

## **2027 Budget for Montgomery Parks Natural Resource Division**

My name is Ed Murtagh, and today I'm speaking for myself as an individual with decades of experience living in Montgomery County Maryland and decades of experience volunteering as a Weed Warrior through Montgomery Parks.

I support fully funding the Parks' Natural Resources Division so that it can better carry out its important mission. As a long time Park volunteer, I have frequently seen small introductions of invasive plants spread and damage the ecological health of our parklands. There are several highly invasive plants that park volunteers cannot manage, such as bamboo, Knotweed, Tree of Heaven and Lesser Celandine. Due to the current budgetary restraints, there are not enough resources to address these invasive plants in most of our parks. It is important that there are enough resources to detect and respond to these invasive plant issues when they are small and cost effective to manage. Once these invasive plants spread and establish themselves, it is too late to manage them. Funding the Natural Areas Vegetation Field Crew member position will help support the important mission of Montgomery Parks and also support the volunteer Weed Warriors who work closely with Parks staff maintaining restoration sites and stormwater management practices. The horticulturalist positions are also important. The horticulturalists will be tasked with maintaining Parks plantings. With the threat of invasive plants in our county parks, maintaining native plants requires adequate, dedicated staffing.

In closing, fully funding the Parks' budget request will better support the Parks' invasive plant management program, along with the wider watershed management and stormwater programs.

Edward Murtagh



Silver Spring, MD 20902

## **Budget for Municipal Solid Waste**

My name is Ed Murtagh and today I'm speaking for myself as an individual with decades of experience living in Montgomery County Maryland, and a farm owner in Dickerson, MD. I also have had professional experience managing a Waste Reduction & Recycling Program at a large facility.

I'd like to focus on the EPA Waste Management Hierarchy as a way of helping the county look at its future choices for treatment of its municipal solid waste. The EPA Waste Management Hierarchy has provided useful guidance on waste management for many years.

Avoidance, Reuse and Recycling: EPA set up a triangle that starts out wide on the top and narrows to a point at the bottom. The priority at the top is of course avoidance of creating trash in the first place (Avoidance on the hierarchy) and then reuse & recycling of materials (Reuse & Recycling on the hierarchy). For us, this includes our existing recycling and transfer station, and at least for now our food composting trial. As time and a mechanism is created, we are all on board to expand the food waste composting program, which can further emphasize home composting as well as collected food composting. This would be irrespective of whether we use incineration or landfilling. That covers a significant chunk of how MoCo should be handling its solid waste

Energy Recovery via Incineration: Looking down the Waste Hierarchy triangle, the next priority is waste to energy and co-processing which includes incineration (Recovery of Energy on the hierarchy). Let me pause to remind everyone that the RRF (Resource Recovery Facility) in Montgomery County generates electricity (enough electricity to power tens of thousands of homes) as well as recovering and selling the metal collected after the rest of the trash has turned to ash. Thousands of tons of metals are recovered at the RRF each year.

Treatment & Landfilling: The last priorities on the hierarchy are treatment and safe disposal in landfills. Landfills are the lowest priority on the hierarchy because they have significant environmental problems. Landfills shift environmental problems such as leachate (toxins in liquids that leak into ground water), high long-term costs of maintaining old landfills, and potential liabilities to the future generations. According to the EPA, landfills are also a major source of methane gas, a powerful greenhouse gas that significantly contributes to climate change.

The note here is that for the EPA, the clear preference for waste management is an RRF over landfilling. Presumably this is not only from recoverable materials, and smaller waste stream but also the difference in off-gassing of methane from landfill to the less damaging CO<sub>2</sub> from an incinerator.

Others can talk about the specific climate dangers of methane from landfilling and the relative cost savings over time by using an RRF over landfilling.

I just wanted to emphasize that on a federal level, and before the current administration, incineration (Energy and Metal Recovery) is considered preferable to landfilling, as a separate matter from reduction of volume from the waste stream in a variety of ways.

