

## **Copy of Oral Testimony of Vernon Ricks 04/07/2026 1:30pm**

Good afternoon. My name is Vernon Ricks, and I serve on the Board of Directors of Montgomery Community Media. It's always meaningful for me to come before you and speak about something that truly matters to me, and our residents. As someone who has served this community in public life for many years, I've seen firsthand how important it is for residents to feel informed, heard, and connected.

As Montgomery County approaches its 250th anniversary, I've been reflecting on the principles that shaped this country—principles like freedom of expression, the free exchange of information, and the belief that every voice matters.

From the very beginning, those ideals depended on people having the ability to share information, to be heard, and to participate in civic life. Here in Montgomery County, our motto is "Gardez Bien," which means to guard well. And those principles are part of what we are called to protect—ensuring that every resident has a voice and equal access to information. Those ideals should still guide us today, even though, at that time, those freedoms were not extended to everyone in this country. We know those principles matter, because we have had to fight to make them real for everyone.

That is what Montgomery Community Media does every day.

MCM is a platform for civic participation. It's where residents can tell their stories, access trusted local information, and engage with their community. At a time when local news is disappearing and

trust in media is fragile, MCM provides something increasingly rare: independent, community-centered journalism and a platform for residents to be seen and heard.

Through initiatives like The Pulse, a weekly news program, MCM is bringing critical local stories to light. Stories that inform, connect, and even prompt action in our community.

And importantly, this work is not funded by tax dollars. It is supported through cable franchise fees, a model that is declining, even as the need grows.

MCM trains the next generation, amplifies voices that might otherwise go unheard, and strengthens the connection between residents, their communities, and the government that serves them.

If we believe in the principles that shaped this country 250 years ago, then we must invest in the organizations that keep those principles alive today.

I respectfully urge the Council to continue its support of Montgomery Community Media and the vital role it plays in our community.

Thank you for your time and your leadership.