

Montgomery County Planning Board

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING BOARD APPROVED PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Date: Thursday, February 12, 2026

Meeting Location: 2425 Reedie Drive, Wheaton, MD 20902

SUMMARY

The Montgomery County Planning Board met in regular session in the Wheaton Headquarters Building in Wheaton, Maryland, and via Microsoft Teams video conference on Thursday, February 12, 2026, beginning at 9:06 a.m. and adjourning at 5:11 p.m.

Present were Chair Artie Harris, Vice Chair Josh Linden, and Commissioners Shawn Bartley, James Hedrick, and Mitra Pedoeem.

Chair Harris acknowledged the passing of Marye Wells-Harley and her extensive involvement and contributions to M-NCPPC for both Montgomery and Prince George's Counties.

Items 1 through 4, Item 5, Item 6, and Item 10 were discussed in that order and reported in the attached Minutes.

The Planning Board recessed for lunch at 12:01 p.m. and reconvened in the auditorium and via video conference to return to open session at 1:02 p.m. to discuss Items 7 through 9, as reported in the attached Minutes.

Commissioner Hedrick left the meeting at 4:57 p.m. during Item 9 and was necessarily absent for the remainder of the meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:11 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Planning Board will be held on Thursday, February 19, 2026, in the Wheaton Headquarters Building in Wheaton, Maryland, and via video conference.

Rachel Roehrich

Rachel Roehrich
Technical Writer/Legal Assistant

MINUTES

Item 1. Preliminary Matters

A. Adoption of Resolutions

1. Seneca Meadows Preliminary Plan Amendment No. 11998004C - MCPB No. 25-154
2. Seneca Meadows Site Plan Amendment No. 81998037A - MCPB No. 25-155
3. Seneca Meadows Forest Conservation Plan No. F20250640 - MCPB No. 25-156

Board Action: Adopted the Resolutions above, as submitted.

Motion: Hedrick/Pedoeem

Vote: 4-0-1

Other: Commissioner Bartley abstained due to being absent for the original vote.

4. Cloverly Local Park ADA Access Improvements Water Quality Plan No. PP2025001 - MCPB No. 26-01

Board Action: Adopted the Resolution above, as submitted.

Motion: Hedrick/Pedoeem

Vote: 5-0

B. Approval of Minutes

There were no Minutes submitted for approval.

C. Other Preliminary Matters

There were no other Preliminary Matters submitted for approval.

Item 2. Record Plats (Public Hearing)

Subdivision Plat No. 220250740, Butler Farm

Staff Recommendation: Approval

Board Action: Approved Staff recommendation for approval of the Record Plat cited above, as submitted.

Motion: Hedrick/Pedoeem

Vote: 5-0

Item 3. Regulatory Extension Requests (Public Hearing)

Mahan Village Preliminary Plan No. 120250140: Regulatory Extension Request No. 3 to extend the regulatory review period until April 9, 2026.

Staff Recommendation: Approval of the Extension Request

Board Action: Approved Staff recommendation for approval of the Regulatory Extension Request cited above.

Motion: Hedrick/Pedoeem

Vote: 5-0

Item 4. Roundtable Discussion

- A. Planning Director's Report
- B. Quarterly Economic Indicators Briefing

Board Action: Received briefing.

Montgomery Planning Director, Jason Sartori, offered a multi-media presentation regarding recent updates for the Planning Department.

Mr. Sartori offered brief comments regarding Marye Wells-Harley's contributions to The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, both in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties. Mr. Sartori also discussed upcoming items for County Council work sessions and briefings as well as the new The Third Place blog post featuring Chair Harris.

Benjamin Kraft, Planner IV and Nicholas Holdzkom, Planner III, offered a multimedia presentation regarding the Quarterly Economic Indicators Report. Mr. Kraft stated the report is the 25th edition of the quarterly joint publication between the Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation (MCEDC) and Montgomery Planning. Mr. Kraft summarized the main quarter to quarter changes for Quarter 3 2025 versus Quarter 3 2024 for the unemployment rate, venture capital, active listings, office vacancy rate, median home price, and federal job change.

Mr. Kraft also discussed the trends observed in Quarter 3 2025 in greater detail for the resident labor force, federal job losses in the region from January to November 2025, the number of job seekers per job, the satellite and advanced communications industry, manufacturing employment concentration in Montgomery County, real estate indicators, office real estate vacancy rate trends, home sales, multi-family rentals, residential building permits, multifamily building permits. Mr. Holdzkom gave an overview and discussed the office building vacancy dashboard and interactive map.

