

DRAFT  
**Representatives Meeting Minutes**  
April 14, 2020

**CALL TO ORDER**

**Note: this meeting was conducted via Zoom and Live Stream You Tube due to the Coronavirus restrictions in place.**

Matt Quinn called the meeting to order at about 7:35 PM. He introduced the guest speaker, County Executive Marc Elrich.

Matt explained that this was the first time using these technologies for a GOCA meeting and asked for patience as there are inevitable glitches as we navigate these platforms.

The March 18, 2020 meeting and the Agenda for the April 14, 2020 meeting were sent out about a week ago. We did not vote on approval, but asked people to send an email through the website if any corrections are needed.

GOCA is urging members of the community to find ways to support MedStar Montgomery Medical Center because of its importance to us all.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- The GOCA Awards ceremony will be rescheduled at a later date
- The planned March 30<sup>th</sup> Casey Anderson meeting (to discuss the next 50 years for Olney) was postponed and will be rescheduled at a later date

Ryan Martin, Corresponding Secretary, explained the mechanics of the meeting. He asked everyone to mute themselves or, if necessary, he would do so. If someone wished to speak, they were asked to utilize the hand raise feature in Zoom, to physically raise their hand, or to ask to speak via the Chat option.

**COUNTY EXECUTIVE MARC ELRICH**

- County Executive Elrich is working well with Governor Hogan and his liaison, Steve Shue.
- There are not enough Coronavirus test kits available yet.
- Three testing stations have opened. More were planned, but will not be opened until we have more test kits.
- A referral from a doctor is still needed to be tested.
- The County is trying on its own to locate kits for the County.
- The virus is likely to come back at least once.
- The plan is to buy enough supplies to last the duration, including any resurgence.
- A large portion of the County workforce is teleworking.

- Some personnel, such as Police and Firefighters have to come in.
- County Executive Elrich meets daily with other County Executives, meets two times a week with the Governor, and on a frequent basis with health care professionals.
- The County budget was prepared prior to the virus outbreak. Because of the drastic changes in the economy, there is a freeze in hiring and spending. Only essential spending is allowed and programs have been scaled back. More help is being provided for the homeless population. The school budget tax increase will not happen. Property taxes are based on December/January figures.

### County Executive Elrich answered questions.

1. Why is the County considering a 4.5% property tax increase at this time and how does the County plan on holding public forums or getting public input prior to this decision? **Answer: The tax increase will not occur at this time.**
2. Why is the Montgomery County grant process for small businesses lagging behind the DC Government's implementation and what additional efforts are planned to support local small businesses? **Answer: Our process is more complicated than the District's. It allows for larger grants (up to \$75,000) which would quickly use up the allotted \$20 million. The application process is being done online. Presently, the County is giving initial grants of up to \$10,000. Higher amounts will follow later. We hope to offer another round of grants as soon as possible and will track the needs. As things ease, some form of social distancing may remain as well as perhaps continuing to require mask/glove use. In answer to an aside question about unemployment, Mr. Elrich specified that the County is not involved in this process. It is currently a Federal program.**
3. What new procedures will be put in place to improve personal hygiene for students when they return to school: cleaning of the bathrooms, cafeteria areas, and classrooms to reduce further spreading of viruses in the school environment? Also, for Assisted Living Facilities. **Answer: The school system determines how to handle these issues in schools. The hope is for rigid adherence to safe practices. With regard to Assisted Living facilities, public health officers went in early to assess needs. Infections come from staff and visitors. The County will continue to work with them to get required equipment to these facilities.**
4. How is the County going to make sure "everyone" wears a mask—including cashiers, stockers, food handlers, etc. -- when they leave their homes? How will it be enforced? **Answer: stores will be monitored and visitors without masks can be stopped from entering stores.**
5. What can be done regarding pools in communities? Many community pools have signed contracts. HOAs are operating under the guidance which considers pool services as essential services. **Answer: Direction for potential pool openings may come from the State. There will likely be restrictions even after quarantine practices have eased or ended. We would definitely need more testing for the virus before pools could be safely opened to the public. It's possible they may not be opened until July. No one knows right now.**
6. How are Police doing community policing and speed enforcement during COVID-19 and how

are other community services handling the crisis? **Answer: County Police are doing all right. They are lightening up a bit on less serious offences such as slightly speeding if not associated with drunk or reckless driving. The number of Police Officers out enforcing has been shrunk. Of course, Fire and Rescue services have to have adequate personnel available. There will be Public Health Grants available for businesses starting tomorrow, April 16. Non-Profits are offering a lot of relief locally. Continue to give gifts to non-profits. A question was asked about getting rid of the plastic bag tax at this point, but there's no reason to do so right now. People can still bring their own bags and bag their own purchases. Matt Quinn gave a "shout out" to Olney Help and the various houses of worship that are providing food needs.**

7. Regarding voting: Will the County support a change to the ballot initiative process by moving to signing online or extending the time to collect signatures? And do you support a change to the general election voting process such as voting by mail? **Answer: The ballot initiative process is set out in the County Charter and the time can't be extended. County Executive Elrich supports a combination of mail-in and in-person voting. Of course, mail is preferable and rules have been relaxed around absentee ballots. Anyone can request an absentee ballot even if they're not truly "absent."**
8. Do we have a good sense of the Coronavirus impact by zip code? **Answer: the numbers are not particularly helpful because they can't really show where a person caught the virus.**
9. Are there limitations on receiving Help Grants for home-run businesses? **Answer: No, though the amounts might be affected by lower overhead costs.**
10. How can we spread the lessons we have learned from this crisis? **Answer: Take warnings seriously and listen to the health experts. Once more testing is available, it may be possible to know if you've had the disease and are now immune. We need to improve our healthcare system and to be better prepared for future health crises.**
11. Could you address the rankings for transportation projects, particularly the Route 97/28 project which is still not funded after 20 years? It was number 5 on the list and was moved to number 8. **Answer: Mr. Elrich could not remember details of this situation and will research and respond directly to the questioner.**

Matt Quinn thanked County Executive Elrich for his time. Mr. Elrich stated that he would like to come back to another meeting to discuss tax issues. In particular, he would like to discuss how Commercial Property taxes are figured differently from Personal Property taxes to the great detriment of the County. Much revenue has been lost over the last 30 years handicapping the County greatly. Other surrounding areas handle these taxes differently and have much more revenue for needed projects.

The May meeting will probably be conducted using the same format. Thanks to Ryan Martin for all of the technical work he put into this process and its execution.

## **CALENDAR ITEMS**

- April 30, 7 PM Officers' meeting via Zoom
- May 12, 7:30 PM GOCA Representatives Meeting via Zoom and You Tube Live Stream

**Respectfully submitted**  
**Carol Frenkel, Recording Secretary**

In attendance:

20 attended by Zoom

33 attended by You Tube Live Stream