



**DPS** | Montgomery County  
Department of Permitting Services  
**YOUR PROJECT PARTNER**

**DPS Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, May 15, 2025**

**4:30 p.m. (Virtual) Microsoft Teams**

**DPSAC Members**

Chair Dean Packard; Vice Chair Neil Blanc; Karem Carpio; Rexie Fernando; Nasser Kamazani; Arquilla Ridgell; Mark Rittenberg; Sean Soboloski; Rebecca Torma; Sharon Wilder; and Debra Wylie.

**DPS Staff**

Director Rabbiah Sabbakhan, Deputy Director Ehsan Motazedi, Land Development Division Chief Linda Kobylski, Customer Support & Outreach Division Chief Gail Lucas and Senior Executive Administrative Aide Leah Ortiz.

**The meeting was called to order at 4:33 p.m.**

**Approved draft minutes from the March 20, 2025, meeting.**

**Customer Support & Outreach Division Chief Gail Lucas provided an overview of the division, its role, responsibilities and its accomplishments. The Customer Support and Outreach Division (CSO) of DPS is organized into three teams, each responsible for different types of permits:**

1. TyNeisha Thornton-Smith: Manages commercial and large residential projects.
2. Crystal Roberts: Handles smaller residential projects, including decks, sheds, additions, alterations, and land development.
3. Matthew Glick: Oversees information requests and trades permits, such as zoning, fences, signs, electrical, and mechanical permits.

The division has about 30 permit technicians, with some positions currently vacant. They are cross-trained in handling various permits and aim to provide comprehensive support for any project. Permit technicians are the first point of contact for customers and are responsible for the intake, screening, and issuance of permits. They also collect fees and manage programs like pre-design consultations and the Design for Life program. Additionally, they handle special event permits for fairs, festivals, and carnivals, ensuring all necessary licenses and permissions are obtained. The division is also involved in outreach activities, including monthly sessions with the fire department and other county organizations. They produce a podcast featuring various topics and experts. DPS strives to be a premier customer service organization, guided by a Customer Bill of Rights available in both English and Spanish. They assist customers with navigating the eServices and ePlans processes and use public and internal dashboards to manage workloads and improve processes.

**Staffing Updates:** New Chief for Commercial Division: John Catlett was hired as the new chief in April. He has extensive experience, including roles in the City of Alexandria and consulting.

Retirement in Land Development: Sherryl Mitchell, a valuable employee with over 40 years of experience, is retiring around July 15th. Her position will be filled soon.

Inspector Vacancy: Tom Weadon's section has one inspector vacancy, but hiring is paused to focus on training new inspectors due to a decline in stormwater management activities.

**ePlan Update:** Previously, you could see the date and time when a reviewer accessed files, which was useful for tracking progress. However, this feature seems to have changed with a recent update. The information is still available, but in a different location. You need to check the "Status" tab or "Workflow Status" within ProjectDox to see if a task has been accepted and by whom. You can also see live feedback by opening files and looking for change marks or exclamation points next to file names, indicating that a reviewer has made updates.

**Strategic Plan:** The strategic planning process is in its early stages. Tina Patterson is leading the effort, conducting meetings with external stakeholders, internal staff, leadership, and committees. A visioning session is scheduled soon, expected to build momentum by early June. Your participation is noted, and others are encouraged to join the discussions. More actions and deliverables are anticipated by mid-summer, with the goal of completing the strategic plan by the end of the calendar year.

**Design for Life (DFL):** No new updates from the council due to their focus on the budget season. DPS is moving forward with system changes discussed in the last meeting, including updates to the application process and adding new items to the program. Efforts to advertise these changes will begin after Building Safety Month, as the PIO, Sonya Burke, is currently focused on that. There doesn't seem to be any new enforced code related to the Design for Life program at this time.

**ICC 2024 Code Adoption:** Bryan has not provided recent updates regarding the state's adoption timeline. It's suggested that you contact the state for realistic estimates on the adoption timeline, as previous grant dates might be outdated. DPS may consider adopting the code independently, like Howard County, although it's not the preferred approach. Reach out to Bryan to initiate DPS advisory feedback and participation, like previous cycles.

**ROW Bond updates and ROW Revision Application Follow-Up:** A draft with new bond rates and multipliers was recently shared. Before finalizing, stakeholders need to provide feedback. The new multipliers aim to keep permit fees stable despite changes in construction costs. Approval from the County Executive is required. The updates will go through a public feedback process and be published in the county register. The draft will be circulated to industry groups for feedback to identify any potential issues. IT is aware of the need for updates to the right-of-way revision application process. Although not a top priority, changes are expected to be implemented soon.

**The meeting adjourned at 5:31 p.m.**

**The next meeting will be held on July 17, 2025, at 4:30 p.m.**