

April 3, 20814

Dear Councilmember Hucker,

As you and the other members of the Montgomery County Council consider this year's capital and operating budgets, I hope that you will support the Parks Department Budget. Montgomery County's Parks are a real treasure. When I moved here in 1979, I remember being so impressed with the number, variety and quality of the parks in my community and I still am today.

I realize that this year the County is facing fiscal challenges as well as an expanding need for services and, as result, budget decisions will be very difficult. As you make your decisions, please keep in mind the important role that the Parks Department plays in our communities. Over this last year, that role became particularly apparent. Those of us living in urban areas within the County were able to enjoy some much-needed respite and to achieve a semblance of normalcy during the pandemic by visiting the nearby parks. Most apartment and condominiums in downtown Bethesda have very limited, if any, green space so even the smallest urban park is very much appreciated. I have been amazed to see how many people, from children to senior citizens, use the newly renovated Battery Lane Park. It is important that the Parks Department is funded sufficiently to allow them to maintain the parks, make necessary repairs and renovations and to make ADA improvements in order to keep these facilities accessible, safe, clean and attractive to everyone.

Park programming is equally as important. The Parks Department has developed some very innovative and creative programming during the COVID 19 Pandemic adding to the quality of life in our communities and this will need to continue moving forward so staff resources are needed. I hope you will provide funding for the Program Access Office Program Assistant position included in this year's budget request. This position is designed to provide much needed services to underserved populations in our community: people with disabilities; veterans, including those with disabilities; and senior citizen. The Program Access Office has been successful in providing services to these populations but to do so is labor intensive since this often involves individual assessments, program modifications, specialized equipment and staff training/coaching. The Program Access Office Program Assistant contract position, although a relatively small budget request, would expand the Office's ability to serve these communities.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to advocate on behalf of the Parks Department budget, particularly the Program Assistant position in the Program Access Office.

Sincerely,

*Nancy Greene*