Montgomery County Library Board and Friends of the Library, Montgomery County

FY 2020 Advocacy Toolkit

Montgomery County Executive and County Council

County Executive - https://montgomerycountymd.gov/exec/

Marc Elrich (D)*

County Council -
https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/council/

At-Large	At-Large	At-Large
Hans Riemer (D)	**Gabe Albornoz (D)***	**Evan Glass (D)***

At-Large	District 1	District 2
Will Jawando (D)*	**Andrew Friedson (D)***	**Craig Rice (D)**

Lead to Libraries   **District 5**

District 3	District 4	
Sidney Katz (D)	**Nancy Navarro (D)**	**Tom Hucker (D)**

County Council President

*Designates new officeholder

County Executive Vision Statement
"A More Equitable and Inclusive Montgomery County"
Below is a list of priorities and measures for County Executive Elrich. The full statement can be found at: https://montgomerycountymd.gov/government/visionStatement.html

Thriving Youth and Families
- Percent of children ready for kindergarten
- Academic achievement gap
- Life expectancy gap

A Growing Economy
- Number of net new businesses
- Number of family sustaining jobs
- Employment gap

A Greener County
- Greenhouse Gas emissions
- Recycling rate
- Resident satisfaction with code enforcement

Easier Commutes
- Average commuting time
- Percent using alternative transportation for work, school or shopping
- Percent of roads rated in "good" condition

A More Affordable and Welcoming County
- Percent of households that are housing burdened
- Access to affordable child care
- Food insecurity rate

Safe Neighborhoods
- Number of gang-related violent crimes
- Property crime rate
- Number of pedestrian-involved traffic accidents

Effective Sustainable Government
- Percent of county contracts with minority, female, disabled-owned and local business
- Resident satisfaction with value for tax dollars
- Bond rating

FY 2020 Operating Budget Information from County Executive Elrich

https://www2.montgomerycountymd.gov/mcgportalapps/Press_Detail.aspx?Item_ID=22685

County Executive Elrich held public budget forums on the following dates:

Monday, January 14, 7 p.m.
Wednesday, January 16, 7 p.m.
Tuesday, January 22, 7 p.m.
Wednesday, January 23, 7 p.m.
Monday, February 4, 7 p.m.

For more information on the budget from the County Executive's office, visit:
https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/exec/index.html

For more information on the budget from the County Council, visit:
https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/COUNCIL/budget_summary/index.html

Education Budget Meetings

https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/Rice/Resources/Images/Forum2019.jpg

Wednesday, February 20, 6:30 p.m.
Neelsville Middle School, Cafeteria
11700 Neelsville Church Road, Germantown

Wednesday, February 27, 6:30 p.m.
Col. E. Brooke Lee Middle School, Cafeteria
11800 Monticello Ave, Silver Spring

Wednesday, March 6, 6:30 p.m.
Rockville High School, Cafeteria
2100 Baltimore Road, Rockville

Monday, March 11, 6:30 p.m.
Bethesda Chevy Chase High School, Cafeteria
4301 East West Highway, Bethesda

Wednesday, March 27, 6:30 p.m.
Montgomery College – Takoma Park/Silver Spring Campus, Cultural Arts Center (CAC), Theatre 1
7995 Georgia Ave, Silver Spring

Montgomery County Library Board
Friends of the Library, Montgomery County, Maryland, Inc.

FY 2020 Joint Position Statement

The Montgomery County Library Board and Friends of the Library, Montgomery County have jointly prepared a position statement on the FY 2020 Operating Budget of Montgomery County Public Libraries. We wish to make our statement clear to the County Executive and the County Council:

We see several issues involving the FY 2020 Operating Budget:

- Early Childhood Education,
- Economic Development,
- Equity, and
- MCPL facilities maintenance.

We have noted the County Executive's determination to devote more resources than are currently being expended to fund an expansion of early childhood education efforts in support of his priority of ensuring all our children are ready for kindergarten.

