

2026 CIP Testimony
For the Parks Department
Roger Paden

For the past several years, I have been testifying in favor of funding work on two parks in my neighborhood, the new Lyttonsville Park and the existing Rosemary Hills - Lyttonsville Local Park.

The New Lyttonsville Park will contain the two main girders of the historic Talbot Avenue Bridge along with interpretive materials to help tell the story of this historically Afro-American community. It will be built on land that is currently being used as a storage site for the construction of the Purple Line. As a result, the construction of the park has been repeatedly delayed as the completion of the Purple Line gets repeatedly pushed back.

The Rosemary Hills - Lyttonsville Local Park is to be extensively rebuilt. With seed money from the state our fields will be renovated; new surfaces will be put on our various courts and the number of courts will be increased; and new paths and a pavilion will be installed. Currently, the Department is working on the needed permits. We hope that construction will begin soon.

The surrounding communities eagerly await the completion of these projects, and we are fortunate that the Council has been fully supportive of both projects in the past. I believe that you will continue to support them until they are finished. Thank you.

Today, however, I would like to address another issue; namely, funding capital improvement projects during the present budget crisis which is likely to get worse before it gets better. This crisis has been brought about largely by the actions of the federal government, and it affects the county in many ways. One particularly harmful effect results from the massive cuts in federal employment. These cuts have directly affected Montgomery County, more than virtually any other county in the country. And the loss of federal jobs has multiplied through the county's work force. Not only are our residents' lives upended, but the county has seen and will see its tax revenues decline.

The county has responded in many ways; with direct opposition to the actions of the federal administration, with attempts to develop new revenue sources, and with attempts to develop new employment opportunities for its residents.

This last has two benefits: it employs county residents and it helps boost county revenue through taxes on the income of these workers.

In this light, I propose that the council undertake to examine CIP budget requests through an important lens. In short, *ceteris paribus*, you should favor capital expenditures that support county employment. A proposal that promises to employ more county residents, whether in County jobs or through county-funded contract work should be favored over those that promise to employ fewer residents. And you should consider *all* the jobs that the project will produce,

both during design and construction *and* over the expectation lifetime of the project.

For example, consider the recent proposal by MCPS to install artificial turf fields at its facilities instead of renovating their natural grass fields. There may be many reasons to favor one option over the other. The council has concluded, I believe, that the balance of these reasons makes natural grass fields the correct choice. I agree. But I want to draw your attention to one other reason that counts in favor of the natural grass fields. Compared to the alternative, natural grass fields will employ more county residents, both during their installation (construction jobs) and over the course of their use (maintenance jobs). There is no need to bring in specialists from outside the county or import expensive material; county residents have the skills to do this work and often live in the county to be close to the job site. Moreover, materials are locally sourced. Thus, this option supports more *county* jobs during both phases. And it will, therefore, give work to our residents and increase the county's tax base, both now and in the long term. These considerations should count heavily in favor of turf fields.

Considerations such as this also count heavily in favor of funding the Parks Department CIP request. Parks are constructed largely with local materials and by local labor; that is, by the labor of both county employees and contract employees. More important, parks are largely maintained by local labor; that is, by employees of the Parks Department who generally live in the county. I would think that the Parks Department – while not unique in this regard – stands out.

That park construction and maintenance are labor intensive is a reason to favor the Departments' CIP request. I hope that this, among many other reasons, lead you to fully fund the Departments' CIP request.