

May 24, 2012

Dear Friend,

I'm proud to announce that today the County Council adopted its FY13 operating budget which incorporates additional funding for critically needed services with a modest budget increase. It was another tough year, with our economy still struggling as our revenue from income tax and property tax lagged behind projections and all indicators now show that the recovery is going to continue to be a long and slow process.

Some of you may have followed the changes made by the state legislature, which included shifting funding of teacher pensions to local jurisdictions including Montgomery County. The General Assembly has also required counties to fund Maintenance of Effort (MOE), a guaranteed increase in per pupil funding for all public school systems in the state. We in Montgomery County value our world-class school system and the education it provides. MCPS put forward a reasonable and straight-forward MOE budget which the County Council unanimously approved.

Despite our financial constraints, we continued to build on the hard work that began last year when we made structural changes to the budget. This has allowed us to fund our much needed libraries, public safety agencies, youth development centers, senior programs, and affordable housing. Our county employees who have weathered our economic downturn with pay freezes and furloughs will be receiving a much deserved \$2,000 lump sum payment. Due to the financial uncertainties still upon us, we have had to continue to be cautious in our spending. However, this budget takes an important step toward restoring some of the painful cuts we needed to make in the past, while ensuring we provide for our residents and especially our neediest and most vulnerable population.

I have included some important budget highlights below. For a full list and more detailed information on the FY13 Operating Budget, please click on the following link:

[FY13 County Council Budget Agreement](#)

Supporting our libraries (I serve as the Council's Lead for Libraries):

- Restored 9.5% of the library budget, an increase of \$2.9 million from FY12
- Added additional operating hours to targeted libraries including those in my district and expanded Sunday hours
- Added \$200,000 for books and audio materials

Supporting our "safety net" services:

- Added \$500,000 for Local Energy Assistance Rebate (I was pleased to author this initiative, which was approved by the council unanimously)
- Added \$750,000 for 7,500 additional visits to primary care clinics for people with low income and no insurance
- Approved \$500,000 to increase the county's contribution for Working Parents Assistance Child Care Subsidies
- Increased Working Families Income Supplement by \$1.2 million

Supporting our Fire and Rescue and Police:

- Added \$16 million to Fire and Rescue budget over FY12 and funded new recruit classes
- Increased Police budget by 6.9% over FY12 which funded additional officers in each district of the county as well as increased the number of detectives (including dedicated detectives for District 6) and new recruits.

Supporting education:

- Fully funded MCPS' \$2.1 billion budget (which included an MOE required 2.6% increase)
- Fully funded Montgomery College's \$267.5 million budget

Supporting our seniors and at risk youth:

- Expanded escorted transportation services for an additional 550 one-way trips for seniors through the "Smooth Ride Program"
- Provided additional home-delivered meals to seniors who are chronically ill, frail or disabled
- Restored Conservation Corps to provide academic and vocational training and services for high-risk and gang involved youth
- Increased funding for drug prevention and intervention services at Crossroads and Upcounty Youth Centers

The newly adopted FY13-18 Capital Improvements Program has a number of projects for our thriving and growing schools and communities including:

- Funding for Northeast Elementary School #8 as well as 19 other schools and/or modernizations
- Funding for Montgomery College's Germantown campus sciences building and Rockville campus student services building and parking garage
- Construction funding for the North Potomac Recreation Center and the Germantown Town Center Urban Park
- Funding for the roadway widening along Snouffer School Road near the County's Webb Tract project

While this budget year has again been difficult, I am pleased that we have done the right thing for our residents by prioritizing and allocating our funds where they are most needed. I believe our budget is one that utilizes our existing resources to provide the most important and vital services while maintaining the structural integrity so crucial to protecting our fiscal health and our coveted AAA bond rating.

I want to thank all of you for your input, perspective and support during this budget season. Your active engagement is crucial to me as we continue our work here on the Council. Please continue to reach out to my office throughout the year to voice your thoughts on issues that may arise.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Craig Rice". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Craig Rice, Council Member, District 2