



News & Views

December 2023

Association Officers

Henry "Skip" Gormley, President
Amblingman@aol.com

Brian Woodward, Past President
Wizank@verizon.net

Jim McMahon, Vice President
JmcMahon657@gmail.com

Deloris Kirby, Secretary
Kirby7524@verizon.net

Al Warfield, Treasurer
Afwarf@comcast.net

Margaret Kingsley, Membership Coordinator
Margaret.Kingsley96@gmail.com

To Be Determined, Communications Manager

Members at Large

Jacqueline Murray
davidg726@msn.com

Mike Horrigan
MikeHorrigan2@gmail.com

December 6th Holiday Celebration

By Alma Lynch (Bi-County)

It was a cold winter-like day as members made their way to the Newton White Mansion in Mitchellville, Maryland, to enjoy our annual luncheon and meeting to celebrate the holidays and the end of 2023. Some 65 members and guests attended the celebration and this year, the Association did have a few things to celebrate.

As required in Article VII of our By-Laws, we conducted an election in October of our Board of Directors to serve for the years 2024/25. It was reported to those in attendance that 63 members returned a ballot and all nominees were accepted and approved by a voice vote of those in attendance. Our 2024-25 Board members are: **Marye Wells Harley, President; Jim McMahon, Vice President; Samuel Raines, Treasurer; Margaret Kingsley, Membership Coordinator; Mike Horrigan, Jacqueline Murray, Patricia Fenn, and Michael Snyder, Members at Large.** The Secretary position is still vacant. **Deloris Kirby and Al Warfield**, who have both served on the Board for many years,

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Happy Holidays from the M-NCPPC Retirees Association!



Holiday Celebration (Continued)

stepped down from their positions. We wish them both well and thank them for their years of service to the Association.

In 2023, the Association hit a milestone – 30 years of keeping abreast of retiree opinions and views as well as monitoring legislative actions and events impacting the welfare of our members. To honor this 30th Anniversary, a video created by Frank Derro (past Association President from 2007-2008) was shown chronicling the beginnings of the Association through interviews with our founding members. This video demonstrated how our founding members had the foresight to envision our Association as a resource for our members to stay connected and informed about retirement and other issues that may impact them.

We know the founding members would no doubt be proud that their foresight in establishing the Association is still going strong in 2023 and into the future. Thanks to Charlie McGovern for the great pictures!



Holiday Celebration (Continued)



Retirees Association Members Enjoy Each Other's Company

Almost 50 Retirees Association members gathered at Fairland Regional Park on September 27, 2023, to share retirement stories and enjoy a meal together. Retirees feasted on box lunches from Panera Bread and many won door prizes. Members played corn hole and a couple of members brought their classic cars to show off. We hope to see more members come out next year for a great time!



Healthier Holidays in 1—2—3!

By The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

If better health is the gift you want to give yourself this holiday season, try these [tips](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to add more movement to your day and healthy foods to your plate.

1. Stay active.

- When shopping, walk a few quick laps around the shopping center before going into any stores.
- Skip the search for a close parking spot during your errands. Park farther away and walk briskly to your destination.
- When friends and family gather, go for a group walk. You can make the walk more fun by turning it into a scavenger hunt. Or play an active group game in your yard or local park.
- Bundle up and take a walk instead of a drive to see holiday lights.

2. Eat healthy.

- At parties and other gatherings, fill your plate with your favorite fruits and vegetables first, then add small portions of less healthy items.
- If you are taking food to a party, make it your favorite healthy dish. Then you'll be sure that at least one item at the party will be a healthy choice that you enjoy.
- Make healthier versions of your traditional recipes by using ingredients with less fat and salt.

3. Plan activities that don't involve eating.

- Volunteer in your community; it might turn into an activity you enjoy year-round.
- Try a seasonal activity such as ice skating or winter hiking.
- Make a "walk and talk" date with a friend or family member. Skip the blended coffee drink and explore an area that is new.
- Visit that museum or exhibit you've been wanting to see.

Consider what new healthy traditions you can start this year. The possibilities are endless!



