

Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board FY 2019 Annual Report

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1. Elected Officials

In September 2018, the budgeting process was discussed. Deborah Lambert, Management and Budget Specialist at Montgomery County, presented on the anatomy and process of the Operating Budget (services) and Capitol Budget (facilities).¹ District 5 Councilmember Tom Hucker briefed the board about Montgomery County's experience with budgets. He indicated that he sees a multitude of assets in the county, however there are also unmet needs. The council stated that the passing of a balanced budget every year has helped the county maintain an AAA rating from three major agencies. When requesting funding for projects, the councilmember recommended the SSCAB and community organizations to lobby the council, testify at hearing, make personal visits to the council offices, and provide a simplified and consistent message.

In November 2018, no county elected officials were present at the Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board meeting.

In December 2018, State Delegations from Districts 18 & 2 were present at the Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board meeting for discussion on priorities and plans for our area. The representatives included; Lorig Charkoudian (D20), Al Carr (D18), Jeff Waldstreicher (D18), Jared Solomon (D18), Emily Shetty (D18) and Jheanelle Wilkins (D20).

The January meeting was cancelled due to weather. In March 2019, Montgomery County's CAO, Andrew Kleine identifies county executive Marc Elrich's budget priorities, which attempted to address a \$100M shortfall. These priorities include access to early childcare, regional hubs to promote small business, and aggressive code enforcement to improve housing conditions.

In April 2019, Councilmember Tom Hucker was working on Oakview neighborhood issues, including incomplete sidewalks, poor lighting, poorly maintained properties and pedestrian safety on New Hampshire Ave (MD 650).

¹ 44% of the county's budget was spent on MC Public Schools, where as 38% on county government

In addition, Pete Tomao, Legislative Aide for Evan Glass, reported on a proclamation recognized by the council; which recognizes the International Transgender Day of Visibility. The council also promotes an initiative that would permit free public transportation for school-aged children.

In June 2019, Councilmember Will Jawando kicked off a Library Listening Tour on June 12 at the Silver Spring Library. During his Listening Tour, he visited all 21 libraries across the County to engage in community conversations about what residents would like to experience at their local library, and to learn about other concerns throughout the community.

2. Plans and Initiatives

There was community dialogue with representatives from Stan Edwards of MoCo EPA, Christina Contreras, Steve Thomas and Lee Hutcherson from the Department of Permitting Service, who offered insights into the process, challenges and plans for DPS.

In January 2019, PEPCO, Purple Line and Studio Plaza and other construction updates were provided.²

In February 2019, we had a conversation with Montgomery Parks Police Chief, Darryl McSwain. McSwain stated the Park Police were focused on current efforts on five well-used trails in dense urban areas. The Park Police also considered tech investment in drones, a Park Police App, Blue Light Call Boxes, multi-lingual materials and anonymous tip lines. In addition, we met with Earl Stoddard, Director of the Montgomery County Office of Emergency Management & Homeland Security (OEMHS). Stoddard noted the Arliss Street's, or 'Flower Branch', gas explosion of 2016 was a major event for the county, which led the agency to codify lessons for the future. OEMHS is looking into changes to lessen the local impact of climate change in 10-25 years.

In March 2019, the deputy director of MCDOT Emil Wolanin reported on revenues, an increase in parking rates and extended hours schedule for 2021.

In April 2019, we had a community conversation with representatives of local non-profit organizations; Wider Circle, Community Bridge, CHEER Cornerstone Montgomery, Ethiopian Community Center, Friends of the Library and Montgomery County Renters Alliance.³

In May 2019, we had a conversation with Sam Oji, chief of Montgomery County DOT's Department of Enhanced Mobility and Senior Programs, and Odile Brunetto Director of Aging and Disability Services (the county's Dept. of HHS) in regards to disability services, transportation and access issues. Odile stated that 87,000 residents declared being disabled, of which 6500 residents are under 18. In addition, the county's Compliance Manager of ADA Title II reported

² PEPCO had a major project that required tearing up Fenton Street through downtown Silver Spring, Montgomery College, and Takoma Park.

³ A Wider Circle is well known for its furniture program, but also provides back-to-work job training skills. Community Bridges offers programs for girls and families as well as mentoring, and college and career programming. CHEER identifies community needs/goals, and provides information and resources. Cornerstone is the county's largest provider of integrated behavioral health services (i.e. treatment, housing and employment programs.). Friends of the Library, Montgomery County supports the county's twenty-one public library branches. It also operates two used bookstores in Rockville and in Silver Spring at the 'old library' on Colesville Road. The Ethiopian Community Center provides community services to all Ethiopians in Maryland promoting self-sufficiency and cultural enrichment. Montgomery County Renters Alliance has the mission to advance renters' rights and security through advocacy, education and support.

that the county is working with DOT to ensure accessibility around construction projects, specifically Purple Line stations.

In June 2019, we had discussions with Silver Spring Campus of Montgomery College (MC). MC is the largest community college in Maryland.

