MCPB No. 21-123
Preliminary Plan No. 12017021C
Liberty Mill Road
Date of Hearing: October 28, 2021

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, under Montgomery County Code Chapter 50, the Montgomery County Planning Board is authorized to review preliminary plan applications; and

WHEREAS, on July 24, 2017, the Planning Board, by Resolution MCPB No. 17-069, approved Preliminary Plan No. 120170210, to create two (2) lots on 3.63 acres of land in the R-200 zone, located at 19115 Liberty Mill Road, in the southeast quadrant of the intersection of Liberty Mill Road and Dawson Farm Road (“Subject Property”), in the Germantown West Policy Area and 1989 Germantown Master Plan (“Master Plan”) area; and

WHEREAS, on March 12, 2021, Flournoy Development Group, LLC (“Applicant”) filed an application for approval of an amendment to the previously approved preliminary plan(s) to create one 3.59-acre lot (3.63 acres prior to right-of-way dedication along Liberty Mill Road) for a Residential Care Facility, Over 16 Persons, as approved by Conditional Use No. 20-09 on the Subject Property; and

WHEREAS, Applicant’s application to amend the preliminary plan was designated Preliminary Plan No. 12017021C, Liberty Mill Road (“Preliminary Plan,” “Amendment,” or “Application”); and

WHEREAS, following review and analysis of the Application by Planning Board staff (“Staff”) and other governmental agencies, Staff issued a memorandum to the Planning Board, dated October 15, 2021, setting forth its analysis and recommendation for approval of the Application, subject to certain conditions (“Staff Report”); and

WHEREAS, on October 28, 2021, the Planning Board held a public hearing on the Application at which it heard testimony and received evidence submitted for the record on the Application; and

/s/Emily Vaias
M-NCPPC Legal Department
WHEREAS, on October 28, 2021, the Planning Board voted to approve the Application subject to certain conditions, on motion of Commissioner Cichy, seconded by Commissioner Verma, with a vote of 4-0; Chair Anderson, Commissioners Cichy, Patterson and Verma voting in favor.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Planning Board APPROVES Preliminary Plan No. 12017021C to create one lot for a Conditional Use (Residential Care Facility, Over 16 Persons) subject to the following conditions which supersede and replace in their entirety all conditions related to Preliminary Plan No. 120170210:

All site development elements shown on the latest electronic version as of the date of the Staff Report submitted via ePlans to the M-NCPPC are required except as provided by the following conditions:

1. This Application is limited to one (1) lot for a Residential Care Facility (over 16 persons) for 125-beds.

2. The Applicant must comply with conditions from the Hearing Examiner’s Report and Decision, dated December 21, 2020, and as amended on August 23, 2021, from the Office of Zoning and Administrative Hearings (OZAH) approving Conditional Use No. 20-09.

3. The Applicant must comply with the conditions of approval for the Final Forest Conservation Plan No. 12017021C, which is an amendment to Final Forest Conservation Plan No. 120170210, subject to the following conditions:

   a. The Applicant must schedule the required site inspections by M-NCPPC Forest Conservation Inspection Staff per Section 22A.00.01.10 of the Forest Conservation Regulations.

   b. The Applicant must comply with all tree protection and tree save measures shown on the approved Final Forest Conservation Plan. Tree save measures not specified on the Final Forest Conservation Plan may be required by the M-NCPPC Forest Conservation Inspection Staff.

   c. Prior to Certified Final Forest Conservation Plan, the Applicant must revise the Amended Final Forest Conservation Plan (“FFCP”) to show that the 2,300 square feet (0.05 acres) of stream valley buffer not being placed into a Category I Conservation Basement is being added to the FFCP Afforestation Requirement of 0.59 acres resulting in a total FFCP afforestation requirement of 0.64 acres.