Lastly, Mr. Sartori congratulated Ariel Zelaya on his new position with Prince George's Parks and Recreation.

The Board asked questions regarding the decrease/reduction in labor force, rent control, townhome data, by-right townhome development, and how the dashboard information can be used to best meet the needs of the community.

Staff offered comments and responses to the Board's questions.

Item 5. Parks Department, FY 27-32 Capital Improvements Program – Response to CE recommended FY27-32 Capital Improvement Program (CIP)

Staff Recommendation: Approve Staff response to the County Executive’s recommended FY27-32 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and transmit to the County Executive and County Council.

Board Action: Approved Staff recommendation to restore full funding of the Planning Board adopted FY27-32 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and transmittal to the County Executive and County Council

Motion: Hedrick/Pedoeem

Vote: 5-0

Ronald Peele, Parks CIP/Budget Administrator, offered a multi-media presentation regarding Montgomery Parks response to the County Executive’s recommended FY27-32 CIP. Further information can be found in the Staff Report dated February 5, 2026.

Mr. Peele stated the County Executive’s recommended reduction is \$11.2M (\$6.4M in General Obligation (GO) Bonds and \$4.8M in Current Revenue: General Funds) from the Parks FY27-32 CIP request to meet the Affordability PDF. Mr. Peele noted the County Executive’s Recommended FY27-32 CIP did not support any of the County-funded increases requested by the Planning Board, and stated Parks is requesting full restoration of the \$11.2M funding.

Mr. Peele also highlighted the impacts of the proposed County Executive’s reductions noting the reductions will affect Parks ability to implement the overall work program, affect projects that received significant Planning Board and Public support, diminish ability to sustain a world-class Parks system, affect the infrastructure rehabilitation program, eliminate all requested increases to the Natural Surface Trails program, affect ability to implement the Wheaton Regional Park Action Sports Park, and delay implementation of the Planning Board’s Solar Initiative putting Federal Tax Credits for energy efficiency at risk.

The Board asked if other agencies experienced the full elimination of funds and Staff, including Miti Figueredo, Montgomery Parks Director and Andrew Frank, Chief of the Park Development Division, offered comments and responses.

Item 6. 2025 North Bethesda Biennial Monitoring Report

Staff Recommendation: Transmit the 2025 North Bethesda Biennial Monitoring Report to the County Executive and the County Council.

Board Action: Approved Staff recommendation to transmit the 2025 North Bethesda Biennial Monitoring Report to the County Executive and the County Council.

Motion: Hedrick/Pedoeem

Vote: 5-0

Audrey Vogel, Planner III, offered a multi-media presentation regarding the 2025 North Bethesda Biennial Monitoring Report. Further information can be found in the Staff Report dated January 15, 2026.

Ms. Vogel stated the 2025 North Bethesda Sector Plan Biennial Monitoring Report (NBBMR) summarizes recent efforts to implement the 2010 White Flint Sector Plan. Ms. Vogel also stated the report contents include development approvals, staging prerequisites, public facilities and amenities, mobility, Capital Improvements Program (CIP), advisory committee feedback, and recommendations.

Ms. Vogel discussed key highlights from the 2025 report for development approvals, public facilities, and mobility in greater detail. Ms. Vogel stated the report was shared with the North Bethesda IAC and noted comments were received regarding continued interest in the architectural compatibility, sustainability, and transit goals. Lastly, Ms. Vogel discussed next steps.

The Board asked questions regarding the amount of motor vehicle crashes, staging allocation requests, if goals are met, and reasoning for requiring projects to come before the Planning Board for staging allocation if the phase capacity is not met.

Staff, including Elza Hisel-McCoy, Chief of West County Planning, offered comments and responses to the Board's questions.

The Board held further discussion regarding staging allocation requests and suggested reviewing or changing requirements before the next biennial report to potentially allow for director level approval.

Item 10. Legislative Update

A. SB 267 Land Use – Residential Housing – Oversight, Regulation, and Taxation (Building Affordably in My Back Yard Act)

Staff Recommendation: Informational

Board Action: The Board agreed by consensus to move forward as informational.

B. SB 158 Counties – Construction of Sidewalks and Crosswalks – Safe Alternative Routes to Public Schools

Staff Recommendation: Informational

Board Action: The Board agreed by consensus to move forward as informational.

