



MID-COUNTY CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD

Isiah Leggett
County Executive

Ana L. van Balen
Director

May 4, 2012

Ms. Connie Latham
Special Assistant to the County Executive
Executive Office Building
1010 Monroe Street, 2nd Floor
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear Ms. Latham,

As requested by the Committee Evaluation and Review Board (CERB) via memorandum dated March 19, 2012, the Mid-County Citizen's Advisory Board (MCCAB) hereby submits our report outlining reasons why the regional citizens advisory boards (CABs), and MCCAB specifically, should continue. The CERB's six areas of inquiry and the MCCAB's responses are provided below.

(Note: the MCCAB has collaborated with the other CABs in developing its responses. Hence there may be some similarity between the MCCAB's responses and the responses of the other CABs.)

- 1. A description of the work the advisory board does, citing the enabling legislation, the membership makeup of the board, and the subcommittee structure (if any).*

The MCCAB is statutorily charged with providing advice to the County Executive, County Council and the Director of the Mid-County Regional Services Center. In order to carry out this function the MCCAB holds public meetings where it discusses and receives input on a number of issues impacting the mid-county region. Traditionally this work has encompassed reviewing and commenting on proposed zoning and section map amendments, master plans and related plan amendments, six year capital improvements program (CIP) of County and Bi-County agencies, operating budgets of County and Bi-County agencies, health and human services matters, land acquisition by County and other government agencies, location and design of fire stations, schools, recreation centers, libraries, and other government buildings and facilities, transportation routes, schedules and services within the County, including School busing, and all other matters coming before the County government for decision which relate to, or affect, the Mid-County Regional Center's service area. Additionally the MCCAB has served to advise the Director of the Mid-County Regional Center in identifying demographic, economic, and social patterns in the area.

The first CAB was created by Council Resolution 8-449, introduced and adopted on September 2, 1975. This resolution established a Silver Spring Area Citizens Advisory Board with membership to be appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council. The Silver Spring Area Citizens Advisory Board was to be large enough so that it could be divided into subcommittees as necessary and so that it could be constituted as to reflect the varying points of view of the community but not be an advocate for a majority position. Subsequent to this action on January 30, 1979, by Resolution 9-40, the Wheaton Center Citizens Advisory Board was established and subsequently renamed the Mid-County Citizens Advisory Board.

The MCCAB serves as Montgomery County's bridge to the 220,000 residents and businesses throughout the 99 square miles of the Mid-County service area. The boundaries of that area extend north along Georgia Avenue to the Howard County line; south to the I-495 Beltway; east to Sligo Creek Parkway, and west to Rock Creek Park. The MCCAB serves as a liaison between the wide network of mid-county communities including Aspen Hill, Brookeville, Capital View, Derwood, Flower Valley, Forest Glen, Glenmont, Kemp Mill, Kensington, Layhill, Laytonsville, Norbeck, Olney, Sandy Spring, Upper Rock Creek, and Wheaton; and Montgomery County agencies.

The fifteen members of the MCCAB are selected from among applicants who reside, work or volunteer in the Mid-County service area. Each member is appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council for a three year term. An MCCAB member may also request appointment to a second term. Attendance at regular meetings is required. A member who is absent from 25 percent or more of scheduled official full MCCAB meetings during any six month period is considered to have resigned from the MCCAB.

The MCCAB membership also may include Associate Members who participate as non-voting members at MCCAB meetings, and Liaison Members from other County Boards and other civic and community organizations that facilitate and improve communications between and among community groups and the MCCAB.

The MCCAB meets the third Tuesday of each month at the Mid-County Regional Center, 2424 Reddie Drive, Wheaton, MD 20902 at 7:00 p.m. Each year in July the MCCAB members elect a Chair, Vice Chair, and Parliamentarian who serve for one year and can serve 2 consecutive years. The MCCAB structure also includes three permanent standing committees. Each MCCAB member joins at least one committee. Each committee meets, on average, 10 times per year. The MCCAB's standing committees consist of the Budget and Capital Projects Committee, the Land Use, Zoning & Transportation Committee and the Quality of Life Committee. The Executive Committee, composed of the three elected officers and the chairs of the committees, plans the recommended strategic work of the MCCAB. When required, the Chair may also form temporary nomination and/or member candidate interview committees.

