



MID-COUNTY CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD

Isiah Leggett
County Executive

Ana L. van Balen
Director

April 25, 2012

The Honorable Roger Berliner
President, Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear Council President Berliner and Councilmembers:

The Mid-County Citizens Advisory Board (MCCAB) appreciates the opportunity to share our comments on the County Executive's (CE's) Recommended FY13 Operating Budget. Our comments were gathered during deliberations held by our Budget and Quality of Life committees concentrating on budget areas most important to our community such as public safety, transportation, health and human services, libraries, culture, and recreation, community development and housing, environment, and community engagement. We encourage the County Council to consider the comments provided here during its deliberations on the CE's recommended budget. If the County receives less revenue from the state than was anticipated in the CE's recommended budget, the County Council should reduce spending rather than raise taxes or fees on County residents to offset the lost state revenue.

Public Safety

Fire and Rescue Service

The Montgomery County Fire & Rescue Service (MCFRS) has continued to make significant advancements in measuring emergency medical services (EMS) patient outcomes particularly in the area of treating patients experiencing heart attacks (STEMI) and sudden cardiac arrest. The survival of STEMI patients to hospital discharge, or other EMS patient outcome measures, should be included as a performance measure in the operating budget.

The recommended budget for "Operations" shows a decrease in expenditures of \$200,000 under the category of "Daywork Overtime at Rescue 1 (Bethesda-Chevy Chase), Rescue 2 (Wheaton) and Station 5 (Kensington)". The MCCAB recommends that the County Council restore this reduction in Daywork Overtime to avoid immediate service cuts. The budget should

preserve current staffing at these stations. The MCCAB expressed concern about a similar recommended budget decrease that was proposed as part of the CE's recommended FY10 budget.

Sheriff

The recommended budget for "Civil Process" shows an increase in expenditures of \$103,000 and a 0.3 increase in FTE's under the category of "Multi-program adjustments...". The MCCAB is increasingly concerned with the quality of life impact of evictions on mid-county residents and recommends that the CE consider dedicating part of this increase to offering support services to evicted tenants.

Transportation

Department of Transportation

We support the budget's proposed 7.1 percent (\$2.921 million) increase in funding for the Department of Transportation. This additional funding will enable DOT to continue important transportation programs and maintenance to improve traffic and pedestrian safety in our community.

Transit Services

We support the budget's proposed 10.4 percent (\$11.120 million) increase in funding for the Division of Transit Services. This additional funding will provide for expansion of Ride On operations and improved commuter services that will promote increased use of mass transit and other transportation alternatives within our community.

Health and Human Services

Kennedy Cluster/Neighborhood Opportunity Center

We support the budget proposal to replace expiring federal grant funding with County funding for the Kennedy Cluster/Neighborhood Opportunity Center. This project makes safety net services significantly more accessible for residents in the mid-county area.

Inflationary increase to contracts with nonprofits

In recognition of the essential role nonprofit programs play in providing the safety net services for mid-county residents, we support the inclusion of a 2% inflation increase to all eligible base contracts for services provided by nonprofits under the Department of Health and Human Services. Nonprofit contracts should include the 2% increase in order to keep pace with the rising cost of employee benefits and to allow for the provision of 1% to 2% wage increase for nonprofit workers, who receive no other increases. Although the budget does not propose such an increase for contracts with nonprofits, it does propose a wage increase for County employees.

Libraries, Culture, and Recreation

Public Libraries

We support the budget's proposed 9.5 percent (\$2.712 million) increase in funding for public libraries. This funding would provide for additional library hours, circulation services, and materials. Funding for libraries has been significantly reduced in prior budgets, and we agree with the County Executive that it is time to begin restoring library services that are vital for County residents.

Recreation

We support the budget's proposed 4.7 percent (\$1.173 million) increase in funding for the Department of Recreation. This additional funding would enhance important senior programs, weekend/evening teen programs, and student employment programs.

Community Development and Housing

Economic Development

We support the budget's proposed 35.3 percent (\$2.943 million) increase in funding for the Department of Economic Development. This additional funding would enhance critical business development programs to attract companies to start up, relocate, or expand in Montgomery County and improve the potential for greater job creation and capital investment within our community.

Housing and Community Affairs

We support the budget's proposed 12.4 percent (\$3.203 million) increase in funding for the Department of Housing and Community Affairs. This additional funding will provide our community with access to a broad range of services to help our citizens to obtain affordable housing, live in safe and sanitary living conditions, and take advantage of loan and rental assistance programs through the Montgomery Housing Initiative.

Environment

Environmental Protection

We support the budget's proposed 9.2 percent (\$1.613 million) increase in funding for the Department of Environmental Protection. This additional funding provides for expansion of watershed management and environmental policy and compliance efforts to further ensure environment conservation and protection for our community.

Community Engagement

Mid-County Regional Center

The MCCAB supports restoring staff reductions at the Mid-County Regional Center. As major infrastructure projects to revitalize the Georgia Avenue corridor progress, such as Wheaton Redevelopment and construction of the Georgia Avenue and Randolph Road interchange, the Mid-County Regional Center will play an increasingly important role in helping to coordinate County and State agencies, as well as advocating for the needs of local residents. Adequate staffing at the Mid-County Regional Center will likely help reduce and mitigate inter-agency and community disputes thus improving the timely execution of these infrastructure projects.

In conclusion, we commend the County Executive and his staff for formulating and submitting a comprehensive budget that balances County needs with County resources that are limited greatly by current economic constraints. We encourage the County Council to consider our comments as they deliberate the FY13 Operating Budget.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "G. Wijetunge".

Gam Wijetunge,
Chair of MCCAB