Benefits Updates

By Cynthia Henderson, Health & Benefits

Oakley - EyeMed Vision Adds 6th In-Network Online Provider

If you are enrolled in the EyeMed Vision Plan, and purchase eyewear online, you can use your vision benefits at [Oakley.com](https://www.oakley.com).

Oakley joins EyeMed's other five online in-network providers to give you a wide range of options for using your vision insurance benefits—from iconic Oakley styles to luxury brands at LensCrafters, value at Glasses.com and Target Optical, to classics at Ray-Ban.com and contact brands everyone loves at Contacts Direct.

Find out more about how you can use your EyeMed vision benefits at [Oakley.com](https://www.oakley.com).

Reminder: You Can Make Allowed Benefit Plan Changes Anytime During the Year

Retirees can make allowed benefit plan changes anytime throughout the year. You do not have to wait until the annual Open Enrollment period.

For example, you can change your benefit plan from Delta Dental PPO to DeltaCare HMO or from UnitedHealthcare Choice POS to Kaiser HMO or UnitedHealthcare Select EPO to UnitedHealthcare Choice POS at any time throughout the year.

There are two exceptions. If you are enrolled in Legal Resources or EyeMed Vision (Low/Moderate/High Level) during any month of a Plan Year (January 1 -December 31), you must remain enrolled until the end of the Plan Year, i.e., December 31st before cancelling your enrollment.

Deduction of Healthcare Premiums from Your Pension: Pre-Tax or Post-Tax

While an active employee, your healthcare premiums were deducted from your bi-weekly paycheck on a pre-tax basis. When you retire from M-NCPPC, your healthcare premiums (medical, dental, prescription, and vision) will not be deducted on a pre-tax basis. When you retire, healthcare premiums are deducted from your pension on a post-tax basis.

Some retirees may benefit from a federal program, the Healthcare Enhancement for Local Public Safety Act (HELPS). HELPS was enacted as part of the Pension Protection Act of 2006 and allows eligible retired public safety officers, when filing their 1040 form, to reduce their taxable income by excluding up to \$3,000 from their gross income each year for healthcare insurance premium payments. For more information see [IRS Instructions for Form 1040](https://www.irs.gov/irm/part1040). Speak with an attorney or tax advisor or contact the IRS with questions.

Travels to Northern Spain & Portugal 2022

Spend eleven weeks on the road with Sandy Tallant (MC Planning) & Drury Tallant

WEEK 3 —Cuenca, Toledo, and Madrid, Spain

On the train - four hours to Cuenca from Valencia. The first two hours are a train ride on the "milk run." We pass through a number of small, charmless, but prosperous-looking dusty towns with no people in sight. The conductor informs us that we will be getting off the train and boarding a bus for the final two hours of our journey. We are not optimistic on how the "transfer" portion of our journey will go. We were pleased to find a new air conditioned bus waiting for us in an anonymous town. Spain has a great transportation system that clearly extends to the rural reaches of the country.

We arrived in Cuenca on time around 7 PM for our two-night stay. We have a small, charming, cozy studio apartment in the old city near the main square and cathedral - the building was likely built before Columbus left Spain for the new world. It has an array of hand-hewed beams on the ceiling and a small balcony overlooking the main street. If we crane our necks, we can see the Cathedral.

We walk to the highest point of the old city and have tapas overlooking the city. What a charming United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) "stage set" town of medieval architecture with hanging houses that cling above deep gorges that surround the town. I imagine Cuenca is used as a site to film period movies.

We spent the next day visiting the sights including a convent - now a hotel - via crossing a gorge bridge. We have a very traditional lunch - Dru is channeling Anthony Bourdain and orders grilled pig ear and a boiled, stuffed and grilled tripe dish. The tripe was surprisingly good. We both could do without more pig ears. We also had a cold chopped tomato soup with boiled eggs and tuna (a local variation on gazpacho), and baby fava beans cooked with Spanish dried ham.

We have decided to deviate from our original travel itinerary and scratch cities in the south to visit the northern cities at a slower pace, and rent apartments instead of hotels. This allows us to take advantage of all the great food we see in the markets and bakeries, giving us more room to spread out, and less time on the train and more time to soak up the culture. The weather will also be more temperate.