For the purpose of these conditions, the term “Applicant” shall also mean the developer, the owner or any successor(s) in interest to the terms of this approval.
d. Prior to any demolition, the Applicant must schedule a pre-demolition meeting with M-NCPPC Inspection Staff and DPS Sediment Control Inspection Staff to verify the staked limits of disturbance as shown on the FFCP and any necessary tree protection measures, within the immediate vicinity of the proposed demolition as determined by the M-NCPPC Inspection Staff.

e. Prior to any clearing, grading or construction for this development Application, the Applicant must record an M-NCPPC approved Certificate of Compliance in an M-NCPPC approved off-site forest bank within the Great Seneca Creek watershed to satisfy the afforestation requirement for a total of 0.64 acres of mitigation credit. The off-site requirement may be met by purchasing credits from a mitigation bank elsewhere in the County, subject to Staff approval, if forest mitigation bank credits are not available for purchase within the Great Seneca Creek watershed or by making a fee-in-lieu payment if mitigation credits are not available at any bank.

f. The Limits of Disturbance ("LOD") shown on the Final Sediment and Erosion Control Plan must be consistent with the LOD shown on the approved Final Forest Conservation Plan.

4. There shall be no clearing or grading of the site prior to recordation of plat(s).

5. The Planning Board has reviewed and accepts the recommendations of the Montgomery County Department of Transportation ("MCDOT") in its letter dated October 7, 2021 and incorporates them as conditions of the Preliminary Plan approval. The Applicant must comply with each of the recommendations as set forth in the letter, which may be amended by MCDOT if the amendment does not conflict with any other conditions of the Preliminary Plan approval.

6. The Planning Board has reviewed and accepts the recommendations of the Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services ("MCDPS"), Fire Department Access and Water Supply Section in its letter dated October 14, 2021, and hereby incorporates them as conditions of approval. The Applicant must comply with each of the recommendations as set forth in the letter, which MCDPS may amend if the amendments do not conflict with other conditions of the Preliminary Plan approval.

7. The Planning Board has reviewed and accepts the recommendations of the MCDPS – Water Resources Section in its stormwater management concept letter dated July 20, 2021, and hereby incorporates them as conditions of the Preliminary Plan approval. The Applicant must comply with each of the recommendations as set forth in the letter, which may be amended by
MCDPS – Water Resources Section provided that the amendments do not conflict with other conditions of the Preliminary Plan approval.

8. Before recording a plat for the Subject Property, the Applicant must satisfy MCDOT’s requirements for access and improvements.

9. The Applicant must provide right-of-way dedication of a variable width (tapered along the Property frontage) to establish the following total right-of-way width for Liberty Mill Road and show on the Certified Preliminary Plan and Record Plat:
   a. 82.0 feet from the southwest Property corner to the opposite right-of-way line; and
   b. 82.9 feet from the northwest Property corner to the opposite right-of-way line.

10. Prior to the recordation of plat(s), the Applicant must ensure construction of the following off-site improvement(s) by satisfying MCDOT requirements to:
   a. Construct a 10-foot-wide shared use path on the north side of Liberty Mill Road, from the intersection of Dawson Farm Road and Liberty Mill Road to the intersection of Liberty Mill Road and Pepper Court, approximately 630 feet.
   b. Upgrade the existing bus stop at the southeast corner of Dawson Farm Road and Liberty Mill Road.
   c. Provide curb ramps approximately 10-foot-wide at the intersection of Liberty Mill Road and Dawson Farm Road, as shown on the Certified Preliminary Plan and subject to final approval at right-of-way permitting.

11. Prior to release of the final Use and Occupancy Certificate, the Applicant must construct all off-site pedestrian and bicycle improvements.

12. The record plat must show necessary easements.

13. The Adequate Public Facilities (APF) review for the Preliminary Plan will remain valid for five (5) years from its initiation date as defined in the Montgomery County Code, Section 50.4.2.J.5.

14. This Preliminary Plan Amendment will remain valid for 36 months from its initiation date (as defined in Montgomery County Code Section 50.4.2.G), and prior to the expiration date of this validity period, a final record plat for all property delineated on the approved Preliminary Plan must be recorded in the Montgomery County Land Records or a request for an extension filed.

15. The Certified Preliminary Plan must contain the following note:
"Unless specifically noted on this plan set or in the Planning Board conditions of approval, the building footprints, building heights, on-site parking, site circulation, and sidewalks shown on the Preliminary Plan are illustrative. The final locations of buildings, structures and hardscape will be determined at the time of approval of a building permit. Please refer to the zoning data table for development standards such as setbacks, building restriction lines, building height, and lot coverage for each lot. Other limitations for site development may also be included in the conditions of the Planning Board's approval."