The general areas of responsibility of the standing committees are the following:

The Budget and Capital Projects Committee deals with issues involving the County Capital Improvements Program (CIP) and the Public Services Program (PSP), which encompasses the County's operating budget. The committee helps evaluate CIP issues including improvements for highways, transit, water and sewer, lighting, other utilities, parks and other County property, and other capital expenditures supporting commercial or neighborhood revitalization. It helps evaluate multi-year and annual budget plans supporting County operations and services, including the overall framework of revenues and expenditures as well as any legislative issues under its purview.

The Land Use, Zoning & Transportation Committee deals with issues involving master plans, zoning and subdivision requirements, special exceptions, neighborhood and commercial revitalization, sewer water category changes, and related issues including impact fees, assessments and other charges. It helps evaluate changes in land use development affecting the broad region, the County, sub-areas, communities, commercial areas, neighborhoods, individual properties, as well as any legislative issues under its purview. Lastly, the committee addresses issues involving all aspects of transportation, infrastructure and pedestrian safety for both County and State roads. The committee may also review legislative matters pertaining to transportation.

The Quality of Life Committee deals with issues brought to the MCCAB by community members as well as "quality of life" matters pertaining to the Mid-County region. "Quality of life" matters can include: housing, code enforcement, public health and safety, education, youth issues and the environment.

- 2. Justification why the advisory board should continue. This may include a general statement concerning why the advisory board was established, and why its efforts are still needed.*

The MCCAB views public participation in the decision making process of the Montgomery County Government (MCG) as an important component of ensuring a transparent, accountable and responsive MCG. As such the appointed members of the MCCAB serve a valuable role in ensuring public input into the policy decision making process of the MCG—an important role that will continue in the future. Consider the following supporting facts:

- The MCCAB provides a cost effective public forum for the MCG to receive public input and disseminate information about its programs, services, and policies;
- The MCCAB provides an excellent forum for MCG staff and officials to engage the broader community at the grass-roots level on important issues;
- The MCCAB studies critical issues, takes public testimony, performs independent research, and reviews staff reports and recommendations. These activities prepare MCCAB to discuss, analyze, formulate, and forward well-developed, thoughtful recommendations to the County Executive and Council;
- The MCCAB provides costs savings to the MCG because Board/Committee members, with significant breadth of experience in their respective fields of professional knowledge, volunteer their time to discuss issues and provide feedback to the County

Executive and Council. Without the benefit of Boards/Committees, this same information could cost the county additional resources by using more staff and/or consultants;

- The MCCAB is a well-run, effective board. Attendance continues to be high by board members, community members and public officials. Members are recruited to provide diverse community representation on the CABs;
- The MCCAB works collaboratively with other regional boards, commissions and committees to develop partnerships and collaborative solutions to mutual issues and concerns;
- The MCCAB promotes public service. Participation as a member of a board or committee engages an individual in public service in local government and can provide a 'training ground' for individuals who remain active in civic life long after they serve on the MCCAB;
- The MCCAB helps the MCG meet increased demands and expectations for responsiveness and accountability;
- The activities of MCCAB can promote a creative dialogue among residents to bring fresh ideas and innovations to the attention of county leadership.

In addition, a recent independent analysis of the MCCAB, and the other regional CAB's, offers support for why the MCCAB should continue. In its 2011 final report the Montgomery County Organizational Reform Commission (ORC) recommended that MCG "[i]ncrease use of the Regional Services Centers' citizen advisory boards and the Office of Community Partnerships, whenever possible, in lieu of creating new citizen boards or committees."

In 1988 a predecessor to the ORC, the Commission on the Structure of Montgomery County Government recommended an expansion of the role of the Regional Service Centers stating in its 1988 report that regional service centers represent an "important philosophical commitment of the County to bring services closer to the people". While it has been said the Regional Services Centers, and their CAB's, "do not provide a direct service" – for example, fixing potholes – the MCCAB believes that they do provide the most basic and direct service of all, that of enfranchising our neighborhoods and stakeholders on a daily basis. This role is especially important for the mid-county region. Anecdotal reports indicate that the mid-county region has the lowest concentration of homeowners and neighborhood associations when compared to the other regions in the County. 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 Services Center and the MCCAB will play an increasingly important role in helping to coordinate County and State agencies, as well as advocating for the needs of local residents. An adequately staffed Mid-County Regional Services Center and appropriately resourced MCCAB will likely help reduce and mitigate interagency and community disputes thus improving the timely execution of these and other projects.

Continuation of the MCCAB would help ensure continued effective public policy development by the MCG by providing an efficient mechanism for the ongoing engagement of County residents in the everyday functioning of the county government.

