



SILVER SPRING CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD

Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board – FY10 Operating Budget Priorities February 3, 2009

Represented by Darian Unger and Kathy Stevens

We understand that there will be cuts in many important programs during this difficult budget year, and we call special attention to the following priority items for our community.

Policy issues that can affect the budget:

Nonprofit programming of the Town Center. The community is eager to begin using Silver Spring Civic Building and Veterans Plaza once construction is complete. Please do not delay any hiring necessary for immediate operation. Our Board also supports the Silver Spring Town Center, Inc. (SSTCI), the nonprofit organization that the community created to assist in programming the civic building and plaza. The nonprofit is to have broad community input through its Board of Directors, which includes representatives from the business and arts community, veterans organizations, and youth. Such an organization can also independently raise funds to support community-based arts, entertainment, and educational programming, thereby enhancing the County's investment. We believe this type of non-profit can insure that this space is used as effectively as possible to involve and engage the community to create a vibrant public use space.

Do not impose fees on fire/rescue services. Emergency medical services should continue to be provided free of charge and based on tax revenue. Charging fees for ambulance services could cause many in our community to hesitate to call 911 in cases of emergency for fear of a financial bill they could not afford. We believe this could be the case even if residents were not charged for what they could not afford. We believe that even a massive education campaign to assure people that they would not pay out of pocket for emergency ambulance services would not alleviate the potential serious confusion and fear around the issue, and oppose ambulance fee on both moral and practical grounds.

Eliminate reimbursements for library parking. If you must cut, then eliminate free parking at libraries instead of cutting to library hours or other library programs. Parking reimbursement favors drivers over pedestrians and cars over public transit, and are therefore inherently financially unfair. They also encourage driving over other forms of transportation, and are a less necessary expense than other library operations.

General operating budget items:

Do not cut the police/public safety budget. Silver Spring is still a developing area, and our community is deeply concerned about increased rates, which affect our safety and quality of life. Silver Spring is in particular need because of our population density, lower income rate, and higher crime levels. Increasing crime rates would curtail our development at a critical time of population and commercial growth.

Regional Services/ Redevelopment Program

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Preserve youth programs. We want to focus on crime prevention as well as enforcement. Youth programs and community centers need adequate funding and pay social dividends in development and reduced crime.

Do not cut the Urban District budget. The Silver Spring Urban District facilitates safety, cleanup, and many other aspects of Silver Spring which makes the commercial area attractive to families, a social hub, and a commercial success.

Fund the pedestrian safety initiative with special attention to high-incident areas.

Our area has a disproportionate number of high-incident and dangerous pedestrian areas, and with several speed cameras which bring in revenue. We urge that a large share of the speed-camera revenue be used for pedestrian safety improvements locally to prevent needless deaths.