C. HB 778 Land Use – Middle Housing Options – Requirements

Staff Recommendation: Support with Amendments

Board Action: Approved Staff recommendation to support with amendments.

Motion: Hedrick/Pedoeem

Vote: 5-0

D. SB 342/ HB 331 Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program

Staff Recommendation: Support with Amendments

Board Action: Approved Staff recommendation to support with amendments.

Motion: Hedrick/Pedoeem

Vote: 5-0

E. HB 654/SB 638 – Natural Resources – Maryland Heritage Areas Authority – Funding and Grant

Staff Recommendation: Informational

Board Action: The Board agreed by consensus to move forward as informational.

Debra Borden, General Counsel and Jordan Baucum Colbert, Senior Government Affairs Analyst, gave an overview and briefed the Board on Bills SB 267, SB 158, HB 778, SB 342/HB 331, and HB 654/SB 638. Further information on the bills can be found under the Agenda for February 12, 2026.

SB 267 Land Use – Residential Housing – Oversight, Regulation, and Taxation (Building Affordably in My Back Yard Act)

Ms. Borden stated the bill establishes certain policies and processes to facilitate the development of residential housing in the State and requires an entity that owns residential real property in the State to make a certain certification to the Department of Housing and Community Development. This bill also authorizes a local jurisdiction to establish an administrative process to review, approve, modify, or deny certain housing development project applications. Additionally, this bill requires certain local jurisdictions and the Maryland–National Capital Park and Planning Commission to establish

processes to evaluate the completeness of residential or mixed–use development project applications. It specifies the standards applicable to certain complete and approved development applications.

Ms. Borden noted Staff feels this bill will inform other housing bills introduced into session this year and some aspects of the bill may inform other bills, mainly the Silver and Starter Homes Act. Ms. Borden noted Staff has drafted amendments and would recommend support of the bill with amendments.

The Board held discussion and offered comments regarding the good elements of the bill, but noted support could not be given at this time due to how the bill is arranged at this time.

The Board agreed by consensus to move forward as informational.

SB 158 Counties – Construction of Sidewalks and Crosswalks – Safe Alternative Routes to Public Schools

Ms. Borden stated SB 158 requires a County Board of Education to prepare and post to the County's website a report that identifies pathways that public-school students who are ineligible for transportation services may use to travel to school using only safe alternative routes under certain circumstances every year. The bill would also require the governing body of a County to review the report and construct any sidewalks and crosswalks necessary to create safe alternative routes for public school students under certain circumstances every year.

Ms. Borden proposed not providing a position statement and providing an informational sheet as the bill is geared toward the school systems, coordination will be needed, and the school systems will need time to implement.

The Board asked questions regarding the Safe Routes to School Program, potential timeline for implementation and construction, funding, and likelihood of the bill progressing.

Staff, including Jason Sartori, Planning Director and Eli Glazier, Transportation Planner III, offered comments and responses to the Board's questions.

The Board agreed by consensus to move forward as informational with comments regarding extending the implementation timeline and aligning policies of the Pedestrian Master Plan with aspects of the bill.

HB 778 Land Use – Middle Housing Options – Requirements

Ms. Borden stated HB 778 requires certain Maryland jurisdictions to take a more proactive role in expanding housing opportunities—particularly middle housing—by rethinking how underutilized vacant land can be used and by updating local planning

and zoning practices. It also alters the requirements for the housing element of a certain comprehensive plan; requiring local jurisdictions to establish certain policies and adopt certain local laws to promote and encourage building middle housing units on certain land. Ms. Borden briefly discussed Staff's comments and recommended supporting with amendments.

The Board asked questions regarding how the bill would impact the Master Planning process and Lisa Govoni, Housing, Infrastructure and Zoning Supervisor, offered comments and responses.

The Board also offered comments regarding better defining "vacant" and further clarity as to what by-right subdivision context would be.

The Board agreed to support the bill with amendments.

SB 342/HB 331 Maryland Beverage Container Recycling Refund and Litter Reduction Program

Ms. Borden stated SB 342/HB 331 aims to reduce litter in parks and waterways, helping counties meet trash-reduction requirements and improve water quality. Ms. Borden also stated "The Bottle Bill" would create a statewide bottle-deposit program that will meaningfully cut litter and boosts recycling. It also puts the responsibility on beverage producers to fund and manage the system through a stewardship organization, with strong redemption targets of 70 percent by 2030 and 90 percent by 2033.