3. *A list of accomplishments from the prior two years; including any direct service provided by volunteers to residents.*

The MCCAB has accomplished much in the past two years that helps explain the nature and purpose of its work. During the past two years the MCCAB has:

- Provided recommendations to the County Executive and County Council on matters pertaining to land use and development that help support business development as well as neighborhood development throughout the mid-county region;
- Supported policies and initiatives that strengthen healthy transportation enhancements throughout the Georgia Avenue corridor;
- Invited and hosted community and civic leaders to meetings to gain a better understanding of the challenges they face in their communities;
- Sent representatives to attend meetings with civic associations to hear from residents on community issues and bridge the divide between the community and the government;
- Hosted the County Executives Annual Budget Forums;
- Engaged in dialogue with several members of the County Council and their staff regarding important mid-county and County-wide issues.

4. *A statistical review of the advisory board member's workload. Include in the review a list of how many regular and sub-committee meetings are held per month/quarter, and the length of the meetings. In addition, list any other board or sub-committee activities. Finally, include a listing of materials produced by the board, such as research reports, newsletters, etc.*

MCCAB holds at least 10 meetings per year. Additionally, MCCAB committees meet at least seven times per year. Most meetings are evening meetings, lasting approximately two hours. There are also additional ad-hoc meetings (i.e.: nominating, etc.) that MCCAB members may attend. In general MCCAB members attend an average of greater than 20 meetings per year, thus contributing over 40 hours of their time to CAB official meetings. Given that there are 15 members in MCCAB, the total number of estimated volunteer hours that MCCAB members contribute annually exceeds 600 hours. This may vary with the MCCAB Chair and committee chairs possibly contributing well in excess of 50 volunteer hours per year.

In addition, the MCCAB designates members to serve as liaisons on other Boards or Committees. These include the Mid-County Regional Recreation Advisory Board, the Olney Town Center Advisory Committee, the Permitting Services Advisory Committee, the Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee and the Wheaton Redevelopment Advisory Committee. Many MCCAB members also attend official ceremonies, ground-breaking, openings, ribbon-cutting, dedications, etc.

In the past two years, the following documents have been produced by the MCCAB:

2010-2011 Correspondence List with the County Executive and County Council

- Oct. 25, 2010: MCCAB supported Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) 09-03 Quality of Life Code Enforcement Reforms.
- Nov. 2, 2010: MCCAB encouraged expediting renovation of Kemp Mill Urban Park.
- Dec. 2, 2010: MCCAB opposed connecting segments of Buehler near Spartan Road.
- Dec. 20, 2010: MCCAB acknowledged the Mid-County Youth Advisory Committee's efforts in providing assistance to some of our neediest community members during the holidays.
- Jan. 3, 2011: MCCAB expressed concern with Pepco's failure to address extended power outages.
- Mar. 15, 2011: MCCAB requested investigation of active and inactive natural gas-fed street lights in Mid-County neighborhoods to ensure safe deactivation.
- Mar. 15, 2011: MCCAB shared suggestions for design of Kemp Mill Urban Park.
- Mar. 29, 2011: MCCAB made suggestions to address budget crisis.
- May 20, 2011: MCCAB made recommendation to post cardiac arrest survivability rates and other health outcome measures to be included in CountyStat and the Montgomery County website.
- Jun. 21, 2011: MCCAB commended Director Natalie Cantor for her tireless efforts on behalf of the residents of the Mid-County Region.
- Jun. 21, 2011: MCCAB expressed concern regarding death of three Montgomery youth killed in a car accident on Olney-Laytonsville Road and requested that the road be straightened to prevent a similar occurrence.
- July 19, 2011: MCCAB made the recommendation that MCPS explore all reasonable feasible alternative approaches to Farquhar Middle School modernization project and opposed transporting students to Tilden during construction.
- July 29, 2011: MCCAB shared their Capital Improvement Program (CIP) FY13-18 recommendations.

2011-2012 Correspondence List with the County Executive and County Council

- Nov.1, 2011: MCCAB sent the council their concerns on the youth curfew legislation.
- Nov.16, 2011: MCCAB expressed concern about the change in design for Fire Station 18.
- Jan. 3, 2012: MCCAB forwarded their support of the Sandy Spring shared use path.
- Jan. 30, 2012: MCCAB shared that they were not in support of Bill 30-11.
- Feb. 16, 2012: MCCAB expressed their concern over the funding of the CIP project for the redevelopment of Wheaton.
- Feb. 23, 2012: MCCAB thanked the County Executive for the budget forum and shared their support of items in the FY 13-18 CIP.
- Mar. 16, 2012: MCCAB reiterated the County Executive's Wheaton Redevelopment CIP.
- Apr. 23, 2012: MCCAB sent their questions and support for department budget items within the Operating Budget for FY13.

