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

ADVOCACY TOOLKIT FY2022
Presented at the Joint Meeting
February 10, 2021

What is in this Toolkit

This advocacy toolkit is a resource for library advocates and provides information on the Montgomery County budget process, contact information for decision makers, and strategies for how to engage them to ask for support of our FY 2022 budget priorities. Due to the pandemic, these approaches will be virtual. The toolkit is prepared by members of the Montgomery County Library Board and Friends of the Library, Montgomery County and is updated annually based on the budget climate, MCPL needs, and updated forms of communication.

This toolkit contains the following:

- Joint Position Paper on budget priorities.
- Suggested talking points.
- Information about the key people in the county's decision-making process.
- Information about the new budget procedures that the County will use for the budget and how these procedures affect what we need to do to gain support.
- Recommendations on near-term actions we all can take.

MCPL Usage during the Pandemic

Library usage has changed across the country during the pandemic and the same holds true for Montgomery County. We believe our advocacy strategies can be best positioned when we educate decision makers on the relevance of libraries and how they have helped us cope in big and small ways during the public health crisis. To this end, we ask that you share how you use MCPL branches during the period since March 2020, using a short questionnaire that will be emailed to joint meeting participants. We will use this information in material we provide to the decision makers.

We also ask you to communicate this message with our elected officials as the FY 2022 budget process unfolds. Specifically, we are looking for people to testify via video or in writing to the County Executive and the County Council during their budget hearings in April.

Background

Montgomery County Public Libraries (MCPL) has responded quickly to the COVID-19 crisis by assuring that its services continue even though public access to the library buildings is closed. In particular, last July MCPL implemented contactless pick-up of books. It also expanded and simplified its online services including access to e-books and other materials and enhanced online events such as Storytime as well as programs for teens, and adults.

Our joint position paper supports MCPL's efforts to respond to the crisis and points out that supporting library services is even more important in a time of isolation.

The following paper sets forth detailed discussion of these points.

FOLMC and MCPL Board Position Paper (DRAFT)

Dear County Executive Elrich:

Friends of the Library, Montgomery County and the Montgomery County Library Board recognize the unique uncertainties you face from the pandemic as you formulate your Fiscal Year 2022 budget proposal. We also witness every day the uniquely sustaining role our libraries play for all of us in the county as we live through this pandemic.

Given these two factors we have one priority at this time:

That you sustain funding for MCPL to enable it to continue operating at the manner and level it has achieved through its rigorous and imaginative reorganization of its services and resources.

MCPL's services have become critical in our enduring isolation. They are vital to our cultural, social, and economic health and our psychological wellbeing. Despite having to close its doors in March, our MCPL leadership has devised new ways to serve us. It greatly expanded digital offerings and made them easier to access on tablets, e-readers, phones, and computers. Readers can also pick-up physical books curbside through online or telephone reservations.

From March through mid-November, MCPL has circulated almost 2.7 million newly borrowed physical and electronic items while renewing more than 900,000 items. Montgomery County residents, your constituents, clearly want and need these services.

In addition, MCPL has shifted many of its programs, such as Storytime, to interactive, virtual presentations. It has also maintained its telephone reference services that provide the public with access to professional library services, particularly for those without online access.

MCPL has made significant efforts to alleviate the Digital Divide. Library parking lots have become well-used Wi-Fi hotspots and the system created "Internet to Go," a lending program for 250 mobile hotspots.

These internet initiatives are yet another aspect of how our libraires promote racial and social equity; all its resources and programs are available to everyone. And finally, with all their early childhood literacy programs, our libraries attack the biggest engine of inequity in the county--lack of kindergarten readiness--a condition that you have identified vividly as our county's number one pre-pandemic priority.

As a result of these efforts Montgomery County Public Libraries remains a mainstay of life in our beleaguered county. We strongly urge that you do your utmost to protect and nurture this vibrant institution and its vital services.

Sonja Roberts, Chair, Montgomery County Library Board
Pam Saussy, President, Friends of the Library, Montgomery County

What can you do between now and March 15?

The County Executive and his staff are now considering his March 15 budget presentation to the County Council. In view of the current situation, it will be difficult to interact personally with members of the Montgomery County Council and other Montgomery County decision makers.

You can, however, do the following:

Call, send a letter, email, or post on social media based on the joint position paper and your own experience with our libraries (especially during the pandemic) to one or more of the decision makers listed below and, if you can, get two other people to do the same. Prior to March 15, County Executive Elrich is the first priority, but communications with Council members are also valuable. It will be even more so when Mr. Elrich's budget proposal is in their hands after March 15.

In that communication, please:
- Include the priorities noted in the joint position paper or use the talking points below.
- Describe how you, or people you know, have used MCPL services during the current crisis.
- In your own words, say why you think it is important to continue support for the MCPL.
- Include pictures if you have them.

After March 15, action will move to the Council. As in years past, the Council will seek testimony from Montgomery County residents. In normal times several hundred people sign up to testify over several days of hearings and others submit written testimony for the record. This year, as with last year, oral testimony will probably be a virtual process and as soon as we know the procedures, we will communicate them and ask you to testify either virtually or in writing.

Social Media

As advocates, we can increase our impact through using social media in ways that emails and phone calls can't. If you are new to social media and want to learn about using it for advocacy, check out TechBoomers website for tutorials: https://techboomers.com/. Here is the link to the Twitter tutorial: https://youtu.be/5jWNpLvdocU.

Additionally, MCPL offers https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/library/collection/online-resources.html#ComputersTechnology. Lynda.com is an especially good resource. Check out the MCPL virtual event calendar for programming with Senior Planet.

