

DJ HANLEY Testimony 07 April 2025
MC County Council Proposed Budget Hearings

Thank you for this opportunity to state my support for the full M-NCPPC proposed budget. My name is Deborah Hanley, a resident of Silver Spring.

As a Montgomery County Master Naturalist and an active volunteer in several Montgomery County parks/facilities, I experience firsthand the importance of our parks to our residents. I delight in seeing the joy of a child as he is introduced to turtles and snakes and birds. I love seeing a pack of girls racing to get to the frog pond first.

For these children and their parents, I request your consideration of the full budget as proposed by M-NCPPC. The minimal 7.2% increase to the general budget is based on continuance of current staff, continuance of current levels of programming, and the minimal maintenance necessary for safe and accessible parks.

In these uncertain economic times, the Park's services and facilities are part of the critical safety-net for our citizens' mental health, physical health, and safety; for school field trips to explore STEAM topics; and for their education in good stewardship of nature and its importance in our environment. Long wait lists for summer programs - which are critical for working families who cannot afford private childcare - indicate demand is not being met by current staff levels. This programming is unique and not an overlap with the activities of the Recreation Department.

Important to recall is that Parks are comprised of living breathing organisms and basic maintenance cannot be delayed or ignored without major safety and cost impacts. Responsible implementation of environmental stewardship to protect water quality, stream restorations, and landscape maintenance must be continued at the current levels. This includes upgrading existing paths to enhance accessible trails for users with adaptive equipment.

The impact of the reduced budget to the services provided to our communities will be noticed by your constituents. I urge you to approve the bare-bones increase of 7.2% proposed by M-NCPPC to enable continuation of the high level of park services historically offered to the community.

Thank You