We leave for Toledo on Monday morning on the fast bullet train. It travels at 299 kilometers (186 miles) per hour! We are in Madrid in 30 minutes, change trains, then in Toledo in another 30. We have booked a studio apartment for four nights, well positioned near the Cathedral. We were here 30 years ago and found more museums and historic renovations of important historical sites open for touring.

We wandered the streets visiting this historic religious center - numerous churches, former mosques, synagogues, and the Jewish quarter. Our visit to The El Greco museum was spectacular as was the abundance and quality of the religious art all over town - a pool of artistic talent that is largely unknown to the casual visitors such as ourselves. These artist's names are likely known by academics in the religious art world.

Travels to Northern Spain & Portugal 2022 (Continued)

The streets wind and change elevation to the point they are hard to navigate, even for Dru. Google Maps has been a godsend. More touring to the remaining sites in Toledo, and again the next day. We see the Cathedral in the morning then catch a train to Madrid to celebrate Dru's birthday on June 3rd. The Cathedral in Toledo is stupendous...the art, interior decoration, the architecture - all befitting of its ranking as the most important religious structure in Spain and one of the most important in Europe.

We arrive in Madrid as expected on the FAST train and check into our apartment for the week. We are in a middle class neighborhood living like Spaniards, NO tourists, just a mix of young families with children, some very elderly, and then some like us - 60-ish + or so. At night, it is like a domestic symphony as we hear cooking, conversation, and families eating from several of the apartments that back up to ours. The only drawback is that it is a bit too far from the center (a Metro ride and walk) to stop "home" for an afternoon nap and then head back out.

There has been much investment in the city since we were last here in the mid 80's. Franco died in the mid 70's, so democracy and open economy came very late to Spain. We spent Dru's birthday, on the recommendation of our landlord, at the city's former slaughterhouse, now a cultural center. It is a massive arrangement of multiple buildings housing artist studios, art and dance exhibitions, and the City's ballet troupe to name a few. We see a Gustav Klimt immersion 3D show. We got to step into a photo booth and get a computer altered portrait.

To be continued...Week 4 - Madrid to the Rioja Region



Toledo, Spain



Madrid, Spain

Sports-Recreation Development Plans in Largo - Greater Mitchellville Community

by Patricia Fenn (Bi-County)

A \$6 million Liberty Sports Park with surrounding amenities and accommodations opened in the Fall of 2022. M-NCPPC, the State of Maryland, Prince George's County Government, and business partners were all involved in the construction and development of the park complex.

The Green Branch Management Group Corporation (Thomas H. Graham, Board Chair; Scott Morrison, President), a community-based, non-profit organization in Prince George's County, will manage it, according to WTOP News. The project was announced during the term of former County Executive Rushern Baker III in October, 2017.

Located at 220 Prince George's Boulevard, Upper Marlboro, Maryland, (mid-way between Route 50/ Route 301 and the Town of Upper Marlboro, on the west side of Route 301), the Sports Park consists of ten lit fields, six turf fields, and four grass fields. Patrons can play lacrosse, field hockey, football, soccer, rugby, and ultimate Frisbee. To see a schematic of the park go to <https://www.libertysportspark.com/facility-overview-1>.

On a larger scale, as part of the Blue Line Corridor Project, Request for Proposals for \$1.3 billion have been disseminated and planning has begun for development in Largo. This phase will demolish the FedEx stadium; construct an indoor stadium for volleyball and basketball to attract national and international competition; and construct a library, charter magnet school and civic plaza for arts events. For details, see the Initiatives section/economic development on the Website of County Executive Angela Alsobrooks (<https://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/departments-offices/county-executive/initiatives>).