16. The Applicant must include the stormwater management concept approval letter and Preliminary Plan Resolution on the approval or cover sheet(s).

17. **Certified Preliminary Plan**

Prior to approval of the Certified Preliminary Plan, the following revisions must be made and/or information provided subject to M-NCPPC Staff review and approval:

a. Update the minimum lot size calculation in the data table to reflect the square footage per bed requirement in Section 59.3.3.2.E.2.c.ii.d.2.i.

b. Illustrate a 10-foot-wide asphalt shared use path along the north side of Liberty Mill Road extending from Dawson Farm Road to Pepper Court.

c. Illustrate bicycle accessible 10-foot-wide curb ramps at the intersection of Liberty Mill Road and Dawson Farm Road at the following five locations:
   i. Southwest quadrant (two ramps),
   ii. Southeast quadrant/corner of the Subject Property (one ramp crossing Liberty Mill Road); and
   iii. Northeast quadrant (one ramp on the south side crossing Dawson Farm Road).

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that having considered the recommendations of its Staff as presented at the hearing and as set forth in the Staff Report, which the Board hereby adopts and incorporates by reference (except as modified herein), and upon consideration of the entire record, the Planning Board FINDS, with the conditions of approval, that:

This Preliminary Plan Amendment and the following findings supersede all previous Planning Board findings for Preliminary Plan No. 120170210.
1. **The layout of the subdivision, including size, width, shape, orientation and density of lot(s), and location and design of roads is appropriate for the subdivision given its location and the type of development or use contemplated and the applicable requirements of Chapter 59.**

The Preliminary Plan meets all applicable sections of the Subdivision Regulations. The lot size, width, shape and orientation are appropriate for the location of the subdivision, taking into account the recommendations of the Master Plan, and for the building type and approved conditional use contemplated for the Property.

The lot was reviewed for compliance with the dimensional requirements for the R-200 zone as specified in the Zoning Ordinance. The lot will meet all the dimensional requirements for area and frontage and can accommodate the Residential Care Facility (Over 16 Persons) which can reasonably meet the width and setback requirements in that zone. A summary of this review is included in Table 1 of the Staff Report. The Preliminary Plan has been reviewed by other applicable County agencies, all of whom have recommended approval.

2. **The Preliminary Plan substantially conforms to the Master Plan.**

The Amendment is subject to the policies and recommendations contained in the 1989 Germantown Master Plan. The Master Plan discusses interrelated themes to address challenges and opportunities with respect to land development, housing, community identity, community facilities, and employment. It establishes six villages distinguished by their own identity and character, to provide a mix of housing types at varying prices, all inter-connected by a functional pedestrian/bikeway/roadway system. A town center was also designated to be developed as the downtown area of Germantown with major retail, offices, high density residential, and a cultural arts center.

The Property is located in the Clopper Village area of the Master Plan. Clopper Village is generally located south of the MARC rail line and east of Germantown Road and extends south to the Germantown greenbelt. It also includes the Germantown historic district near the MARC rail station.

The Property is not specifically referenced in the Master Plan; however, it is consistent with the intent of the Master Plan and compatible with the following recommendations contained in the Master Plan:
"The intent of this Plan is to promote a mix of housing types that can accommodate families of varying ages and income levels and allow opportunities for them to continue living in Germantown as their needs and tastes change."\(^2\)

The Amendment consists of residential housing for seniors who need personal services, supervision and assistance with the activities of daily living. The residential care facility provides a needed housing type, in a residential setting, that enables seniors to remain near families in Germantown. Therefore, the Project is consistent with this recommendation.

"The Master Plan identifies the Property as within Analysis Area No. CL-2. Due to its proximity to Dawson Farm Road (an arterial roadway) and being located in a residential area, the Property is "suitable for a child or elderly day-care center, religious facility or other similar use."\(^3\)

The proposed Residential Care Facility (Over 16 Persons) is similar to an elderly day-care center in that both facilities provide services and activities to assist with daily living for seniors. Such services generally include social activities, health care, meals, and recreation. Both facilities would generate similar morning and afternoon vehicular traffic and deliveries. However, the use is a less intense use because 1) the residents live on-site, 2) generally do not drive personal vehicles, and 3) utilize shuttle services for transportation. Therefore, the Project is consistent with this recommendation.

