



Dear Council President Ervin:

February 13, 2011

**Re: Please oppose MC/PG 112-11**

I am writing on behalf of the Audubon Naturalist Society and its membership, regarding the County Executive's late filed bill, MC/PG112-11. We only learned of this filing on Monday, February 4, and we question this fast-tracked process, absent public testimony, on an action which could significantly impact Montgomery's Park system.

Nationally recognized five times as one of the best in the nation, our parks are often mentioned as a major draw for businesses locating in Montgomery. They are part of the fundamental fabric of our communities countywide, and deserve much more consideration than this hastily filed bill provides.

We oppose subjecting the now mandatory tax, on which Parks depend for a minimum level of maintenance and operation, to diversion of these funds dictated by the Executive or Council. There is no way to maintain a top-notch park system under such a scenario, one which could change with each election cycle. We have seen for example, the raiding the Transportation Trust Fund to plug budget holes to the detriment of needed transit projects..

The Park Police have proven to be an important asset in maintaining the safety of our parks. Simply put, the MNCPPC knows the park system like no other agency, and successfully manages their Park Police force with a track record to prove it. It is instructive to look at the Baltimore experience for lessons learned. They merged their Parks Police into the city force and crime in parks has increased exponentially since the merger was undertaken.

MC/PG112-11 presents a scenario where both funds and focus would inevitably shift to the detriment of Montgomery's Parks, We urge you to oppose this misguided attempt to solve budget woes.

Sincerely,

Dolores Millmoe  
ANS Maryland Conservation Advocate