

**2021-2022 MCC Governing Board  
Public Hearing on FY2023 Budget and Regular Meeting  
September 22, 2021 6:30 p.m.**

**MINUTES**

**Board Members Present:** (ALL) Suzanne Le Menestrel; Carla Post; Maria Foderaro-Guertin; Barbara Zamora-Appel; Ivy Chen; Max Blacksten; Bill Glikbarg; Melanie Sletten; Lisa Mariam; Shivani Saboo; Rasheq Rahman

**Staff Members Present:** Daniel Singh, Executive Director; Ashok Karra, Comptroller; Holly Novak

**Guests:** Camila Alfonzo Meza (Supervisor Foust's office); Deb Bissen (MPA); Christopher Henzel; Norma Benner; Robert Jordan; Ned Benner; Johanna Sachse; Jeffrey Shapiro; Bill Denk; Alice Middleton; Cole Mallard; Paul Kohlenberger; Lissy John

**CONVENE MEETING**

This meeting of the Governing Board of the McLean Community Center was convened on September 22, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.

**ADOPT AGENDA** The Agenda was adopted by acclamation.

**OVERVIEW OF FY2023 BUDGET PROPOSAL**

**BACKGROUND:** Meeting-of-the-Whole on September 8 was an opportunity for the entire board to see the FY2023 Budget presentation. There was thorough Q&A that evening, as well in previous Finance Committee meetings held in August and September. At the end of 9/8 Meeting of the Whole, no further changes were requested and the FY2023 Budget was deemed ready for posting on MCC website for public review.

*For public awareness and education, Comptroller Karra explained the FY2023 Budget proposal. For any questions not answered during this meeting, Comptroller Karra said he would address it at the next meeting or respond to the individual as soon as possible in coming days. During this explanation of the published FY2023 Budget presentation, questions were raised by board members and the public -as enumerated below.*

MCC has had a strong core of financial stewardship: we have maintained 2.3c per \$100 of assessed value and we will continue to maintain that. The tax rate for FY2023 will be 2.3c per \$100 of assessed value. FY2020 and FY2021 have been challenging years for MCC, as for the whole economy: COVID-19, which has affected and impacted FY2020 and FY2021. FY2022 is predicted to be a full normal year of programming. Registration for programs has been picking up and alternative virtual programs are offered through MCC's website. FY2022 is the first year MCC has offered virtual programs. MPA handles their classes and registration on their own system; it does not run through MCC. We expect FY2023 to also be a full year of normal programming, based on priorities established in each department.

*Executive Director Singh explained a method of organizing the programming information shown in the budget:*

FY2023 is the first year of applying 'anchors' and common themes across all departments, looking at: performing arts, classes, special events – and how the budget aligns with what we've identified as priorities. In the coming year, our focus will be: diversity; equity; engaging our local community; regional destination. Our goal over three years is to make sure to hit all the categories in an equitable way. The next three major areas are: finding innovative ways to get our programming done; events around recovery and re-engaging local artists. MCC staff identified the primary column that pertains to each program and also noted other anchors and addressing multiple issues that also

apply. You will see that our main budget focus is on the McLean community: McLean Day; 4<sup>th</sup> of July; classes – all designed to benefit the local residents a lot more. Tables and columns illuminate how classes and events are organized based on the 12 thematic anchors identified.

A glossary of anchor terms is provided. *\*All FY2023 budget information is shown on MCC website as of Sept. 15, 2021.*

**Public comment:** At public meetings, it would be good to have printed hand-outs for the public who is attending ). Thank you.

**Q & A:** *\*As the budget was explained, questions and requests for clarification arose.*

We projected this way because we expect FY2023 will be a full normal year. Alden Theatre has specialized equipment – which requires their own maintenance and equipment budget.

The major expenses in PIO office are postage and printing & typeset costs for seasonal Program Guides. MCC is trying to be more ‘green’ by reducing the amount of overall printing by 30%.

*Question: Regarding reduction of 30% - is that a view across-the-board of all MCC operations, including public notifications?*

Correct. It is both for PIO/media and Special Events, because those two departments spend the most on publications. We are trying to reduce that by putting notices on social media and on the MCC website.

*Question: Is the effect to move some of the expenses from ‘printing’ to ‘managing’ social media accounts – so it’s not going to ‘zero’... but you still have all those accounts to manage?*

Correct. You will see a bit of an increase in website maintenance – that is going to go up. But in the long run, hopefully, MCC will be able to be more sustainable – keeping the actual costs down and making it ‘green.’

*Question: Regarding Compensation/Benefits for the employees – do we have any sense of the amount per person?*

MCC has a total of 32 full-time employees; remainder are all part-time and seasonal employees for camps. Some teachers and instructors are included in the payroll as contractors.

*Question: Some employers have a designation of “FTE” (full-time equivalent). You are really defining here what makes up “FTE’s.” What is the rough number of FTE’s for instruction? Which departments are heavily FTE-staffed?*

This is FTE’s... plus: contactors, over-hires for theater; instructors. Special Events has only three full-time people; the rest are all part-timers. MCC Finance Dept. has the breakdown of such information. Instruction is mostly contractors: 3 - 4 FTE’s; the rest are all part-time contractors. We have different types of employees: full-time--50-60 hours, some get benefits; some don’t; seasonal people for Camp McLean– they don’t receive benefits.

*Question: Where in the FY2023 budget is the expense for programs, classes, workshops?*

Under “Instruction” – classes, seniors classes, bridge all are shown in the “Instruction” category.