**Transportation**

As discussed below, the Preliminary Plan is consistent with the transportation elements of the 2018 *Master Plan of Highways and Transitways*, the 2018 *Bicycle Master Plan*, and 1989 *Germantown Master Plan*.

**Master-Planned Roadways**

The Subject Property has frontage on Dawson Farm Road and Liberty Mill Road. Dawson Farm Road is classified as a four-lane arterial road with a 100-foot right-of-way (ROW). Dawson Farm Road is built to its full master plan width, including four travel lanes, dual bike lanes, a 5-foot sidewalk on the north side and an 8-foot-wide shared use path on the south side.

Liberty Mill Road is classified as a two-lane primary residential street with a 70-foot ROW. The existing ROW is 75 feet wide and improved with two travel lanes and 5-foot-wide sidewalk on both sides. The existing sidewalk along the Property's frontage is located on the Subject Property.

\(^3\) Germantown Master Plan, 1989, p. 63.
Proposed Improvements
As conditioned, the section of Liberty Mill Road from Dawson Farm Road to Pepper Court will be improved on the north side with a 10-foot-wide shared-use path.

The 2018 Bicycle Master Plan (BMP) recommends a 10-foot-wide shared-use-path (SUP) to be constructed along this segment of Liberty Mill Road; however, the BMP doesn’t specify which side of the road the shared-use path should be constructed on. The north side of Liberty Mill Road, along the frontage of the Germantown Elementary School is preferable because it will be easily accessible by students and is on the same side as the northern segment of Liberty Mill Road east of Dawson Farm Road towards the railroad tracks. Installing the path on the southside would have negative impacts to the Subject Property, among them being the removal of a large specimen tree. This proposal places the shared used path on the north side of Liberty Mill Road, abutting the Germantown Elementary School. This improvement is to be constructed in lieu of construction along the immediate frontage of the Subject Property, which already includes an existing sidewalk and green panel.

The Bicycle Master Plan additionally recommends a shared use path on the south side of Dawson Farm Road fronting the Subject Property. At present, a shared use path as well as an on-street bike lane are provided along the frontage. However, the sidepath is constructed to an 8-ft wide standard, which is below the minimum 10-ft-wide standard of the Bicycle Master Plan. However, impacts to the existing frontage to expand the sidepath to current standards would be significant, including the removal of all existing mature trees fronting the road on the Subject Property, currently providing shade and screening, and requiring additional ROW dedication beyond the Master Plan requirement of 100-foot width. The shift of the Property line would additionally require the redesign of the building to meet setback requirements, causing a revision to the approved Conditional Use plan. Additionally, concerns over the adequacy of the 8-foot-wide standard are significantly reduced by the presence of the on-street bike lane, which provides an alternative for cyclists, as is the shoulder on Dawson Farm Road. In lieu of improving this section of path along Dawson Farm Road, the Applicant has agreed to construct an off-site 10-foot-wide shared use path to extend from the frontage of the Germantown Elementary School to Pepper Court to the south.

As conditioned, the Applicant will also improve all four of the existing bike/ped crossings for the Dawson Farm Road / Liberty Mill Road intersection by reducing turning radii of the existing corners and installing the most up-to-date ADA and bike/ped crossing standards, which will slow turning vehicles and improve bike/ped safety. The adjacent Ride On bus stop pad will also be expanded to 10 feet by 7 feet, and a 6-foot bench will be installed, as required by MCDOT.
To accommodate the existing sidewalk within the public ROW, the Applicant is dedicating an additional variable 6.5 feet to 6.8 feet of ROW width on the south side of Liberty Mill Road. All other ROW requirements are satisfied. As conditioned, the Preliminary Plan satisfies the requirements of the 2018 Bicycle Master Plan.

3. Public facilities will be adequate to support and service the area of the subdivision.

Access
Transportation access is adequate to serve the development by this Preliminary Plan. The Application has been reviewed by the MCDOT who in their letter dated October 7, 2021, determined that the lot has adequate vehicular access and sight distance.

