

Dear Council President Albornoz and Members of the Montgomery County Council:

I am writing in support of full funding for the Montgomery Parks Department's Fiscal Year 2023 operating budget.

Besides maintaining 421 parks across 37,000 acres of parkland, including community gardens and dog parks, museums and historic buildings, hundreds of miles of natural and hard surface trails, the Parks Department provides programs and services that appeal to every interest and ability, like nature centers, concerts and exercise classes, and natural resources conservation.

In addition to using Parks Department playgrounds and fields for entertaining my very active four-year-old grandson and playing softball as a member of my office team, for more than a decade I have served as a Parks Department archaeology volunteer. In that role, on numerous occasions I have participated in Parks Department-sponsored archaeology-related public events and outreach programs. In each instance, I have seen firsthand the positive impact the Parks Department has on Montgomery County residents, both adults and children, by providing valuable historical information in conjunction with engaging educational activities. Further, as a member of the archaeology crew that began working in 2009 at what is now the Josiah Henson Museum and Park in North Bethesda, I have had the opportunity to see that project develop from an excavation site to a first-class museum complex that benefits visitors by telling the important story about the life and challenges of Reverend Josiah Henson, enslavement in Maryland, and the ongoing struggles for racial equality and justice.

Without full funding, the Parks Department undoubtedly will have to reduce spending on historical outreach events and facilities such as the Henson Museum, to say nothing of maintenance of infrastructure, including ballfields, basketball and tennis courts, and hard surface trails. At a time when Montgomery County residents have come to rely more than ever on our parks facilities for exercise and social gathering, and with Parks Department events and programs now being restarted as covid restrictions are relaxed, the Parks Department needs more resources, not less.

Please vote to restore the reductions as full Parks Department funding is needed to maintain and sustain our park system during a time of unprecedented usage and demand.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Bollwerk". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "P".

Paul Bollwerk