



# County Council

## Montgomery County, Maryland

### About the Council

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The Montgomery County Council is the legislative branch of County Government. It has nine members, all elected at the same time by the voters of Montgomery County for four-year terms. The terms of the present Council, elected November 2018, began at noon on December 3, 2018 and will continue until noon on the first Monday in December 2022

Five members of the Council are elected by the voters of their respective council districts. Four members are elected at-large by all the voters of the County. The Council officers are elected by the Council from among its members in December for a one-year term. Officers for 2019 to 2020 are:

President: Tom Hucker

Vice-President: Gabe Albornoz

As of December 3, 2019 the Council President receives a salary of \$154,408 per year. The other members receive a salary of \$140,317.07 per year.

### The Council's Responsibilities

The County Council's responsibilities are specified by the County Charter and state law. Some of the Council's principal responsibilities are:

- Appropriates money to fund the capital and operating budgets and sets the local property tax rate and other local taxes.
- Approves all land use plans including the General Plan, area master plans, and sector plans prepared by the Planning Board.
- Acts on zoning changes.
- Exercises oversight over County programs to ensure efficiency and effectiveness.
- Approves the six-year capital improvements, public services, and fiscal policy programs.
- Approves the county Ten Year Solid Waste and Water Supply and Sewerage System Plans.
- Serves as the Board of Health for Montgomery County.
- Enacts all County laws and amendments to the Code.
- Sets the tax rates required to fund the County budgets.
- Confirms major appointments made by the County Executive and appoints the members of the Montgomery County Planning Board and the Board of Appeals.
- Acts on or initiates reorganization plans for the County government's executive branch.
- Directs and reviews the annual independent audit of County government operations.



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### **When the Council Meets**

The Council generally meets on Tuesdays beginning at 9:30 a.m. The Council meets other days in committees and frequently holds public hearings and forums in the evenings. Nearly all Council meetings are open to the public.

### **Council Procedures**

The Council conducts business in the following manner:

- An item of business is introduced at a regular Tuesday session. The public is notified through the advance agenda and Council report and the Council's website.
- The Council schedules a public hearing if required by law, which is advertised in Montgomery County newspapers as well as in the agenda. Special measures may be advertised by press release.
- After the public hearing, the Council holds committee and full Council worksessions. For worksessions, the staff prepares a packet of material for the Council's consideration that summarizes issues raised.
- Worksessions are open to the public and are publicized through the agenda mailing. After the worksessions, the item is brought before the Council for final action, usually at a regular Tuesday session.

### **Standing Committees**

There are six Council standing committees. Each Committee has budget review and program oversight responsibilities. Some cross-cutting issues may be reviewed by two committees meeting jointly.



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### About The Council - How The Council Is Organized

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The Charter provides that the Council shall elect a president to preside over meetings. The Council elects a president and a vice-president each December for a one-year term.

The Council President is responsible for setting the Council's agenda and work schedule, reviews and signs all official documents of the Council, responds to the major portion of the correspondence addressed to the Council, and acts as spokesperson. In recognition of these additional responsibilities, the Council President receives a salary 10 percent greater than the salary of the other Councilmembers.

### Standing Committees

There are currently six Council standing committees which are described below. Each Committee has budget review and program oversight responsibilities. Some cross-cutting issues may be reviewed by two committees meeting jointly.

In some of the committees, an individual other than the Chair has been designated as the Lead Councilmember for an issue or group of issues. Lead Councilmembers take the initiative in developing agenda items in their areas of responsibility and act as chair of the committee when their items are being discussed.

Council committees customarily meet on Mondays and Thursdays. During the Council budget seasons (January through June), committee sessions are held more frequently.

