

Written Testimony: Montgomery County FY27 Operating Budget

TO: Montgomery County Council

FROM: Mike Rubinfeld

DATE: April 2, 2026

RE: Opposition to Proposed Property Tax Increases and Call for Fiscal Accountability

Introduction

Council President Fani-González and Members of the County Council, thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed Fiscal Year 2027 Operating Budget. My name is Mike Rubinfeld, and I am a resident of Bethesda. I'm writing to express my firm opposition to this latest proposed **6% property tax increase** and to call for a return to disciplined, priority-based budgeting that reflects the needs of the majority of Montgomery County residents.

Fiscal Responsibility and Accountability

This budget exercise must be one of accountability. This is way overdue. Much like the citizens of this county are required to manage our own household finances, the county government should be held to the same standard. Budgeting is about making difficult choices—none of us can simply decide to outspend what we can afford and expect someone else to foot the bill.

It is unacceptable to expect ordinary citizens to shoulder the burden of an administration that refuses to live within its means. Following the previous **4.7% property tax increase** many residents—me included—have seen personal property taxes rise more than **20% in the last 5 years. That doesn't include a 200% increase in recordation taxes** the year prior that makes buying and selling our homes even more expensive. This is not a recipe for the "affordable housing" this county claims to champion.

Distinguishing "Needs" from "Wants"

While there is no shortage of initiatives, the Council must distinguish between essential needs and "feel-good" projects.

- **Prioritize Education and Core Services:** School funding is a necessity, but these funds must be found through disciplined spending elsewhere, not by treating local taxpayers like the U.S. Mint.

- **Re-evaluate Pet Project Spending:** I ask the Council to consider if residents deem the value of newly constructed, unused bike lanes, pedestrian oriented road closures, gas leaf blower ban enforcement, traffic cameras, ubiquitous no turn on red signs, police drones and other wasteful and poorly conceived initiatives, commensurate with their proposed 26%+ property tax increase over the last 5 years.
- **Infrastructure over Ideology:** Residents want well-funded, safe and effective schools, well-maintained roads, reliable and timely snow removal and safe neighborhoods. Instead, we see funding directed toward wasteful, ineffective headline-worthy projects that only serve to build the political resumes of our elected officials and represent the vocal minority of residents.

The Path to True Affordability and Safety

If the goal is truly to make Montgomery County more affordable and safer, I propose a shift in strategy:

- **Housing:** It's critical that we eliminate layers of legislation and development roadblocks to make all housing more affordable and to increase the tax base. At present nearly six figures are spent on every new home in regulatory costs that add zero value for the homeowner. The county's recent natural gas ban further illustrates a complete lack of understanding not only of constituent preferences, but also how their decisions impact its residents. By way of this policy, the county is granting a monopoly to PEPCO which will drive utility bills higher for everyone in this county. What's worse is that more than 20% of PEPCO's electricity is generated from natural gas! Do we have an adequate electrical grid in place to service all of the residents here when we're a fully electric county. Has anyone thought that through?
- **Road Safety:** Instead of unreachable "zero fatality" goals that lead to unused bike lanes and frustrating "no turn on red" signs, we should invest in driver education. Spend money on more instructors and more stringent licensing standards. Speed cameras and lower speed limits are not a substitute for teaching people how to drive and to cross the street responsibly.
- **Economic Growth:** The Council must cease its anti-business policies and make its highest priority to attract new businesses and high-paying jobs. By attracting large companies to the county, we can generate tax revenue through economic growth rather than continually and unsustainably asking existing residents to foot an endlessly increasing tax bill. The migration data speaks for itself – the county's

current policies and attitude drive businesses and residents out. It's time for a look in the mirror.

Conclusion

It is time for the local government to get on a budget and a "diet." Please remember that you were elected to represent the majority of your constituents, not just the loudest few. I ask you to reject the property tax increase and focus on the disciplined management of our shared resources. Our banks accounts are ours...not the county's.

Respectfully,

Mike Rubinfeld