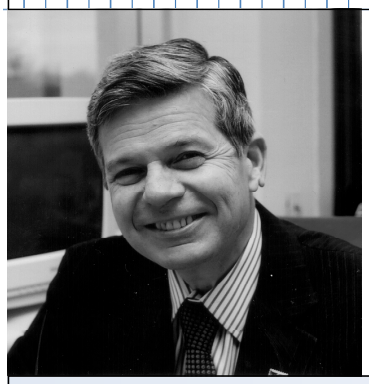
Fall 2003



NEWS FOR DISTRICT 1

COUNCILMEMBER HOWARD A. DENIS

Dear Neighbors,

This is my third annual report to you as your representative on the Montgomery County Council. As always, I am honored to work for you.

This year, I now serve on the Council's Education Committee. This is important because the school budget is roughly half of the total overall County expenditures. As a new member of the Committee, I'm working hard to enhance quality education.

Positive developments during the past year include: the renovation of the Spanish Ballroom at Glen Echo Park, the opening of the Rock Creek Trestle on the Capital Crescent Trail, the preservation of the Serpentine Barrens in Potomac, the completion of the modernization project at Walter Johnson High School, and the completion of the Woodacres Elementary School modernization. These projects and many others add to the quality of life in our County.

I am also thrilled at the imminent re-opening of the Bethesda Library — later than hoped for but earlier than feared. It was part and parcel of a difficult budget year. The Council was particularly hampered by the overall economy and less state aid, particularly for school construction and health and human services.

Despite the challenge, the Council passed a balanced budget totaling over $3 billion that preserves progress on Council initiatives to reduce class-size in the schools, establish all-day kindergarten, and make a significant down payment on meeting County transportation needs. We restored funding for fire and emergency protection and addressed critical health and human services needs. We also kept our commitment to homeland security as a leading subdivision in the Washington region.

In all of these endeavors, and many others, I seek your ideas and input. Please invite me to visit, or visit me, or otherwise let me know what you are feeling and thinking. Feel free to contact me if I can be of assistance, at the website, phone number, or address listed in this newsletter. And remember, our meetings are open and televised live, and extensive information is available about Council Business, agendas, and issues on the County website at www.montgomerycountymd.gov.

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County Budget Highlights

Supported Transportation

- Funded $22.2 million in "Go Montgomery" projects.
- Approved purchase of 15 new Ride-On buses.
- Approved two new natural gas-powered buses.
- Restored support for the Fare Share/Super Fare Share to encourage transit use and carpooling.
- Restored funds for residential road resurfacing to FY 03 levels.
- Funded pedestrian safety enhancements.
- Funded additional intersection improvements.
- Approved tech-nology planning funding to locate buses in emergencies.

Maintained Support for Education

- Maintained the Council's support to complete the Walter Johnson High School Modernization project as scheduled.
- Maintained funds to construct new Gymnasiums at Ashburton Elementary and Somerset Elementary.
- Approved $1.5 billion for County schools – 99% of the Board of Education's request.
- Preserved Council initiatives to reduce class size and continue rolling out full-day kindergarten.
- Included funding for County Pre-Kindergarten Programs to maintain the number of children in both Federal Head Start and County Pre-Kindergarten.
- Added funding for 16 additional maintenance workers to keep school buildings in good repair.

Restored Funding for Fire and Rescue Services

- Restored cuts that would have reduced staffing at Kensington Station Number 21 and Burtonsville Station Number 15.
- Restored administrative personnel for volunteer Fire/ Rescue stations.
- Rejected the proposed ambulance fee

Increased the number of Police recruits in the July police academy class for the coming year from 30 to 50.

Funded opening of the Bethesda Library on October 11.

Health & Human Services

- Funded new clinics for the uninsured through the Primary Care Coalition and increased funding for six existing clinics.
- Restored home health aides and chore services for eligible seniors and those with disabilities.
- Restored funding for transportation of seniors to centers for meals and programs.
- Restored funding for two of the County's Parent Resource Centers.
- Restored funding for an intensive, structured program to help emotionally disturbed adolescents and their parents.
- Restored funding for the Senior Health Insurance Program that assists seniors with insurance access.
- Restored funds for "Baby Steps", a program that makes sure all children born in County hospitals get a risk assessment to ensure a healthy start in life.

Glen Echo Park

I am pleased to report that Glen Echo Park is bustling with activity as the extensive renovations to the park continue. The historic Dentzel Carousel was unveiled in May after twenty years of painstaking painting to refurbish the Carousel and each of its animals. In July, at a ribbon-cutting ceremony attended by thousands, both the Spanish Ballroom and the North Arcade celebrated the completion of their renovations. Other buildings are scheduled to undergo rehabilitation to improve the aging facilities. All of this construction has been possible by a unique partnership of funding from the federal, state, and county government.