Local Area Transportation Review
A transportation statement has been provided along with this Application. The Subject Property is located in the Germantown West Policy Area. As shown in Table 2 in the Staff Report, the use will generate a net of 34 AM and 49 PM peak-hour net new person trips. The trip generation rate falls below the 50-person peak-hour Local Area Transportation Review (LATR) threshold and is exempt from additional review.

Circulation and Connectivity
The Property will be accessed via a new driveway off Liberty Mill Road. The driveway will provide direct access to the main entrance, service bay, and surface parking. A lead-in walkway will connect the entrance to the sidewalk along Liberty Mill Road. Access and circulation, as provided, are safe and adequate for the use.

Public Transit Service
Ride-on routes 71 and 75 provide service directly in front of the Subject Property on Dawson Farm Road. As conditioned, the Applicant will reconstruct this bus stop with a larger pad and new bench. Additionally, Ride-on route 61 provides service along Germantown Road, approximately 1,000 ft. to the northwest.

Schools Facilities Test
A Residential Care Facility (Over 16 persons) does not produce any school aged children. Therefore, this Application is exempt from school facilities testing.

Other Public Facilities and Services
Other public facilities and services are available and adequate to serve the lot. The Subject Property is in the W-1 and S-1 water and sewer service categories, respectively, and utilizes public water and sewer service. There is adequate sewer and water facilities to serve the Property through the on-site sewer main and water line in Liberty Mill Road.

The Application was reviewed by the MCDPS, Fire Department Access and Water Supply Section, and a Fire Access Plan was approved on October 14, 2021. The Fire Department Access Plan provides fire code compliant access from Liberty Mill Road to the Residential Care Facility. Other utilities, public facilities and services, such as electric, telecommunications, police stations, firehouses and health services are currently operating within the standards set by the 2020-2024 Growth and Infrastructure Policy in effect at the time that the Application was submitted.

4. The Application satisfies all the applicable requirements of the Forest Conservation Law, Montgomery County Code Chapter 22A.

Natural Resource Inventory/Forest Stand Delineation
The Natural Resource Inventory/Forest Stand Delineation (“NRI/FSD”) 420161070 for this Property was approved on February 5, 2016. The NRI/FSD identifies the environmental constraints and forest resources on the Subject Property. The NRI/FSD calls out the Property to be a total of 3.63 acres (prior to right-of-way dedication) with no forest on the Subject Property. The NRI/FSD shows an intermittent stream that begins approximately 50-ft offsite off of the southeast corner of the Property. The associated stream valley buffer (“SVB”) extends onto the Subject Property with about 2,900 sq ft (0.07 acres) being on the Property.

A. Forest Conservation

The Board finds that as conditioned, the Forest Conservation Plan complies with the requirements of the Forest Conservation Law and is in compliance with the Montgomery County Planning Department's Environmental Guidelines.

On March 12, 2021 the Applicant submitted an amendment to the approved FFCP addressing the requirements of Chapter 22A of the of the Montgomery County Forest Conservation Law (“FCL”) and Forest Conservation Regulations. The Subject Property is zoned R-200 and assigned a Land Use Category of High Density Residential as defined in Section 22A-3 of the FCL and in the Land Use Table of the Trees
Technical Manual. This results in an afforestation requirement of 15% and a conservation threshold of 20% of the Net Tract Area.

As shown on the FFCP, the total Net Tract Area for forest conservation purposes is 3.90 acres. This includes the gross tract of 3.63 acres plus 0.27 acres for offsite work associated with this Application. There is no forest on the Subject Property which results in an afforestation requirement of 0.59 acres. The Applicant proposes to meet this requirement through purchasing the necessary credits in an off-site forest bank or submitting a fee-in-lieu payment if no forest banks are available.

The approved NRI/FSD and the FFCP approved with the Preliminary Plan both show a small segment of SVB on the Subject Property in the southeast corner of the site of about 2,900 sq. ft. (0.07 acres). The original FFCP showed no encroachments into the SVB. However, the current FFCP Amendment shows a SWM outfall and easement in the area of the SVB. This SWM outfall and easement bisect the SVB and create two small segments of 300 sq. ft. and 2,000 sq. ft. that would typically be placed into a Category I Conservation Easement. In addition, the onsite SVB is disconnected from the main SVB of the intermittent stream by an existing WSSC easement along the southern property line of the Subject Property. In this very specific case, recording two small segments of standalone separate Category I Conservation Easements does not support the ecological concept of a Category I Conservation Easement. These small standalone Conservation Easement areas also create a very difficult condition to enforce. Therefore, as conditioned, the Applicant will not record a Category I Conservation Easement over the SVB on the Subject Property and will add the area of 2,300 sq. ft. (0.05 acres) of SVB to the 0.59-acre afforestation requirement on the amended FFCP resulting in a total FFCP requirement of 0.64 acres.

