

I strongly encourage the Montgomery County Council to fully support the invaluable resource that is our county parks and facilities. In short, for FY27, the Parks Department requested a 6.3% increase over the prior year's budget, with no additional funding requested for new or expanded programs. Unfortunately, the County Executive's recommended budget only provides a 4.1% increase, which will result in a budget shortfall of \$3,127,430. While we are currently evaluating the full impact of this reduction, we expect that it will affect our ability to deliver core services and programs.

I am a retired Federal worker who has chosen to remain in Montgomery County for my retirement due to our wonderful parks and facilities. I volunteer my time and effort for Brookside Gardens (Natural Areas Assistant, renovating the woodlands in the park; Butterfly Docent in the conservatory during the summer months) and for all of the parks as a Level 2 Certified Weed Warrior, removing non-native invasive plants that are smothering our native plants that support our native insects and birds. Trust me, from my personal experience, I can tell you that we have something very, very special in our county parks and facilities.

Walk in the parks, either on the trails or at Brookside, and you will see children, parents, families, friends, and the elderly all enjoying our outdoor spaces. Review the parks web site at <https://montgomeryparks.org/> where you can see how many special programs and services that benefit us all. Especially now, we need to pay special attention to our mental health and well-being. Being active in green spaces is one proven therapy for stress and anxiety, and so easy to do: with your HELP. If Quality of Life matters to you, and your friends and family, please reconsider funding the full 6.3% increase in park's budget.