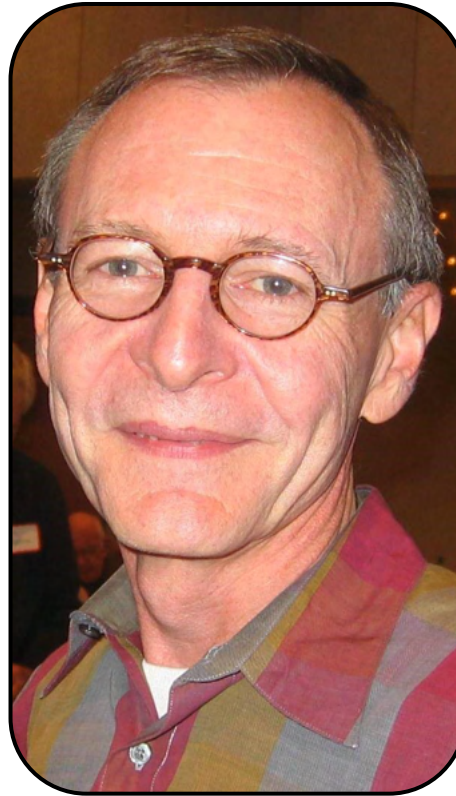
These mega developments, along with the \$6 billion relocation of the FBI building and commute of some 7,000 employees, are going to turn Prince George's into a Tyson's Corner IV, in my opinion, and affect transportation and property taxes, substantially, despite Tax Reform Initiative by Marylanders (TRIM).



Remembering Our Friends

Joseph "Joe" Wayne Anderson passed away peacefully in his sleep September 29, 2023, at age 75 due to prostate cancer. As a registered professional engineer, Joe dedicated 30 years to the Montgomery County Planning Department. After retirement, he served as Chair of the Planning Commission in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia. He is most fondly remembered by his friends for the numerous glittering champagne parties he hosted in his D.C. apartment.

His obituary can be found at <https://obits.oregonlive.com/us/obituaries/oregon/name/joseph-anderson-obituary?id=53273838>. Our condolences to Joe's family and friends.



Joe Anderson



The Retirees Association received word that **Retired Sergeant Don Liller** passed away on October 30, 2023. Sgt. Liller served in the Special Operations Section of the Montgomery County Park Police and was a long-term member of the Association.

His obituary can be found at <https://www.echovita.com/us/obituaries/de/milton/don-wayne-liller-17148981>. Our condolences to Don's family and friends.

Welcome new members!

Daniel Hardy
Kevin Leonard
Joyce Pettigrew
Kathleen Reilly
Darlene Watkins

Remembering members we lost...

Joe Anderson—9/29/2023
Don Liller—10/30/2023
Rita Mills—11/7/2023

Association Members Tour the new M-NCPPC Headquarters in Wheaton

By Charlie McGovern (MC Parks)

Thanks to Mike Riley, the Director of Parks for Montgomery County, a group of Association members had a grand tour of the new Commission Headquarters in Wheaton on October 24th.

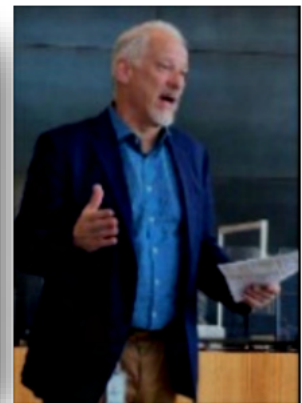
We were met by Senior Urban Designer Paul Mortensen in the lobby at 1:30 for a 2-1/2 hour, well-informed tour of the building conducted by Paul. He had such an incredible number of facts and figures concerning the planning and construction of the building, it would take up too much space to list here. You can check out the following website (<https://montgomeryplanningboard.org/wheatonhq/>) and scroll down a bit to see the video of Paul's comments that reflect what he mentioned during our tour.

After the tour, we met with Mike Riley in the conference room near his office where he spoke for several minutes and took questions, and posed for a group photo. There were even some baked goods from Panera Bread to top off the day. Mike was written up by John Kelly in his column in the Washington Post on November 21st regarding his retirement as Parks Chief after 38 years of service. See the article at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2023/11/21/montgomery-parks-director/>.

Editor's note: Thanks to Charlie for organizing the tour and the pictures!



Tour Participants



Paul Mortensen



Mike Riley
(Picture courtesy of The Washington Post)

A Note to Retirees from the Employees' Retirement System

After reviewing your January check stub, some retirees may notice a change to their net retirement annuity. Remember, new health insurance rates go into effect January 1st. If any part of your medical coverage was affected by rate changes for the 2024 benefit year, there will be a change in the amount of your net annuity. Questions regarding health insurance coverage should be directed to the M-NCPPC Health & Benefits staff – 301-454-1694 or Benefits@mncppc.org.