3. Agencies and Non Profits

In September 2018, Sgt. Ian Clark and Lt. Eric Bunting of the Third District reported tragic pedestrian fatalities. Sgt Ian noted auto-theft is still the most common crime.

In October 2018, a Commander from the county reported problems with several downtown businesses, concerning violent acts.

Division Chief of Operations John Kinsley of MCFRS and staff are looking forward to working with the new County Executive, Marc Elrich. Mr. Kinsley reported that there were no major fire incidents to report, but warned pedestrians and drivers to be vigilant with recent clock changes and dark evening commutes.

In December 2018, The Planning Department shared an abridged version of their annual presentation on “What is being built in downtown Silver Spring”. The SSUDAC had three new members joining the Committee.

Department of Transportation presented information on how the bike-sharing program will grow in Silver Spring and other areas of the county to include scooters. Many questions regarding safety, of both riders and pedestrian, the urban clutter the scooters will create. DOT is working with the vendors to mitigate these concerns before the roll out. The SSTMD has two new members appointed by the SSCAB joining the Committee.

CAT members have expressed that procedurally it remains unclear exactly where their advice can affect change in the construction process. The MTA and the PLTC have an abundance of information online, and the CAT meetings are informative, however frustration still exists when members identify issues that may be contractually beyond the project’s scope.

In March 2019, Deputy Commander, Eric Bunting of the 3rd District reported that residential and commercial burglaries were down compared to last year. A new app has also has been introduced to monitor police activity from the county police website. ⁴

In April 2019, Suzanne Paul from The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (MNCPPC) reported the Parks department is performing a study in response to the growing demand of dog parks development in Montgomery County.⁵

⁴ <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/montgomery-county-police/id1444672195>

⁵ Ms. Paul provided a review of the methodology for identifying need and selecting sites. Six sites are currently under review as candidates. The recent Ellsworth Park cost approximately \$250-300K to build. Guidelines require dog parks to be no closer than 65 feet to playgrounds and 200 feet from residences.

In May 2019, Lt. Eric Bunting of the Third District reported that crime has slightly increased in every category, in contrast to 2018. However, home burglaries were down.

4. SSCAB Committees and Director's Report

In September 2018, the Neighborhoods Committee discussed homelessness and the elements of Just Cause Eviction.⁶ Tree Committee looked into the State of Solar Energy in Montgomery County. CED (Commercial and Economic Development) Committee featured Worksource Montgomery.

In addition, Regional Director Reemberto noted the importance of Source of the Spring and Montgomery County Media as valuable sources for local news and information.

In October 2018, Neighborhoods Committee covered hate crimes, while CED Committee discussed time restrictions for alcohol sales. TREE covered pedestrian safety.

Silver Spring Transportation Management District (TMD) Advisory Committee approved Harriet Quinn of Four Corners and James (Chris) Perry of Downtown Silver Spring.

CED encouraged all members to attend a committee meeting on November 26th. He announced the timely discussion with DPS on ROW, noting that in 2019 Purple Line construction will create challenges throughout the service area. The County Executive Marc Elrich gathered a 180-member transition team to schedule four public listening meetings.

In December 2018, Neighborhoods Committee held a conversation with school principals in November, stating the need continue to include adequate Mental Health counselling support, summer-school programs, internet access and adequate space for growing enrollments. January meeting will be held in Takoma Park to address tenants' issues. TREE held a community meeting on SHA's plans to widen 495 and 270. The January meeting looked at status and plans for SHA's Georgia Avenue Improvement plans. CED did not meet in November, while January plans were centered on workforce issues, especially preparation for youth.

Reemberto Rodriguez, Director of Silver Spring Regional Center reminded committee meeting planners to send notes the following day so that he can assist with planning and promotion. He recommended members to watch for news on the upcoming January Budget Forum with new County Executive Marc Elrich. He is also planning to send an online questionnaire that will ask members to note the community and organization meetings they attend in an effort to increase networking and coordination.

In February 2019, the Neighborhoods Committee meeting primarily focused on the strengths and challenges of the Arts and Entertainment organizations in the region. The TREE Committee meeting highlighted progress and updates on the MD-355 and MD-29 BRT.

⁶ There was no just cause eviction protection. Delegate Janelle Wilkins submitted a bill to the Maryland House for consideration. Later in the year, the 'Just Cause' bill passed its first review with support from County Executive Elrich and the county council.

In March 2019, Regional Director Reemberto promoted the March 13th community conversation on racial equity and social justice to be held at the Civic Center. In addition, the director provided an update on the Discovery Channel move; he noted that last year's Discovery only occupied 50% of the building and that 300-600 employees will remain in downtown Silver Spring.

In April 2019, Neighborhoods Committee noted the success and shortcoming for arts groups in the county, and emphasis on the importance of supporting these communities. TREE Committee covered financing programs through Montgomery County Green Bank.

In conclusion, 2019 has been a productive year for SSCAB that featured elected officials, agencies, schools, small businesses and community organizations.

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