf of their organizations.

▮ **The Sentinel Award** to Seven Oaks Evanswood Citizens Association, presented by Montgomery County Councilmember Kate Stewart. SOECA President Chris Reynolds accepted the Award on behalf of the civic association.

5. Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m. ▮

Minutes, MCCF Executive Committee Meeting, June 20, 2024, 7:00 p.m. via Zoom

By Alan Bowser, Secretary

1. Call to Order. President Cheryl Gannon called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. Attending: Secretary Alan Bowser, President Cheryl Gannon, Dick Kauffunger, Newsletter Editor and Webmaster Jacquie Bokow, Dan Wilhelm, Peggy Dennis, Cary Lamari, Dan Meijer, Dean Ahmad, Treasurer Jerry Garson, Brenda Freeman, and 2nd Vice President Elizabeth Joyce.

2. Treasurer's Report. Treasurer Jerry Garson reported a bank balance of \$6,216. There were questions related to expenses for Committee for Montgomery, Inc., membership dues and Constant Contact.

3. Attainable Housing Study Next Steps.

It was noted that the Montgomery County Planning Board had approved a study on attainable housing strategies in the County and would send it to the Montgomery County Council. It was expected that the relevant Council Committee would hold work sessions on the document and that a recommendation would be made to the full Council in Fall 2024.

Cheryl Gannon said that the Federation should send a letter to the County Council about the Attainable Housing Report, outlining concerns and making recommendations for changes and improvement. She also suggested that it would be

useful to create a PowerPoint presentation about housing issues for use by member associations and the General Public. She recommended drafting a Legislative Alert about housing for MCCF members.

In the discussion about housing and the Planning Board Report, attendees commented on a range of issues, including the importance of adequate public facilities, the protection of tree canopy in neighborhoods, the impact on school enrollment, impact on emergency responses in areas where density is increased, and parking issues.

An MCCF-sponsored Community Summit on Montgomery County housing issues during the summer was proposed. It was also suggested

June ExCom Minutes, cont.

that some community-based organizations could organize such a meeting on housing issues.

4. Office of the People's Counsel. President Cheryl Gannon described some next steps to advance the Federation's advocacy for an Office of the People's Counsel. Among the suggestions were the need for an advocacy fact sheet and increased cooperation with partner groups.

5. 2024–2025 Programming. Attendees suggested discussions of the following issues for the 2024–2025 membership year: climate change, MCPS and the education budget, and partnership with the Regional Center directors.

6. In-Person Meetings.

There was discussion about the need for and value of in-person Civic Federation meetings. Some speakers expressed the view that in-person meetings were important and that there should be a return to regularly scheduled in-person meetings in Rockville. Some speakers said that there had been significantly increased participation in MCCF meetings and recommended continued online meetings along with periodic in-person social meetings.

A speaker recommended that the delegations be polled to assess their preferences between in-person or online meetings.

7. Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 p.m. ■

New Officers Elected

Congratulations to the new MCCF officers for 2024–2025!

President: Cheryl Gannon, Woodside Civic Association

1st Vice President: Joyce Gwadz, Edgemoor Civic Association

2nd Vice President: Elizabeth Joyce, Saratoga Neighbors

Secretary: Alan Bowser, Park Hills Civic Association

Treasurer: Jerry Garson, Regency Estates Civic Association

Immediate Past President: Alan Bowser, Park Hills Civic Association

Minutes of the MCCF Executive Committee August 27, 2024, 7:00 p.m. via Zoom

By Alan Bowser, Secretary

1. Call to Order. President Cheryl Gannon called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. Attending: Secretary Alan Bowser, President Cheryl Gannon, 1st Vice President Joyce Gwadz, 2nd Vice President Elizabeth Joyce, Treasurer Jerry Garson, Dan Meijer, and Brenda Freeman. Members congratulated Joyce Gwadz on her election as 1st Vice President (Programming).

2. Treasurer's Report. Treasurer Jerry Garson reported a bank balance of \$6,623. Members approved a payment of \$300 for the Federation's annual dues to the Committee for Montgomery, Inc.

3. September 5th Symposium on Attainable Housing. Members discussed details for the online community program on attainable housing. County Executive Marc Elrich, attorney Michelle Rosenfeld, and former Montgomery County Council official Glenn Orlin will be the speakers. Resources from the Montgomery County Planning Board and the Office of the County Executive will be linked in the announcement email. (See page 4 for details.)

4. September 9th General Meeting. The September General Meeting will focus on attainable housing issues. Speakers will summarize and highlight issues

relevant to the Planning Board's Attainable Housing Study Final Report, now before the County Council.

The Land Use and Planning Committee will draft a Resolution for consideration by the membership at the November General Meeting.

It was suggested that there be a special meeting of the Federation at the end of September to solicit additional comments from membership to be incorporated in a draft Resolution.

5. 2024–2025 Programming. Attendees made recommendations for General Meeting topics in the 2024–2025 membership year.

Aug. ExCom Minutes, cont.

Among other ideas, there was interest in County education and tax assessment issues. The option of holding special MCCF meetings on particular topics was discussed. 1st Vice President Gwartz will propose topics for the General Meetings to the Executive Committee.

6. MCCF 100th Anniversary. Members noted that 2025 would be the 100th Anniversary of the Montgomery County Civic Federation. A Committee will be organized to plan the anniversary event.

7. Newsletter. Members discussed articles for the September 2024 newsletter. The deadline for submission of articles is August 27th.

8. Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m. ■

Final June Awards Photo



Montgomery County Civic Federation

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Submit contributions for the next issue by the 26th of the current month. Send to CFN at [civicednews AT montgomerycivic.org](mailto:civicednews@montgomerycivic.org).

Send all address corrections to membership AT montgomerycivic.org.

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