

Parkwood

Residents Association - Fall 2013 Newsletter

Next Meeting: Tuesday, October 8th, at Kensington Parkwood Elementary School, at 7:30 pm

Letter from the President

Neighbors and Community Members,

The next meeting of the Parkwood Residents Association will convene on Tuesday, October 8th at 7:30 p.m. at Kensington Parkwood Elementary School in the media room on the main level.

A number of potentially controversial issues will be discussed at this meeting. The agenda will include an update on the Zoning Rewrite process underway in Montgomery County. A number of e-mails have been shared with Parkwood on this process over the last month on the neighborhood list serve. Should the Zoning Rewrite be approved as originally planned, the zoning process will dramatically change and the sector plan maps for individual towns in the county will essentially be superseded. A separate article in the newsletter covers this issue in more detail.

Also on the agenda will be a proposal for Parkwood to formally request that Montgomery County divest from all holdings in fossil fuel energy companies. This proposal has been put forward by the PRA Executive Committee and includes endorsing these requests to the County Council:

- Immediately freeze any new investments by Montgomery County in fossil fuels.
- Divest from direct ownership and any commingled funds that include fossil fuel public equities and corporate bonds within 5 years.

The County Council has taken no formal stance on this issue. A copy of the petition is included in the newsletter. If a majority of the PRA feels that individual action is more appropriate, then a vote to that effect will be recorded.

The agenda for the meeting will also include these updates: membership; beautification

efforts including tree planting; treasurer's report; and BRAC-related infrastructure work in 2014. We will also take up action items from the last meeting and new business.

I look forward to seeing you at the meeting.

Bailey Condrey

Zoning Rewrite is now before the Montgomery County Council

Lara Akinbami and Gail Dalferes

The Zoning Rewrite is a huge effort to completely revamp the dated zoning ordinance in place since 1977. County Councilmember Marc Elrich spoke at our last PRA meeting to express concerns about the revised code and urged residents to review and comment on the new proposed ordinance.

The Planning, Housing and Economic Development Committee of the County Council is currently conducting worksessions on the Zoning Rewrite submitted by the Planning Board after a 4-year writing process, and will issue recommendations to the full Council in October.

Former Planning Board member Meredith Wellington (and member of Neighborhood Montgomery, a neighborhood network) has also expressed concerns with the Zoning Rewrite, especially the fact that the new mapping will essentially supersede all the Master Plans mapping currently in place, including the Kensington Sector Plan. This is a drastic departure from how zoning and planning has been conducted in Montgomery County, and may remove meaningful input by residents in the development process. Neighborhood Montgomery recommends residents write to the County Council with concerns most likely to impact quality of life in neighborhoods:

1. Abandon the District Map Amendment which will automatically rezone the entire county without public input and review. Many errors and questions have been raised by commercial and residential property owners alike. Take it slow; apply new zones one master/sector plan at a time.
2. Do not allow non-residential "general buildings" in residential neighborhoods without notifying neighbors and allowing public input into site design and use.
3. Do not "urbanize" neighborhoods by permitting high-density non-residential (commercial/residential, industrial and employment) "floating zone" developments and commercial uses within or adjacent to residential neighborhoods.
4. Keep neighborhoods stable and secure by retaining the requirement that new Commercial/Residential (CR) zones be applied only where recommended in a master/sector plan. The Council should delete any proposed language that dilutes the strength of master plans which have been tailored to the needs of local communities.
5. Keep neighborhoods secure by maintaining current levels of citizen input into development proposals that affect their neighborhoods, as well as adequate standards to protect those neighborhoods.

All this information can be difficult to digest! For more details, please see two excellent synopses: <https://groups.google.com/forum/#!forum/neighborhood-montgomery> and <http://wearemc.org/alert-zoning-rewrite/>. Please also contact Lara Akinbami (tojohnlara@hotmail.com) or Gail Dalferes (gaildalferes@yahoo.com) with questions. We repeat the advice of Councilmember Elrich and planning professionals who have reviewed the Zoning Rewrite: express your concerns to the Council today. The Councilmember email addresses are provided at the end of this newsletter. Please also consider attending the first full Council public hearing on November 12th at 7:30 pm.

Montgomery County Fossil Fuel Divestment Campaign

Bailey Condrey, PRA Executive Committee

A local chapter of a nationwide fossil fuels divestment campaign (Fossil Free Campaign at gofossilfree.org sponsored by 350.org) is bringing the issue of fossil fuel investments to the attention of the County Executive and the Montgomery County Council through a petition campaign. The Divest Montgomery County chapter of the Fossil Free Campaign is reaching out to civic associations to build broad support for the request that our County government shift its investments to equally productive but less potentially destructive industries. The contacts for Divest Montgomery County are Geoffrey Kidd (netgk@hotmail.com) and Peter Murtha (pete.murtha@gmail.com). Here is the petition:

To Ike Leggett, County Executive, Montgomery County (MD) & the Montgomery County Council

1. Immediately freeze any new investments in fossil fuels.
2. Divest from direct ownership and any commingled funds that include fossil fuel public equities and corporate bonds within 5 years.

