



LITTLE FALLS WATERSHED ALLIANCE

EDUCATION - ACTION - STEWARDSHIP

Sarah Morse
Executive Director

Board of Directors:

Jack Sobel
President

Karen Thornton
Vice President

Sara Schneeberg
Robinson
Secretary

George Wyeth
Treasurer

Mikel Moore

Laurie Fink

**Testimony of Jack Sobel
President, Little Falls Watershed Alliance
Montgomery County Council Public Hearing on
The FY23 Capital Budget and FY23-28 CIP (CIP)
Tuesday, February 8, 2022, 7:30 – 9:30PM**

Good evening and thanks for the opportunity to testify tonight. **I'm Jack Sobel, President of the Little Falls Watershed Alliance (LFWA), an environmental stewardship group for the Little Falls Watershed.** The Montgomery County portion of our watershed lies within Bethesda and Chevy Chase. We have over 5,000 members and work closely with our community on projects and issues affecting our natural resources. Our watershed contains many cherished county resources including the heavily used Little Falls Stream Valley Park and Capital Crescent Trail; and will be the future home of the promised Willett Branch Stream Valley Park. **On behalf of LFWA, our 5,000+ members and our community; I am here to testify in support of the Montgomery County Parks Capital Improvements Program and urge you to restore the full \$19.4 million or 7.3% that was cut from the amount requested by the Parks Department as the minimum necessary to adequately support our parks.**

Among the many reasons to prioritize, restore and increase Parks funding, four critical factors currently stand out:

1. COVID: The pandemic has greatly accelerated the public's already increasing demand for and use of county parks. The Capital Crescent Trail and Little Falls Park became so crowded that Little Falls Parkway was opened for pedestrians and bikers on weekends. This increased use is likely to continue beyond pandemic.
2. THRIVE50 (continued population growth): Thrive Montgomery 2050, county government and the Montgomery County Council all seem to recognize and support increasing and accelerating population growth that will further increase demand for, use of, and strain on our county parks.
3. CLIMATE CHANGE: Climate change increases the stress on existing parks & park infrastructure, the use of these green spaces that help mitigate some local effects, and the responsibility on us to protect additional spaces for current and future generations.
4. URBANIZATION, STORMWATER & FLOODING: For the foreseeable future, both 2 & 3 above will increase demand for parks and green space and exacerbate the problems existing ones are already facing. Ex: Little Falls Pedestrian Bridge.

Restoration of the full \$19.4 million cut would help prevent cuts to the following programs we think are especially important:

- Legacy Open Space, the park acquisition program.
- Funds for repairs and improvement to park roads, especially related to stormwater.
- Annual funding for lifecycle replacement of park infrastructure and amenities.

Board@lfwa.org



4920 Dorset Avenue, Chevy Chase, MD 20815 ▪ www.LFWA.org

Little Falls Watershed Alliance is a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization. All donations are tax deductible.

Jack Sobel LFWA Testimony on Montgomery Co Parks-FY23 Capital Budget and FY23-28 CIP

- Annual funding to meet mandates under the Clean Water Act.
- Annual funding to add amenities in urban areas.
- Annual funding to support rehabilitation and expansion of trail network.

Restoration of the Montgomery Parks Capital Improvements Program is critical to protect the value of and maximize public enjoyment of our county assets including the Little Falls Stream Valley Park, the Capital Crescent Trail and the future Willett Branch Stream Valley Park. LFWA has worked effectively with the County on implementing several joint projects to protect park and stream resources including regular stream cleanups, water quality monitoring, elimination of invasive species, planting and protections of native species, installation and education regarding rain gardens, and education, distribution and installation of rain barrels. As the redevelopment of properties within the Westbard Sector Plan proceeds, we look forward to the development and implementation of strong stormwater protection programs to improve the health of the Willett and Little Falls branches, maximize their value, and ensure the development and full potential of the Willett Branch Stream Valley Park as a community and county asset.

LFWA has a new Strategic Plan and several new and exciting projects related to it. These include a Bacteria Monitoring program, a Salt Watch Monitoring program, and an Autonomous Water Quality Monitoring Program. LFWA's Annual Meeting will be held on February 27th via ZOOM and I'd like to invite you all to attend and learn more about our new work. Details can be found on our website at www.LFWA.org.

Jack Sobel, President
Little Falls Watershed Alliance