### Education & Culture (ED)

- **Jurisdiction:** Issues relating to Montgomery County Public Schools, Montgomery College, Montgomery Coalition for Adult English Literacy, and Community Use of Public Facilities
- **Members:** Craig Rice, Chair; Will Jawando; Nancy Navarro

### Government Operations and Fiscal Policy (GO)

- **Jurisdiction:** Economic and fiscal policy; spending affordability; County Government administrative departments; cable and telecommunications issues; technology issues; personnel and compensation issues; procurement policy; oversight of interagency teams on training, public information, procurement, and PEG (public, education, and government) cable television channels.
- **Members:** Nancy Navarro, Chair; Andrew Friedson; Sidney Katz

### Health and Human Services (HHS)

- **Jurisdiction:** The Department of Health and Human Services and all associated issues and organizations; libraries and the arts; culture, and the humanities.
- **Members:** Gabe Albornoz, Chair; Evan Glass; Craig Rice



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### **Planning, Housing, and Economic Development (PHED)**

- **Jurisdiction:** Master Plans and amendments to the zoning laws; issues related to parks and recreation, the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, and the Montgomery County Planning Board; historic preservation; economic development; housing; and agricultural preservation.
- **Members:** Hans Riemer, Chair; Andrew Friedson; Will Jawando

### **Public Safety (PS)**

- **Jurisdiction:** The Police Department, State's Attorney's Office, the Circuit Court, Sheriff's Office, Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, and the Criminal Justice Coordinating Commission; Fire and Rescue Service, Emergency Management and Homeland Security; Animal Control and Office of Consumer Protection
- **Members:** Sidney Katz, Chair; Gabe Albornoz; Tom Hucker

### **Transportation & Environment (T&E)**

- **Jurisdiction:** Water and sewer issues and the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission; issues relating to environmental protection and conservation, including forest conservation; and solid waste issues, County infrastructure issues including public transportation, roadway and street construction and maintenance.
- **Members:** Tom Hucker, Chair; Evan Glass; Hans Riemer



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### **About The Council - The Budget Process**

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The Council is the final authority on spending by the departments of County Government as well as the independent County and bi-County agencies such as Montgomery County Public Schools, Montgomery College, the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission, and the Montgomery County Planning Board. The County Executive has responsibilities for proposing a County Government budget to the Council and makes recommendations on the independent agency budgets.

It is the Council's task to review all of these spending proposals comprehensively and craft a budget that provides the services that the people of Montgomery County need and want at a cost that they can afford.

It is the Council's role to listen to the people of Montgomery County and understand the impact of spending and taxes on all of the residents of Montgomery County.

### **Spending Affordability**

This is the process, required by the County Charter, by which the Council instructs the independent agencies and Executive departments how to plan their budgets for the coming fiscal year.

Each September, the Council begins with a study of the economic indicators that help predict the condition of the County economy. With the assistance of staff and fiscal experts, the Council estimates what the County's resources will be: revenue from property taxes, from the County income tax, transfer and recordation taxes, from State and Federal grants, and other sources.

Based on this information, the Council sets a limit on what the County can plan to spend. The "spending affordability" guidelines place a ceiling on property tax revenues, a ceiling on the total operating budget excluding certain grants and enterprise funds, and allocate the projected revenue among the agencies. Agencies are required to attach a prioritized list of reductions if they submit a budget that exceeds the spending affordability limit. There is some leeway for minor changes to the affordability limits, but the Charter specifies that any aggregate operating budget exceeding these guidelines requires the approval of seven rather than five Councilmembers on the nine-member Council. A similar process is used for the capital budget and six-year Capital Improvements Program (CIP).

### **Budget Schedule**

The County Executive submits proposed capital and operating budgets to the Council by January 15 and March 15, respectively. The Council then holds public hearings and



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deliberates on the spending and revenue proposals. By June 1, the Council must take final action on the budget for the fiscal year that begins July 1. The Executive has an item veto which the Council may override by six votes. As a result of a 1996 Charter amendment, a six-year CIP is prepared every other year in the second and fourth year of an Executive/Council term.

The capital budget includes spending for construction projects such as schools and roads and is financed largely through bonds. The operating budget includes expenses for personnel, programs and capital budget debt service (principal and interest payments on the bonds).