Why is this important?

The nations of the world (including ours) have pledged to limit global warming to 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) - because any warming beyond 2 degrees will recklessly endanger human civilization. Regrettably, they are struggling to develop a meaningful plan by which to make good on this pledge.

Meanwhile, the world's fossil fuel companies already have assets in hand (i.e., coal, oil and gas currently in the ground, awaiting extraction) that—if extracted and burned—will make it impossible to limit the warming to 2 degrees. In fact, their assets in hand are 5 TIMES MORE than can be safely used if we are to limit the warming to 2 degrees.

San Francisco discovered that nearly 9% of its employee pension fund was invested in fossil fuels. If a similar fraction of Montgomery County's \$3.4 billion pension fund is invested in fossil fuels, it would total over \$300 million.

Our aim is to have MC sell off its multi-million dollar fossil fuel investments. Why? Because divestment works. For example, in the 1980s divestment was a major factor

forcing South Africa to abandon apartheid, a previously immovable object. Similarly, the fossil fuel industry has overwhelming influence in Congress, preventing our representatives from passing crucial laws to limit climate change. The industry wears the guise of respectability, despite the fact that their business plan seeks profit from the destruction of our environment. Through our divestment campaign, we are announcing to the world that we do not wish to be associated with the fossil fuel industry. We can strip it of that illusion of respectability. Our goal is to make that industry a pariah. Our Members of Congress will become sensitized and will find it more embarrassing to be associated with fossil fuel companies. With that, the influence of these companies will decline, and our chances for essential legislation will strengthen. At the same time, fossil fuel companies may finally decide to develop renewable energy sources.

Even as extreme weather events like Hurricane Sandy, floods, droughts and fires threaten to overwhelm local budgets, federal action to solve this crisis is all but stalled. We have the solutions, but we won't see any political progress on the issue until we can weaken the power of the fossil fuel industry.

The bottom line is this: Divestment is the only moral choice for institutions that care about the planet and its residents. Solving the climate crisis is the only practical choice for governments that care about their solvency.

We can do this. A growing list of places are poised to divest from fossil fuels including San Francisco, Seattle, Santa Fe, Berkeley, Madison (WI), Boulder (CO), Ithaca (NY), Bayfield (WI), State College (PA), Richmond (CA), and Eugene (OR). Let's do this in Montgomery County! Please: (1) sign the petition; (2) encourage other adults in your household to sign; (3) broadly share the petition with other MC residents via Facebook, list serves, etc.; and, most importantly, (4) target at least five of your like-minded friends via a personal contact to sign the petition and ask them to do the same with their friends.

How will it be delivered?

This petition will be hand-delivered to the Montgomery County Council. (An online version of this petition can be found at: <http://campaigns.gofossilfree.org/petitions/montgomery-county-fossil-fuel-divestment-campaign?source=facebook-share-button&time=1369257308>.)

PRA Tree Committee Success: New Trees Coming

Erin Haney, PRA Tree Committee

Andrew Driscoll, an arborist with the Montgomery County Department of Transportation coordinates street tree plantings for the entire county. He worked with the PRA Tree Committee to finalize the tree planting requests that were submitted. Of the 90 trees requested, roughly 70 will be planted. Mr. Driscoll and his team inspected every planting site and left a door hanger at each requesting home, including homes that would not receive a tree due to technical reasons – either lack of space or utility conflicts. A list of sites to receive trees will be posted on the Parkwood web site. Mr. Driscoll also made suggestions for alternate species when appropriate, and entered additional plantings where it was possible.

The new trees will arrive in the December 2013 to January 2014 planting season. When PRA receives word on specific planting dates, a listserve announcement will be posted along with reminders about caring for the new trees.

Thanks to all who participated in working to plant street trees better suited to the changing conditions of the neighborhood. The entire community will benefit from their shade, protection, and beauty.

Montgomery County Council email addresses

Councilmember.andrews.montgomerycountymd.gov, 240-777-7906 (Phil Andrews)
 Councilmember.berliner.montgomerycountymd.gov, 240-777-7828 (Roger Berliner)
 Councilmember.elrich.montgomerycountymd.gov, 240-777-7966 (Marc Elrich)
 Councilmember.ervin.montgomerycountymd.gov, 240-777-7960 (Valerie Ervin)
 Councilmember.floreen.montgomerycountymd.gov, 240-777-7959 (Nancy Floreen)
 Councilmember.leventhal.montgomerycountymd.gov, 240-777-7811 (George Leventhal)
 Councilmember.navarro.montgomerycountymd.gov, 240-777-7968 (Nancy Navarro)
 Councilmember.rice.montgomerycountymd.gov, 240-777-7955 (Craig Rice)
 Councilmember.riemer.montgomerycountymd.gov, 240-777-7964 (Hans Riemer)

PRA Newsletter online

Access live web links in this newsletter online at www.parkwoodresidents.org and click on "Docs" along the left hand side.