Other materials produced by the MCCAB:

- Annual Report

5. *As done in typical annual reports, provide a 2-year work program outlining planned activities and goals for the future.*

The MCCAB will continue to focus on the issues affecting mid-county. Two ways to achieve this goal include gathering information on relevant issues while also creating opportunities for participation by community members that have not customarily participated in traditional civic life. Strategies involve holding special events, meetings on topics or areas of need, while using technology, blogging and the use of other electronic communications to maximize reach. The MCCAB will also reach out to civic leaders, community members, non-profit directors, businesses and youth to increase participation in MCCAB meetings and hence, enrich dialogue that impact MCCAB's decision-making processes. This may result in summer forums for CIP issues, operating budget conversations and meetings on issues that emerge throughout the community.

The work of subcommittees will continue to be the main mechanism of engagement and dialogue. And with increasing needs in mid-county as well as scheduled development throughout the region, MCCAB committees will be monitoring and looking for ways to ensure that the overall quality of life of the region is strengthened through its work. Some examples of issues to be addressed within each MCCAB committee include the following:

- **Land Use, Zoning and Transportation**—this committee will continue to monitor the development of bus rapid transit (BRT), traffic issues in Olney and throughout the Georgia Avenue corridor, new business development, sector plan amendments, the completion of recently approved projects such as the Wheaton Library and Recreation Center and Kemp Mill Urban Park as well as other important zoning matters in the mid-county region;
- **Quality of Life**—this committee will further address needs surfaced through the housing crisis, code enforcement, public safety and revitalization of the Georgia Avenue corridor;
- **Budget and Capital Projects**—this committee will continue to address issues related to budget prioritization especially as it pertains to the ongoing recession, the State teachers pension benefit shift and how these both impact the quality of MCG services.

All of this will be achieved through continued monthly, regularly scheduled meetings with a high level of MCCAB member participation. This work will be captured through the production of the Annual Report highlighting the activities and accomplishments of MCCAB.

The MCCAB expects to further engage County Council members and their staff on matters pertaining to the mid-county community. Further, MCCAB will also work with the County Executive and his staff by sponsoring, conducting outreach, and participating in the County Executive's forums, town Hall meetings and other events. These efforts are vital to MCCAB's work to provide county leadership with fresh and innovative ideas for moving Montgomery County forward.

6. *A description of the amount of County government resources, including County employee staff time, currently being used. Include an outline of a plan to reduce the use of these resources. Note the “staff time” and “resources” includes preparing for and attending meetings, setting up meeting space, office supplies expended, photocopying, and any other monetary costs for equipment rental, parking, etc.*

The Mid-County Regional Director attends all MCCAB meetings and MCCAB committee meetings and works with the Chair to develop the agenda, contact guests, and prepare the necessary documentation. The Mid-County Regional Director also helps with logistical matters for meetings such as making copies, recording meetings, room set up and other minor tasks. The Regional Director spends approximately 10 hours per month supporting MCCAB. Additional time is spent during member transition as the Mid-County Regional Director is also directly involved in the recruitment, interviewing, and orientation of MCCAB members. Over the course of the year, it could be estimated that the Mid-County Regional Director spends approximately 20 hours on this effort.

While the newly created Community Engagement Cluster support staff (the “Business Management Team”) helps in some of these tasks, the bulk of the work falls on the Mid-County Regional Director. As the BMT staff formalizes itself this year, it is expected that the BMT staff will pick up additional responsibilities moving forward.

Given the nature of the work of the MCCAB, other County staff – including County Council staff - is usually present at the meetings. Thus, it can be estimated that other Departments – and County Council - spend at least 2 hours per month on the work of MCCAB.

The monetary costs of the MCCAB are minimal, consisting primarily of printing costs and some minor incidental occasional costs. All correspondence is completed electronically.

We thank you for the opportunity to submit this report and share of the work that the Mid-County Citizen's Advisory Committee has conducted over the last two years. Please feel free to contact us with any questions you may have regarding the contents of this report.

Sincerely,



Gam Wijetunge, Chair
Mid-County Citizen's Advisory Board