

February 2021

## COMMUNITY CONCERNS

## COVID RELATED

- **Food insecurity:** We continue working with the Department of Health and Human Services, the Montgomery County Food Council, and the schools to ensure no one goes hungry in Silver Spring. We continue exploring potential satellite sites to augment the excellent work Clifton Park Food & Service Hub. These sites would serve additional areas in Silver Spring; and would work in collaboration with various other groups providing other supportive services. We are also exploring ways that Shepherd's Table capacity to prepare food can be maximized to serve local communities. Much of this information is readily available at the now bilingual weblink <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/covid19/get-help/food.html>
- **Access to Covid testing:** We continue working with the County's Public Information Office and the Office of Community Partnership to get the word out regarding where testing is available. It is critical that as vaccines become more available we continue testing – and adhering to the essential protocols of mask wearing, social distancing, and limiting gatherings. This complements the many other efforts throughout the Region where testing is also available. A list of all available sites doing testing – including at the Silver Spring Civic Building and the old Adventist Hospital in Takoma Park - is available at <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/covid19/testing.html> .
- **Vaccination:** We are collaboration across County agencies to ensure the people that qualify know that it's time for their vaccination. Additionally, we have begun a major effort to get everyone pre-registered for when their group is called. However, State protocols and the availability of vaccines complicate the work – and the messaging.
- **Housing protection:** The Renter's Alliance is conducting one of their Town Halls to inform the community on the status of rental assistance and moratorium on rental evictions. With winter upon us, the Health and Human Services Department is working to ensure no one sleeps outside – particularly during the colder nights. Assistance is best accessible on the link <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/covid19/get-help/housing-assistance.html>

## NON-COVID

- **Purple Line:** The work to build the Purple Line continues their works in certain sections of the Line under the auspices of the Maryland Department of Transportation and a revamped agreement with part of the original private partners. Increasing disruption to traffic flow is expected in the weeks to come. Major pending situations include the closing of the Spring St bridge, extensive work on Bonifant St, Wayne Ave, and University Blvd. We will be working extensively with the community to get the word out on traffic flow impact. We are

also working with the Purple Line Corridor Coalition and others to ensure construction disruptions are abated in the various commercial hubs along the Purple Line in Silver Spring. We are using our established relationships with these hubs to work with the businesses – and also inform them of available Covid grants.

- **Downtown Silver Spring and Adjoining Communities Master Plan.** An emerging issue in this process is how the downtown area transitions to the non-commercial, more residential areas. The “missing middle” concept is being intensely discussed. The Planning Department is finishing their community outreach for this phase and will soon be preparing their finding for a presentation to the Planning Board. The various Silver Spring Advisory Groups, civic groups, business associations, and others have had the opportunity to comment via a variety of group meetings and public forums.

## ADVISORY GROUPS

### Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board:

- The SSCAB regular full board meeting in January focused on a conversation with Councilmember at Large Will Jawando on homelessness and related issues. The three Committees had an exceptional joint meeting to discuss issues of race and equity. Councilmember Rice and other special guests provided an engaging panel for an in-depth conversation. In February, the SSCAB have two major conversations: (a) Council President Hucker; and, (b) Chief Administrative Officer Rich Madaleno.
- The SSCAB will host its annual conversation with Park & Planning on “real estate developments in Silver Spring”. This is an opportunity to better understand the recently built, under construction, and proposed developments.
- The SSCAB, functioning as part of the Silver Spring Covid Community Committee, will participate in a Forum of the broader County CCC to engage the community in encouraging vaccination pre-registration and battling vaccine hesitancy. In preparation for the meeting, they will participate with the East County CAB in a special presentation by Dr. Gyles on the subject.

### Silver Spring Urban District Advisory Committee:

- At the January meeting, the SSUDAC heard a presentation on the operations of the Urban District; and approved a Letter of Advice on downtown safety and security. In February the Committee will have a discussion on the proposed Business Improvement District.
- The Silver Spring Urban District Operations again assisted with snow-cleaning and related work during the recent multiple day snow event; and continued its work with the street eateries in downtown Silver Spring. The Georgia Ave / Bonifant Street DINE was removed as winter settles in and adjacent restaurants asked for more curb-side pick up spaces. However, two new eateries will soon be installed: One on Veterans Plaza; and the other on

the Shared Street, Newell Street. Use of the eateries will be monitored to adjust time and resources. The hiring process for the new Silver Spring Urban District Manager should be complete by February, with a projected start date for the new Manager of March 1<sup>st</sup>.

#### **Silver Spring Arts & Entertainment District Working Group:**

- The group continues to meet weekly bringing together some of the key art groups in the District to share their experience during the pandemic and explore possibilities of working together in various projects. Major focus continues on how venues can access some of the new Federal resources that have become available; and discussion on how to transition out of the Covid pandemic to begin a return to pre-Covid level of activity later this year.

#### **County's Retail & Restaurant Re-Opening Work Group:**

- *(In collaboration with the other work groups engaged in the re-opening efforts, the Director for the Silver Spring Region is leading the Retail & Restaurant Work Group. The group meets every other week, bringing together small businesses, the various chambers, and County officials to address the current issues regarding re-opening safely.)* The Group has provided valuable advice and insight to help guide some of the County's initiatives, i.e.: re-opening indoor dining with limited capacity; Economic Development Grants; and curb-side pick-up options.

#### **Other Advisory Groups and Efforts:**

- There are many other internal and external efforts in which the SSRSC and the SSUD are involved, providing input and establishing collaboration. Some of these include:
  - Silver Spring Transportation Management District (focusing on commuter options)
  - Long Branch Partners (focusing on emergency management)
  - Chamber of Commerce Security Calls (focusing on homelessness)
  - Food Council Coordinating Calls (focusing on coordinating and delivering meals)