Quick Tips
- All of the County Council members and County Executive are on social media and use it.
- **"Like"** or "**follow**" the Council members, and regularly interact with them.
- In all social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) you can share your thoughts with them.
- **"Tag"** @FOLMC (On Facebook and Twitter) @FOLMCMD (Instagram) and @MontgomeryCountyPublicLibraries (Facebook) @MCPL_Libraries (Twitter and Instagram). Tagging is important because it amplifies your voice.
- As you post, your followers will also be encouraged to contact county leaders, too.

Useful Talking and Writing Points:

- We are proud of our libraries.
- We should be particularly proud of how MCPL responded to the physical shut down COVID-19 imposed. MCPL moved immediately to expand their digital resources and make them more available.
- MCPL made its programs and events available online.
- Patrons can click into well-loved Storytime sessions every day of the week.
- MCPL developed a no-contact, curbside pick-up service for physical books.
- Helpful, trained librarians still answer questions by internet or phone.
- MCPL expanded its Wi-Fi availability.
- Tens of thousands of Montgomery County residents have responded to these new lifelines for the well-being and balance libraries offer.
- that our library leadership created in record time.
- Tell County Executive Elrich that you are encouraged that he has pledged every effort to maintain our libraries funding in the upcoming budget.
- We need our libraries strong for the fear and isolation still ahead. And, libraries will help us with the information and resources we need to recover.

Who to Contact in Montgomery County
(Note: anything underlined in blue is a hyperlink)

Montgomery County Executive - Marc Elrich

Twitter: @MontCoExec
Executive Office Building
101 Monroe Street, 2nd Floor
Rockville, MD 20850
(240) 777-0311
FAX: (240) 777-2517
Send an email by filling out this form

Montgomery County Council
Twitter: @MoCoCouncilMD
Council Office Building
100 Maryland Avenue, 6th Floor
Rockville, MD 20850
Website: https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/council/

Montgomery County Council Members

Tom Hucker - President
D - District 5, 240-777-7960

Email: Councilmember.Hucker@montgomerycountymd.gov
Twitter: @CmHucker
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/CMHucker
Committees: Transportation & Environment (Chair), Public Safety

Gabe Albornoz - Vice President
D - At - Large, 240-777-7959

Email: Councilmember.Albornoz@montgomerycountymd.gov
Twitter: @albornoz_gabe
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/councilmemberalbornoz
Committees: Health & Human Services (Chair), Public Safety

Will Jawando [Council lead for libraries]
D - At - Large, 240-777-7811

Email: Councilmember.Jawando@montgomerycountymd.gov
Twitter: @willjawando
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/Councilmemberjawando
Committees: Planning, Housing & Economic Development, Education & Culture
NOTE: Mr. Jawando created his own **Storytime on Facebook** and has resumed
Community Conversations at MCPL Branches.

Andrew Friedson
D - District 1, 240-777-7828

Email: Councilmember.Friedson@montgomerycountymd.gov
Twitter @Andrew_Friedson
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/CouncilmemberAndrewFriedson
Committees: Planning, Housing & Economic Development (Lead for parks),
Government Operations & Fiscal Policy

Evan Glass
D - At - Large, 240-777-7966

Email: Councilmember.Glass@montgomerycountymd.gov
Twitter: @EvanMGlass
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/EvanGlassforMoCo
Committees: Health & Human Services, Transportation & Environment (Lead for
homelessness and vulnerable communities)

Sidney Katz
D - District 3, 240-777-7906

Email: Councilmember.Katz@montgomerycountymd.gov
Twitter: @MC_Council_Katz
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/sidneyakatz
Committees: Public Safety (Chair), Government Operations & Fiscal Policy

Nancy Navarro
D - District 4, 240-777-7968

Email: Councilmember.Navarro@montgomerycountymd.gov
Twitter: @nancy_navarro
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/councilmembernavarro
Committees: Government Operations & Fiscal Policy (Chair), Education & Culture

Craig Rice
D - District 2, 240-777-7955

Email: Councilmember.Rice@montgomerycountymd.gov
Twitter: @RicePolitics
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/ricepolitics
Committees: Education & Culture (Chair), Health & Human Services

Hans Riemer
D - At - Large, 240-777-7964

Email: Councilmember.Riemer@montgomerycountymd.gov
Twitter: @hansriemer
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/HansRiemer4
Committees: Planning, Housing & Economic Development (Chair), Transportation &
Environment

Important Websites for Advocacy

- Montgomery County Government https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/
- Montgomery County Council: https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/council/
- Montgomery County Operating & Capital Budget: https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/COUNCIL/budget_summary/index.html
- Montgomery County Public Libraries https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/library/
- Friends of the Library, Montgomery County www.folmc.org

The Montgomery County Government website is indispensable for any advocate in the county. If you have not already done so, we urge you to visit it, poke around, and discover the useful information available there.

For instance, you can find texts of speeches and press announcements, notices of upcoming events, a comprehensive calendar of happenings across the county, the opportunity to participate in the County Executive's on-line town halls and records of previous ones, the Council's schedule and, very importantly you can find access to the analytical documents the Council and its committees use. Finally, you can find access to live and archived video of Council and committee hearings and much more.

We recommend:
- **Sign-up for the MCPL newsletter** and check out their calendar to see just how many early literacy and other programs the MCPL runs across the county.
- If you do not already have a **library card**, sign up for a digital one here: https://montgomerycountymd.gov/library/services/registration.html
- **Sign-up for FOLMC newsletters**. Also, **sign-up for FOLMC's special newsletter for advocates**, *In the Know*. These publications are very good for the latest news about FOLMC-sponsored events that are often opportunities for advocacy.

Questions and suggestions?

Email: advocacy@folmc.org

Thank you to our Toolkit Contributors:

Friends of the Library, Montgomery County:
James Montgomery, Melissa McDonald, Fred Evans

Montgomery County Library Board:
Dan Melnick, Toni Negro