B. Forest Conservation Variance

Section 22A-12(b)(3) of the Forest Conservation Law identifies certain individual trees as high priority for retention and protection ("Protected Trees"). Any impact to these Protected Trees, including removal or any disturbance within a Protected Tree's critical root zone ("CRZ"), requires a variance under Section 22A-12(b)(3) ("Variance"). Otherwise, such resources must be left in an undisturbed condition.

This Application will require the CRZ impact to three (3) Protected Trees as identified in the Staff Report. In accordance with Section 22A-21(a), the Applicant requested a Variance, and the Board finds that the
Applicant would suffer unwarranted hardship by being denied reasonable and significant use of the Subject Property without the Variance.

Unwarranted Hardship Basis

Per Section 22A-21, a variance may only be granted if the Planning Board finds that leaving the requested trees in an undisturbed state would result in unwarranted hardship, denying the Applicant reasonable and significant use of its property. In this case, the unwarranted hardship is caused by the necessary layout of the development on the Property and the conditions of the subject trees. The three trees requested to be impacted are all located within the developable area of the Property and the inability to remove these trees would potentially render the Property undevelopable for a residential care facility (over 16 persons), which is a significant and reasonable use of the Property. Therefore, the Applicant has a sufficient unwarranted hardship to justify a variance request.

Section 22A-21 of the County Forest Conservation Law sets forth the findings that must be made by the Planning Board or Planning Director, as appropriate, in order for a variance to be granted.

The Board makes the following findings necessary to grant the Variance:

1. Granting the Variance will not confer on the Applicant a special privilege that would be denied to other applicants.

   Granting the Variance will not confer a special privilege on the Applicant as the impact to the three trees is due to the location of the trees and necessary site design requirements. Therefore, the granting of this Variance is not a special privilege that would be denied to other applicants.

2. The need for the Variance is not based on conditions or circumstances which are the result of the actions by the Applicant.

   The Variance is not based on conditions or circumstances which are the result of actions by the Applicant. The requested Variance is based upon the existing site conditions and necessary design requirements of this Application.

3. The need for the Variance is not based on a condition related to land or building use, either permitted or non-conforming, on a neighboring property.

   The requested Variance is a result of the existing conditions and not as a result of land or building use on a neighboring property.
4. Granting the Variance will not violate State water quality standards or cause measurable degradation in water quality.

The Variance will not violate State water quality standards or cause measurable degradation in water quality. The specimen trees being impacted will not be removed and are not located within a stream buffer, wetland or special protection area. Therefore, the project will not violate State water quality standards or cause measurable degradation in water quality.

No mitigation is required for Protected Trees impacted but retained.

5. All stormwater management, water quality plan, and floodplain requirements of Chapter 19 are satisfied.

The Preliminary Plan received an approved stormwater management plan approval from the Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services, Water Resources Section on July 20, 2021. The Application will meet stormwater management goals via biofiltration and microbioretention facilities.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Resolution constitutes the written opinion of the Board in this matter, and the date of this Resolution is DEC 16 2021 (which is the date that this Resolution is mailed to all parties of record); and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that any party authorized by law to take an administrative appeal must initiate such an appeal within thirty days of the date of this Resolution, consistent with the procedural rules for the judicial review of administrative agency decisions in Circuit Court (Rule 7-203, Maryland Rules).

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of a resolution adopted by the Montgomery County Planning Board of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission on motion of Commissioner Cichy, seconded by Commissioner Patterson, with Chair Anderson and Commissioners Cichy and Patterson voting in favor of the motion, Commissioner Rubin abstaining, and Commissioner Verma absent at its regular meeting held on Thursday, December 2, 2021, in Wheaton, Maryland.

Casey Anderson, Chair
Montgomery County Planning Board