

Take Action: Contact the County Council and Ask Them to Fund the People’s Counsel

[On March 15, 2023, Montgomery County Executive Marc Elrich recommended that the County Council appropriate monies for the Office of the People’s Counsel in the FY24 Operating Budget. This is a high priority for the Civic Federation and its associations and individual members. MCCF members are encouraged to send letters of support for refunding the Office of the People’s Counsel to the Montgomery County Council County as soon as possible.]

Members of the Montgomery County Council
Werner Council Office Building
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

RE: Funding the Office of the

People’s Counsel, FY 2024 Operating Budget

Dear Councilmember:

I am writing to request that funding be restored to the Office of the People’s Counsel (OPC), an agency that is authorized by the County Code to represent the public interest in the County’s land use regulatory process. The County Executive has recommended renewed funding in his FY23 Recommended Budget.

Continuing to withhold funding for this agency is not in the public interest and defunding the OPC has led to an imbalance of representation on issues related to land use.

The Office serves to protect the public interest in land use hearings by promoting full and fair representation of relevant issues to achieve

balanced administrative records. The Office also provides technical assistance to residents so that they can effectively participate in the County’s land use control process. Reestablishing the OPC will help to restore a balance of trust and integrity to the planning and public engagement process.

Furthermore, the County Code requires that prior to introduction, any proposed Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) be reviewed by a ZTA Advisory Group that includes the OPC. One of the reasons often cited by the Planning Department for the complete rewrite of the County’s Zoning Ordinance (which was a seven-year process) was to discourage the use of Zoning Text Amendments that bypass the master planning and

MORE

OPC Funding Letter, cont.

land use public processes. However, since the Zoning Rewrite was adopted, there have been over 100 ZTAs proposed by a small number of Councilmembers. All of the ZTAs were proposed without the benefit of the OPC review.

Other Maryland jurisdictions have established offices of the People's Counsel, including Prince George's County, Baltimore County, and Harford County. It's time to restore Montgomery County's Office of the People's Counsel.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit our recommendation for the FY24 budget on this very important matter of public interest.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

CONTACTS

Here is the contact information for the Montgomery County Councilmembers:

■ Gabe Albornoz
Councilmember.Albornoz@montgomerycountymd.gov

■ Marilyn Balcombe
Councilmember.Balcombe@montgomerycountymd.gov

■ Natali Fani-González
Councilmember.Fani-Gonzalez@montgomerycountymd.gov

■ Andrew Friedson
Councilmember.Friedson@montgomerycountymd.gov

■ Evan Glass
Councilmember.Glass@montgomerycountymd.gov

■ Will Jawando
Councilmember.Jawando@montgomerycountymd.gov

■ Sidney Katz
Councilmember.Katz@montgomerycountymd.gov

■ Dawn Luedtke
Councilmember.Luedtke@montgomerycountymd.gov

■ Kristin Mink
Councilmember.Mink@montgomerycountymd.gov

■ Kate Stewart
Councilmember.Stewart@montgomerycountymd.gov