The Board asked if the Parks department was supportive of the bill and if glass or plastic would be included in the statewide bottle-deposit program. Staff offered comments and responses.

The Board agreed to support the bill with amendments.

HB 654/SB 638 Natural Resources – Maryland Heritage Areas Authority – Funding and Grant

Ms. Borden stated HB 654/SB 638 would lower the amount available for Non-Capital grants and will also decrease the percentage from 10 percent to 7 percent of Program Open Space funds transferred to the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority Financing Fund that may be used for certain operating expenses. It also repeals a provision of law authorizing the distribution of up to \$300,000 to the Maryland Historical Trust. Ms. Borden noted Montgomery Parks Staff would like to submit information comments regarding the impacts of decreasing funding levels and Staff would also like to engage with the sponsor to discuss the bill and concerns.

The Board asked if the Parks Department has tried to engage with the bill sponsor previously and potential impacts to Parks.

Montgomery County Planning Board
Public Meeting Minutes of February 12, 2026

Cassandra Michaud, Parks Cultural Resource Stewardship Supervisor offered comments and responses to the Board's questions.

The Board agreed by consensus to move forward as informational.

Item 7. Friendship Heights Sector Plan Preliminary Recommendations Briefing

Board Action: Received briefing.

Atara Margolies, Planner III, offered a multi-media presentation regarding the preliminary recommendations for the Friendship Heights Sector Plan. Further information can be found in the Staff Report dated February 5, 2026.

Ms. Margolies discussed the Plan schedule, Plan vision and themes, and four overarching goals including: enhancing existing connections and create safer ways for people to walk, bike or ride between Friendship Heights and the surrounding communities; providing new experiences for social connection, activity, and respite in parks and public spaces throughout the Plan Area; strengthening the Wisconsin Avenue corridor as a center of activity with opportunities for economic growth; and achieving a resilient urban area that strives to mitigate climate change impacts.

Alex Pemberton, Planner III, discussed the economic development analysis performed for the Friendship Heights Plan area as well as the real estate market analysis, office market context, retail market context, and residential market context.

Ms. Margolies; Bhavna Sivasubramanian, Planner II; Tyler Milam, Planner II; Audrey Vogel, Planner III; Hye-Soo Baek, Planner III; Ronnetta Zack-Williams, Transportation Planner II; Cristina Sasaki, Park Planner III; John Liebertz, Cultural Resources Planner III; and Halley Johnson, Planner II discussed preliminary goals and recommendations for land use and zoning, housing, urban design, community amenities, schools, transportation, parks and public spaces, historic resources, and environment in greater detail.

Lastly, Ms. Margolies discussed the next steps noting the Working Draft is expected by Summer 2026.

The Board asked questions regarding height transitions to adjacent residential neighborhoods, proposed overlay zone height restrictions, potential for inclusion of condominium housing types, streetscape, responsibility for the bike facility on Western Avenue, reasoning for expanding parking supply, potential sites for adaptive reuse, and why adaptive reuse is good environmentally.

Staff, including Elza Hisel-McCoy, Chief of West County Planning, offered comments and responses to the Board's questions.

The Board held further discussion regarding the recommendation for a Design Advisory Panel, elevating the social cohesion goal for community amenities, and stream valley buffers. The Board also suggested reviewing the pros and cons of having a Design Advisory Panel.

Item 8. ZTA 26-01, Commercial Uses – Data Centers (Public Testimony Accepted)

Staff Recommendation: The Planning Board transmit comments and a Climate Assessment to the District Council.

Board Action: Approved Staff recommendation to transmit comments and a Climate Assessment with additional comments discussed during the meeting to the District Council, as stated in a transmittal letter to be prepared at a later date.

Motion: Hedrick/Pedoeem

Vote: 5-0

Benjamin Berbert, Planner IV, offered a multi-media presentation regarding ZTA 26-01, Commercial Uses – Data Centers. Further information can be found in the Staff Report dated February 5, 2026.

Mr. Berbert stated ZTA 26-01 creates a use and a definition for Data Center and establishes conditional use standards for Data Centers in the Industrial Zones. Specifies that a Data Center is only allowed by conditional use in Industrial Zones and establishes additional standards to mitigate any potential negative impacts of a Data Center, including visual, environmental, and to community resources. Mr. Berbert discussed Staff's concerns, recommendations, and proposed Climate Assessment recommendations in greater detail.