The Park also has a new management structure in place. While the National Park Service will continue to hold the property in its inventory, a public-private partnership has been set up to manage the daily operations at the park and to ensure its financial viability. The Glen Echo Park Partnership for Arts and Culture is charged with leading the programs and activities at the park and overseeing its renovations. I am serving on the Glen Echo Park Partnership Board of Directors in an ex-officio capacity.

This park is truly a national treasure which we are fortunate to have in Montgomery County. Please use and enjoy it!

Councilmember Denis at the re-opening of the historic Dentzel Carousel at Glen Echo Park

County Preserves 256 Acres of Environmentally Sensitive Land in Potomac

In May, I was very pleased to take part in the announcement of the County's purchase of the Serpentine Barrens.

The 256-acre Serpentine Barrens is the largest block of privately-held forest land in the county. It is the sixth natural resource site safeguarded by the County Council as part of the 2001 Legacy Open Space Master Plan. It constitutes a large part of the more than 600 acres of new parks identified in the Potomac Master Plan.

The name "serpentine barrens" refers to the geological and ecological conditions that exist on the property. Geologically speaking, the light green-colored serpentine bedrock was formed many hundreds of millions of years ago beneath the early oceans. Over the eons, this rock has been pushed upwards during periods of geological upheaval.

In North America, serpentine barrens are found only in three areas: California and southern Oregon, Quebec and western Newfoundland, and southeastern Pennsylvania and Maryland. The Serpentine Barrens property in Montgomery is home to about 22 species of rare and threatened plants and is part of the Potomac watershed.

I believe the acquisition of the Serpentine Barrens would not have been possible without the support of the community and the Planning Board and their staff who worked hard to make this important priority a reality.

District 1 Neighborhoods Included in *Renew Montgomery*

Renew Montgomery was created in 1996 as a means to deal with infrastructure needs in older neighborhoods. The goal was to make proactive improvements and address maintenance needs comprehensively, rather than responding to emergency situations piecemeal.

The services included as part of Renew Montgomery include: Sidewalk, Curb and Gutter Repair; Roadway Base Repairs; Road Resurfacing; Americans with Disabilities Act Improvements; Traffic Calming; Street Lighting; Sign and Marking Maintenance; Bus Stop Amenities; Tree Maintenance; Storm Drain Improvements; and Neighborhood Beautification.

I am very pleased that neighborhoods in District 1 are included in Renew Montgomery in the coming year. They are:

- Luxmanor/Hollyoak/Heritage Walk
- North Bethesda Grove
- Rollingwood

Improvements may begin as early as this spring. The specific improvements made in each neighborhood are based on an assessment performed by the County, input from local citizens, and available funding. More info about Renew Montgomery may be found at the County website at http://publicworks.dpwt.com/renew.shtml.

The Annual Growth Policy Is Here

One of the least known and most effective tools the Council has to manage growth in Montgomery County is the Annual Growth Policy, or AGP. While Master Plans serve as blueprints, the AGP sets the timing for their implementation. Under the AGP process, the County Council provides guidance to County agencies on land use; growth management; and related environmental, economic, and social issues.

The Council is currently reviewing the Policy Element of the AGP. The Policy Element consists of guidelines for the administration of laws and regulations that affect growth and development. The Council last approved an update to the Policy Element in October 2001.

Alongside the AGP, the Council is also reviewing a proposed Development Impact Tax to fund school construction needs and changes to the Recordation Tax to limit its use to school construction projects only. If you'd like to learn more about the Annual Growth Policy worksessions, please check the Council's agenda and briefing materials at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/council.

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www.montgomerycountymd.gov/council
for up to date Council agendas and news.

Bethesda Regional Library Re-Opens

Councilmember Denis calling for the early reopening of the Bethesda Regional Library.

I am pleased to announce the October 11 reopening of the Bethesda Regional Library. The Bethesda Library closed for renovation in December 2001.

The renovated library features redesigned interior space, a new space for children's programs, a new HVAC system, and a reconfigured reading room suitable for advanced technology.

While the renovation project was completed this past spring, budget cuts and the County's hiring freeze forced the library to stay closed. At my urging, the Council approved funding for an accelerated hiring process which allowed the library to open earlier than feared.

The Bethesda Regional Library is the second busiest in the library system. Only Gaithersburg Library consistently has higher patronage. In the last full year the library was open, 733,954 books and other media were circulated (243 per hour on average) and 650,169 people visited (215 every hour on average).

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