Therefore, we urge the County Executive to direct some of these new resources to MCPL's well-established *All Children Excel* (ACE) program. This program has a successful history of introducing increasing numbers of young children (and their caregivers) to the joys and possibilities of literacy, the bedrock of any effort to ensure children are ready for kindergarten. Last year, each of the 65,000 children in Montgomery County under the age of five, on average, interacted with their library branches about once a week. Five years ago, that average was about once every two weeks. Thus, over the last few years, MCPL has made increasing numbers of children better prepared for kindergarten whether they also attended a formal early childhood education program such as Head Start or a program in a private school. We believe that these MCPL programs offer an immediate, cost-effective way to help all children under five become better ready for school.
To this end, we ask that money be allocated in the FY 2020 budget to hire a full-time outreach children's librarian who would disseminate MCPL's literacy materials, resources, and methods to all the institutions of early childhood care and education in the county, thus continuing to increase the rate of interaction between our residents under the age of five and the resources of our libraries.

MCPL also supports the County Executive's economic growth priority with dozens of programs and courses available to those looking for work, those wishing to start their own business, those needing to write a business plan, others who want to develop a workable IT system, those who need to understand business accounting better, and much more. A resident in

Montgomery County can even go to the library and enroll in an on-line program to earn a high school diploma and a career certification, the very foundation of an ability to participate in our economy.
Twenty-two people have graduated from this program and we ask that the FY 2020 budget provide monies for additional five scholarships.

Both the County Executive and the Council President have emphasized that equity is an important driving force behind their priorities. In that regard, not all library branches are open for the same number of hours each week. Thus, all MCPL programs and services are not available to all residents on an equitable basis.
We therefore ask that the administration fund additional hours at Damascus and Long Branch in FY 2020 so that the residents in those areas have equal access to all MCPL's offerings, including the expanded programs recommended above.

Finally, for FY 2019 the County Council agreed to a new performance-based approach by the Department of General Services to contracting for custodial services in public libraries. It did so with the caveat that it would review this new approach in six months. That time is now, and we ask that the County Council hold such a review.

In the Know – *Stay up to date on issues concerning libraries by signing up for this monthly publication for library advocates at -* *https://www.folmc.org/*

Advocacy Questions and Talking Points

These brief talking points and questions can be used as inspiration when you attend meetings with County Council members or interact with the County Executive while attending budget forums.

You should differentiate your approach depending on the event you attend. If you are at a budget forum, you will only have an opportunity to ask one question and possibly a follow-up. Your questions should be focused and short. If you are at a reception, you may have more time with an officeholder, so you can expand the conversation and learn more about his/her library experience.

Visit the MCPL website to view the State of the Library video for more statistics and talking points: https://montgomerycountymd.gov/library/about/index.html

Talking Points

- Provide an example of a time when branch hours were limited and hindered you from completing a project or being able to visit the library.
- Library hours across all branches are not equitable. We ask that the administration fund additional hours at Damascus and Long Branch.
- Libraries directly support early childhood education with programs like MCPL's All Children Excel (ACE) which has been introducing increasing numbers of children under five to the joys and rewards of books, the necessary prerequisite for literacy.
  - Last year, each of the 65,000 children in Montgomery County under the age of five, on average, interacted with their library branches about once a week.
  - Five years ago, that average was once every two weeks.
- If you have visited a library that has completed a Refresh, speak to what that meant for you and your community.
- Libraries are a valuable resource for economic growth as they provide programs and courses available to those looking for work, those writing a business plan, and much more.

Questions to Ask

- How do you plan to support libraries in the upcoming budget process?
- Do you know about the resources available to those looking for work or working towards their degree?
- Can I tell you about the work libraries are doing to support early childhood education?
- Can you tell me about your experiences with libraries? Which branch do you typically visit?

Tips for In-Person Meetings

Keep these tips in mind as you prepare for and attend meetings with County Council Members.

<u>Before the Meeting</u>

- ✓ Review the advocacy platform, talking points, and questions to ask.
- ✓ Do some research on your Member's position and public statements on libraries.
- ✓ Develop your story and practice with your family and friends.
- ✓ Have a plan, before going into the meeting, as to who will speak to what.

<u>During the Meeting</u>

- ✓ Tell your story and explain what libraries mean to you and your community.
- ✓ Talk through the main points in the advocacy platform.
- ✓ Make the ask.
- ✓ Thank them for their time and ask for information so that you can follow-up and stay in contact.