Mr. Berbert also noted correspondence received recommending a moratorium and reasons given for recommending a moratorium. Mr. Berbert noted Planning Staff is not taking a strong position on the moratorium and noted the County Council would be the governing body to decide whether or not to move forward with a moratorium.

Casey Cirner of Miles and Stockbridge offered testimony on behalf of Atmosphere Data Centers regarding support for the proposed amendments with the request to allow the usage of metal fencing to surround data centers and suggested the requested moratorium is not necessary at this time.

Douglas Siglin of the Chesapeake Climate Action Network offered testimony recommending an energy amendment regarding the size of data centers, utilizing the Carbon Usage Effectiveness ratio as a benchmark, and allowing compliance through on-site clean energy procurement.

Karen Metchis of the Climate Coalition Montgomery County and the Sierra Club of Montgomery County offered testimony regarding reasoning for requesting a moratorium.

Caroline Taylor of Montgomery Countryside Alliance offered testimony supporting a data center use, but noted more time is needed to answer necessary questions and suggested a moratorium.

Montgomery County Planning Board
Public Meeting Minutes of February 12, 2026

The Board asked questions regarding sub-definitions, size and intensity usage, whether there have been studies on the usage or impacts of data centers, and if other jurisdictions have provided use standards.

Staff, including Amy Lindsey, Environmental Regulatory Supervisor, offered comments and responses to the Board's questions.

The Board held further discussion regarding the testimony suggesting a moratorium and the need for strengthening the language for the first recommendation of the Climate Assessment. The Board was not supportive of a moratorium and requested additional comments regarding County and State climate goals, utilizing the Carbon Usage Effectiveness ratio, and allowing compliance through on-site renewable energy generation, storage, or procurement be added to the first recommendation for the Climate Assessment.

Item 9. Review of County Executive's Recommended FY27 Capital Budget and FY27-32 Capital Improvement Program – Transportation

Staff Recommendation: Staff recommends sending comments to the Transportation and Environment Committee.

Board Action: Approved Staff recommendation to transmit comments and additional comments discussed during the meeting, to the Transportation and Environment Committee, as stated in a transmittal letter to be prepared at a later date.

Motion: Pedoeem/Linden

Vote: 4-0

Other: Commissioner Hedrick was necessarily absent.

David Anspacher, Chief of Transportation Planning and Karen Gouws-Dewar, Planning Associate, offered a multi-media presentation regarding the County Executive's Recommended FY27 Capital Budget and FY27-32 Capital Improvement Program – Transportation. Further information can be found in the Staff Report dated February 5, 2026.

Mr. Anspacher stated the recommended FY27-32 CIP funding totals \$8.6 billion, with 26.7 percent (approximately \$2.3 billion) allocated for transportation projects.

Ms. Gouws-Dewar gave an overview of the transportation funding by category noting the top allocations are for mass transit, highway maintenance, and pedestrian facilities/bikeways. Ms. Gouws-Dewar discussed the eleven new projects, projects with significant decreased funding, projects with significant increased funding, highway maintenance funding, and project deferrals with funding shifted beyond 6 years in greater detail.

Ms. Gouws-Dewar also discussed Staff's recommendations for BRT MD 355 North, the Forest Glen Passageway, Observation Drive Extended, the Summit Avenue Extension, the Wheaton CBD BiPPA, the Purple Line BiPPA, the Cherry Hill Road Bike Facility, US 29 Pedestrian and Bicycle Improvements, the Germantown Area combined BiPPA, and full lighting of the Capital Crescent Trail between Bethesda and Silver Spring. Lastly, Mr. Anspacher noted a change to Page 2 of the Staff Report

The Board asked questions regarding reasoning for listing new projects for Gaithersburg and Rockville, if the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) MD 355 South/North transit funding decrease was due to reduced funding from the Op Lanes Maryland funding agreement, location of the BRT MD 355 North/South segment, if funding was obtained for the BRT MD 355 central portion, reasoning for the US 29 Phase 2 funding increase, and whether there has been any further discussion regarding the Capital Crescent Trail tunnel.

Staff offered comments and responses to the Board's questions.

Montgomery County Planning Board
Public Meeting Minutes of February 12, 2026

The Board also suggested an additional comment regarding the interest for increasing the scope and funding for the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) Bus Priority Program.