Please contact Chris Baysmore in the Employee Retirement System (ERS) – 301-454-1407 or ContactERS@mncppc.org if you have any other general questions about your M-NCPPC ERS annuity payment. Happy holidays!



Topic of Bifurcation of Montgomery County Planning Raised Again at Public Hearing

by Pat Fenn (Bi-County)

On Monday, November 11, 2023, the joint House and Senate Delegations in Montgomery County (where bi-county legislation starts) held its annual public hearing about legislative priorities. Seventy-four people testified. Three people: Elizabeth Joyce of Silver Spring; Daniel Meyer of Silver Spring; and Jamison Adcock of Rockville; testified about many of the same issues from last year that were a part of Senator Ben Kramer's (Democrat - District 19) proposed legislation to dismantle the MC Planning Board and MC Planning Department. The legislation recommended to give the duties of the Commission to the County Executive's Office, although Kramer denied this intent. A compromise was reached and a Workgroup was designated in February 2023.

The [Montgomery County Development Review Process Workgroup](#) completed its work after four months of examining the County's development review process, with a special focus on finding opportunities to improve the County's economic competitiveness. The Workgroup finalized 22 recommendations that were reached by consensus and submitted its report three weeks ago to Maryland State Delegate Lesley Lopez (D-39), who brokered the Compromise. For a complete list of its recommendations, please visit the [Montgomery County Development Review Process Workgroup website](#).

We Get Mail!

Samuel Dixon's "Wine and Spirit I & II"

Maryland artist **Samuel Dixon (PGC Planning), Artist**, was selected for inclusion in the Washington, D.C. Hill Center Galleries 2024 Regional Juried Exhibition that will run from January 10 to May 4, 2024. "Wine and Spirit I & Wine and Spirit II," a visual celebration of wine cuisine prints with delectable selection of uncorked mixed media red & white wine bottles. Juried by Amy Cavanaugh, only 150 pieces were selected from our largest field of entries ever -- over 500 pieces for the upcoming exhibit.



Be sure to mark your calendar for Wednesday, January 24, 2024 from 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. for the Exhibition Opening Reception where the prize winners (1st, 2nd, 3rd place and Honorable Mention) will be announced. The reception will be held at the Hill Center DC, 921 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE, Washington, D.C. Go to <https://www.hillcenterdc.org/event/hill-center-galleries-2024-regional-juried-exhibition-opening-reception/> to register.

Samuel Dixon, primarily a watercolorist, who also works in oil and acrylics, is described as an American Abstract Impressionist. Influenced by paintings of Monet, Whistler, and the branch of Impressionist artists, his works capture the essence of inspiration and temperament. A collection of Samuel Dixon Prints and other merchandise including iPhone covers can be found the next time you're [online](#).



Wine & Spirit I



Wine & Spirit II

We Get Mail!

Marc Seleznow (MC Parks) shares his recollections of MRO below.

I really enjoyed Charlie McGovern's article in the last News & Views about the demolition of MRO (even though it did make me somewhat melancholy) and thought I would share some of my own recollections.

Having grown up in Wheaton, I knew that building (and the one on Colesville Road) my whole life. When I came to the Commission in 1977 and got to work there, I was in heaven (by the way, Bill Rosenberger interviewed me for my Horticulturist position in December 1976 in his new office at the Parkside office).

When the MRO expansion was implemented, I was heartbroken with the loss of the fountain and flower beds out front as they were an iconic landmark for me (and others I'd bet). I also couldn't stand losing the huge mature trees in the beds out front, and had my staff hand dig and transplant as many as we could manage to our parks. That was no small feat as several had been there since 1957.

The only compensation for that loss was working with the Architects and Ted Sharman from Pope Farm to create the indoor garden in the expanded building's atrium, which Ted and his staff made extra special through their seasonal displays of flowering plants. So seeing Charlie's photos of MRO coming down after all these years and all that work was sad to see. Seems that nothing is permanent anymore.

As for the new building on Reddie Drive, like Charlie, I've got history at that location too. In the 1960's, the building right on the corner of Reddie and Grandview housed a slot car racing track where I raced model slot cars with friends for hours. I think it later became a Peruvian Chicken restaurant.