<u>After the Meeting</u>

- ✓ Write a handwritten note to thank the Member for their time and reiterate your position.

Other Ways to Communicate with Elected Officials

Email/Letters

When writing your email or letter to your elected official, it's important to develop your message in a clear and concise way, but also weave in your own story. Provide facts about how libraries impact our County and how you have personally benefitted from their services. Provide your contact information for follow-up, and be sure to send another follow-up message in a couple months if you don't hear back. Use this method of communication to develop a longer, detailed message in a more formal way.

Telephone Calls

Calling your elected officials' office is a good way to talk through the issue and is considered one of the most effective forms of advocacy. Having a conversation with a staffer or the official allows you to ask questions and receive answers immediately. Follow the same guidelines you would for meeting in-person and always be respectful.

Social Media

Social media provides a quick and efficient way to send a message to elected officials. When posting, be sure to keep your message to the point and on topic. Use this method of communication to provide a public statement on your position about libraries and to quickly explain your thoughts on an issue. If you have a social media account, you can follow elected officials who have a presence on social media as well as the County Executive and the County Council offices.

Facebook
The Facebook platform offers a unique Town Hall feature that you can turn on in your settings. This allows you to see who your local, state, and federal elected officials are and comment with a "Constituent Badge." This feature provides you with the ability to comment on an issue without having to worry about whether or not the elected official knows you are a constituent.

[To turn your "Constituent Badge" on, visit the Town Hall feature. From the settings page, you can edit your address and turn on your badge, voting reminders, and Town Hall updates. Use the Directory to view your local, state, and federal elected officials.]

Twitter
Twitter is another quick way to communicate with legislators, but it is more difficult to show that you are a constituent with limited characters. This platform is a great source of quick County and individual elected official news.

<u>Email Lists</u>
While an email list isn't technically social media, signing up for County Council and County Executive mailing lists are a good way to stay up to date and find out about upcoming events.

Tips on How to Deliver "The Ask" to a Policymaker

Opportunities are few to have a policymaker's full attention on issues of importance to you. For policymakers, crowded calendars and the need to address multiple issues simultaneously make it difficult to give their full attention on any particular issue of importance to you and for you to deliver it in person. That's why communicating with policymakers by writing letters, email and social media to express your point of view on your issue is so important to an advocacy campaign.

But talking to a policymaker at a community event is possible. Many of you are active with other groups that sponsor events where Montgomery County policymakers are invited to attend. These are excellent venues to communicate your point of view, but only if you are prepared. Below are some tips on maximizing these opportunities.

- Look for opportunities to have one-on-one chats with policymakers.
- Be brief. Policymakers want to meet with as many constituents as possible. You will leave a positive impression if you demonstrate that you respect the demands on their time.
- Stay focused on priority messages/asks:
    - ✓ A strong message is: "By increasing hours at the Damascus and Long Branch branches, we can ensure that all residents have an equal opportunity to use library resources. Please ensure that MCPL will have adequate budget funding to meet those community needs."
    - ✓ A weak message is: "We want County support for public libraries to serve the citizens of MC."
- Be cordial. Don't argue.
- Be responsive to requests for information.
- Ask for a response.
- Send a thank you letter, email or social media post that includes your "ask".

Remember, be prepared. Be informed. Be likeable. Be persistent.

Good Luck!

How to Tell a Compelling Story

Meeting with elected officials can be intimidating, but it is important to remember that they want to hear from you as a constituent. Keep the following in mind as you prepare for meeting with or writing to County Council Members and the County Executive ahead of the upcoming budget forums and meetings.

emotional connection   *relevance*   *call to action*

1. Have a goal in mind – enter your meeting or write your letter with an end goal
2. Include the community – within the details of your personal story, try to include examples of how your experiences are shared by the rest of the community
3. Have an ask – never leave an office or end a letter without asking for something (refer back to the platform!)
4. Don't just read – while the platform is important, you want to make sure to tell your story within the context of the overall goals for the budget
5. Structure your story like a narrative
   a. Develop a beginning with background information
   b. Structure the middle with the main reason for the meeting and information about the impact
   c. End with what you want them to do and how you can work together
6. Always be respectful

Storytelling Worksheet
Use the space below to plan the components of your personal story

Goals for the story	Details to share	Hook and ask