



OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET

Marc Elrich
County Executive

MEMORANDUM

Richard S. Madaleno
Director

October 8, 2019

TO: Marc Elrich, County Executive

FROM: Richard S. Madaleno, Director *RSM*

SUBJECT: Summary – Wheaton FY21 Budget Forum
Wheaton Library and Community Recreation Center

The purpose of this memorandum is to transmit Office of Management and Budget (OMB) staff notes on comments from the FY21 Operating Budget Forum held on October 7, 2019 at the Wheaton Library and Community Recreation Center. Mid-County Regional Services Center Director Luisa Montero-Diaz, CAO Andrew Klein, OMB Director Rich Madaleno, OMB Deputy Director Jennifer Bryant, OMB Analysts Pofen Salem, Richard Harris, and Estela Gomes were present. Corey Orlosky presented on behalf of OMB. Representatives from various County departments such as Fire Rescue, Department of General Services, Department of Recreation, Public Libraries, and County Executive's Office were present, as well as Councilmember Glass and staff from the offices of Councilmembers Albornoz and Katz. Approximately 60 people were in attendance, including County staff.

The following topics and concerns were raised by participants.

A. **Roads/Pedestrian Safety**

- a. A speaker thought more people could be attracted to the Wheaton core attractions if the area were more pedestrian friendly and sought buildout of a 10-year-old Sidewalk Plan that was largely unimplemented.
- b. A resident of Connecticut Avenue Estates said a lack of parking was causing tension in the neighborhood of single-family homes and asked the County Executive (CE) to initiate a low-cost driveway program to address the problem, similar to a program the State funded several years ago. **The CE said he would investigate the State program.**
- c. A Connecticut Avenue Estates resident also asked for more public transportation links (RideOn buses specifically) in the neighborhood, noting the high number of low-income residents who rely on the County's bus system. **The CE said he would look into adding or expanding routes to serve Connecticut Avenue Estates.**
- d. A resident advocated for expanded bicycle safety efforts on the County's roads. A Forest Glen resident noted the planned tunnel under Georgia Avenue at Forest Glen Road didn't connect directly to the Metro station and suffered from accessibility issues. People who can't use stairs (such as seniors and the disabled) would have to walk a far distance to the station's transit entrance, and then back to the actual metro station entrance.

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- e. A second speaker from Forest Glen seconded the accessibility concerns of the Georgia Avenue/Forest Glen Road tunnel.
The CE said he would review designs for better access to the Metro station.
- f. A resident asked for better road maintenance in general, noting low quality paving throughout the County, even recently repaired roads.

B. Seniors

- a. A Seniors Advocate praised the County's Recreation and Senior Centers as a resource for seniors but lamented the loss of a custodial employee who would help arrange tables and chairs.
OMB Director Rich Madaleno clarified that this was an issue with a new custodial services vendor that the County is working to resolve.
- b. A second resident asked for additional staffing at Senior Centers, referencing the previous commenter, and asked for a budget forum to be held in Leisure World for elderly residents who may not be able to travel far from home.
The CE responded saying he agreed with the idea and asked staff to arrange a budget forum in Leisure World.
- c. A speaker lamented that the CE did not include Seniors as one of his priority outcomes and also asked for an expansion of the County's Guardianship program, arguing it helps extend the length of time seniors can live at their home and avoid using other, more costly senior support services.

C. Wheaton Redevelopment

- a. A speaker said he was pleased with the new plaza but thought added resources and staffing was needed to support activities and events at the plaza. There is only one employee currently assigned to oversee the Wheaton Urban District.
- b. A member of the Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee outlined several things he believed were needed for the new plaza and Veterans Urban Park: better lighting, sound, stage, and related equipment for performing arts, and added staffing for the Wheaton Urban District. He noted that the County would save money by owning sound and lighting equipment rather than renting it for events.
The CE was under the impression the lighting and stage were the way the Committee member described and said he would follow-up with staff on the matter.

D. Housing

- a. The Vice Chair of the Mid-County Citizens Advisory Board asked the CE about plans to increase affordable housing in the County.
- b. A Justice Leader for the local Archdiocese advocated for stronger enforcement requirements in a bill aimed at improving low-income housing inspections, and for more housing inspectors.

E. Recreation Facilities

- a. A speaker praised the County's Recreation Centers as a way to promote health and wellness to seniors and the broader community and asked how better to promote their use.
- b. A frequent user of the Olney Swim Center said the facility was an important community feature but needs a major renovation.

F. Animal Control

- a. A speaker expressed concerns about community cats and unaltered dogs, noting that the County lacked a low-cost spay/neuter program and that the Animal Shelter's veterinary suite appeared understaffed.
- b. After the meeting concluded, a resident described what he thought was an inefficient way in which a lost dog was reported and returned to its owner (picked up and processed by Animal Control hours later rather than telling the owner it had been reported at a home a block over).

G. Schools

The chair of the Mid-County Citizens Advisory Board expressed support for more Montessori and charter schools to address the County's school crowding issues.

H. Miscellaneous Questions or Comments

- a. A resident asked the CE how to best pour cement to replace his home's exterior stairs, given that after being mixed, cement has a short timeframe in which its usable and that the County's cement plants are far from his home.
The CE suggested a portable cement mixer or using wood to construct the stairs.
- b. A resident questioned the CE's initiative to require solar panels on new residential construction. The speaker thought it would void the home's warranty and be cost inefficient.
The CE said he had not previously heard solar panels void a roof warranty and disagreed that it would do so on new construction, and he and a participant disagreed that the solar panels are cost inefficient.
- c. A resident asked if the County's program performance measures would be made public.
The CE said yes, they will be available to the public.
- d. The Chair of the County's Commission for Women asked for women-owned businesses be given priority in County procurement, and for additional funding so the Commission for Women can expand its programming.
The CE said he was supportive of expanding small, minority- and women-owned businesses on the County's small business set aside.
- e. The Justice Leader for a local Archdiocese also advocated the County's Developmental Disabilities supplemental, asking for continued funding and for the CE to add developmental disabilities requirements for County contracts.
- f. A Forest Glen resident asked for a forum in that neighborhood.
The CE suggested a space in Holy Cross Hospital could be used.