

July 22, 2020

MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board
VIA: Gwen Wright, Planning Director
FROM: Rebeccah Ballo, Historic Preservation Supervisor
SUBJECT: Montgomery County Street and Parks Facilities Renaming Review

BACKGROUND

On June 15, 2020, the Montgomery County Council sent a letter to County Executive Marc Elrich and Montgomery Planning Board Chair Casey Anderson asking for “a comprehensive review of all County owned and maintained street names and public facilities to determine all those named for Confederate soldiers or those who otherwise do not reflect Montgomery County values.”

The Montgomery County Planning Board has oversight over the Montgomery County Planning Department and the Montgomery County Parks Department, both part of The Maryland-National Capital Planning Commission (M-NCPPC). Under Maryland law, M-NCPPC is tasked with naming and renaming any street or highway and numbering and renumbering the houses in the area under its jurisdiction. The Montgomery County Planning Department has been responsible for street names and address numbers in Montgomery County since the 1950s. The Montgomery County Parks Department manages parks and parks facilities in the county.

Montgomery Parks Cultural Resources staff and Montgomery Planning Historic Preservation Office staff are working together to create a comprehensive list of county-owned and maintained streets and parks and parks facilities that have the names of individuals that were known Confederates, Confederate sympathizers, and slaveholders who resided in Montgomery County. Planning Board Chair Casey Anderson will then submit this list to the Montgomery County Council. Montgomery County departments under County Executive Marc Elrich will conduct similar research for county-owned public facilities. Upon the completion of these reviews, it is anticipated that the County Council will advise on a process for the renaming of county-owned and maintained streets and public facilities owned by the county and M-NCPPC to better represent the county's diverse population and its commitment to racial equity and social justice.

In response to this request, staff is sharing an update on our approach to this important work.

RESEARCH

Beginning with the receipt of the request in June, a full team of Parks and Planning historians has taken a tiered look at all the information available to us at this time (it's important to note that the Maryland State Archives, National Archives, and all local repositories are currently closed at this time due to COVID-19). Most of this work is new and original research—which includes a deep dive into the history of the county that has never been fully compiled.

Here are more details on how staff is approaching this work:

1. Researching the history of known Confederates and Confederate sympathizers who lived in or were from Montgomery County. This includes researching military rosters and pension records, census data, cemetery records, news articles, and other secondary sources including books and articles.
2. Researching the names of known slaveholders from 1790 to 1865. This includes looking at additional census data and property and tax records.
3. Cross referencing these names with GIS-based map data to find the match of street names and/or public facilities.
4. Detailed cross-comparison to determine if a street or facility is named for the Confederate/sympathizer or slaveholder on the list. For example: Veirs Mill Road— Is Veirs Mill Road named to honor members of the Veirs family, who were known to hold slaves, or simply to denote that it was the road that led to the Veirs Mill?" For many streets this may be obvious, but for most it will require analysis of each instance of an initial positive identification.

We can share that our preliminary research has shown that there are more than 1,500 unique names that make up known Confederates, sympathizers and slaveholders in the county.

OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

One of our first steps in response to this request was to create a dedicated website and email address to inform the public of this endeavor and to collect information from the community. We continue to encourage the community to weigh in submitting comments on our [website](#) or via our dedicated project email, Renaming@montgomeryplanning.org. On the project site we have created a robust FAQ page with information about the research methodology and information about the Department's existing renaming policy.

Additionally, Planning Director Wright has sent letters to all of the municipalities within Montgomery County informing them of this effort and inviting them to participate in our efforts. Several have contacted staff to collaborate on this effort. Staff has also reached out to DGS, DOT, and MCPS to inform them of this project, and to learn from their prior research on this topic.

NEXT STEPS

Staff is committed to providing the Planning Board and County Council with a data-based and historically accurate inventory of these findings.

At this early stage, we expect our findings will lead to the following considerations or decision points for the County Council:

- Consider the categories of names - there are geographic based names and there are names meant to specifically honor people in Montgomery County.
- Consider the budget implications for property owners for any renaming efforts.
- Consider the budget implications on county agencies with any renaming efforts.

Montgomery County Street & Parks Facilities Renaming Review
Planning Director's Report
July 30, 2020 Planning Board Hearing

- Consider coordination between M-NCPPC and county agencies (specifically MCPS, MCDOT, DGS, Department of Recreation).

We will continue with our research over the month of August and will report back to the Planning Board in September with a more detailed briefing that will include initial findings.