*Question: Regarding paid performers: Do we evaluate whether Performer X filled the house, while Performer Y only got ½ the audience – so we need not have them back again next year?*

*Clarification by Executive Director Singh:* We don’t base our artist contracts on revenues – because then we would never present a local artist. Anytime MCC presents a local artist, we have really poor audiences. We look at: What is our mission? How do we serve our community best? These areas have been identified in the grid – from public surveys, and from staff and the board input– and we program based on those priorities. Community centers never make money.

*Question: Do we have a sense of which kind of performance draws an audience?*

Yes, we noted that Harvest Festival is already sold out – so we are looking at next year adding an afternoon session. We don’t look at event-by-event; it’s more about whether there is an interest that we want to make sure is supported. On the flip side: sometimes there is a need that might not have the audience; but we want to build that. It might run at a loss for a few years. We will still run it because it’s an important priority.

MPA receives an estimated \$240K in-kind toward the cost of the space that MCC provides. 33% of MPA’s profits is shared with MCC. If MPA rented a regular property, this represents what it would cost them.

## CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS:

Two Capital Improvement projects were carried over from FY2022 – security and fire alarm system at OFC, which was completed as of last week. Storage shed – one is used by theater personnel for golf carts and traffic cones. It is 15 years old and rotting and must be replaced. We will have two sheds, one for Special Events and the other for theater equipment; approx. \$35K.

The next items are estimates: two EV charging stations in MCC parking lot which cost \$75K each station; \$100K for electric capacity. This cost might be zero to MCC depending on what the county will provide as they initiate such projects for all agencies; these are placeholders. Shade sails outside on the back plaza – for people to sit and relax. MCC roof – estimate is based on what was done for OFC (sq. feet) –about \$750K+. We don't know if we will have to replace it next year but are keeping it as a placeholder in case there is an issue.

**Public comment:** *Question: When you did this enormous renovation to the MCC, wasn't the roof included in that?*

No -we did not do the roof because that would have added-to and thrown-off the original construction budget of \$8M. The roof replacement is a separate project because it's not related to the renovation; it's related to what was the existing building. The renovated portion is not involved in roof replacement – only the old portion of the building.

*Question by board member: Does insurance cover it? Does MCC have to pay for it, or does it come out of Fairfax Co. general insurance?*

We have our own Fund; MCC is 'self-funded.' Now it becomes a discussion with the county – because it is their building. We need to talk about the Governing Board presenting it to the county and asking them: What are you going to do about this? This is your building. Can you do something about it? The county might actually commit to it themselves. But... we need to keep the money set aside in case there is an issue. If it's not spent, it will go back into MCC Fund.

**Public comment:** *Question: I have a question about the EV charging stations - that is ¼ million dollars. If this community center is for the local community, I would think that people could pump their gas before they get here?*

*Or charge their cars at home before they drive just a couple of miles to get here? That seems like an awful lot of expense to MCC that I think is not right.*

*Opinion expressed:* We put that in as a placeholder because: 1. We want to make sure that MCC is aligning with the county's climate action plan. One of the largest contributors to greenhouse gases in Fairfax County is transportation. A goal of the county's plan is to add additional EV charging stations.

2. While MCC is not a new building, we want to make sure that MCC is adjusting for the future; this is a placeholder. Many people in McLean may have their own charging stations; but others may not. Having that availability, as this area grows into more and more electric vehicles – is something we are looking into in alignment with Fairfax Co. planning. Our contention is to create the infrastructure. It's very possible the county will actually be paying for these things... or will work with public/private partnerships. We want to have a placeholder so as to align MCC with sustainability goals and initiatives – many of which MCC is already aligning with today: LED bulbs; pollinator garden; looking at composting here. We are making sure to prepare for the future, because we have already experienced the effects of climate change at MCC. In 2019, we had major flooding. And this past year, there was flooding from the ground-up and through the ceiling. We are already aware that this is an issue.

**Public comment:** I'm just trying to take a common-sense approach. If you have five electric cars, it's their responsibility to be able to charge their car at home before they drive three miles to get to MCC. We don't have gas pumps here for people to pump their gas here. I think it's great to do the LED lightbulbs and those things – because that's something that everyone is using in here. But a quarter of a million dollars could go toward a lot of activities here. I think seven activities for FY23 seems like very few. I would love to see more children's activities here and have the

tax money go toward something like that. It's not a new building – it sounds like it's not a requirement to have EV charging stations here. As a taxpayer, I would like to see more focus on the children and let the adults find a different place to charge their cars.

*Opinion expressed:* We'll take your views into consideration, obviously. But we're trying to prepare the infrastructure. There are three different costs that Comptroller Karra put in as a placeholder: 1. Infrastructure—electric supply upgrade 2. roof 3. the two charging stations.

**Public comment:** Just one other comment: you have the risk of creating a real 'white elephant.' We really don't know how electric cars are going to roll-out. There may end up being EV charging at every gas station – who knows? It's not the job of the community center to encourage electric vehicles. I also think you are subsidizing the wealthy because most of us can't afford electric vehicles at this point. And they can just charge-up their own cars. This is kind of 'boutique environmentalism.' I think we should stay away from that and focus on providing great MCC activities.

*Opinion expressed:* This isn't boutique environmentalism...

*Opinion expressed:* Oftentimes, parents might be coming to pick up children from activities here, straight from other things. And the convenience of being able to pull-in and charge your car...

**Public comment:** Parents have that capability. If this is a local community center, people are not traveling far to get there from their home. Parents can think ahead to buy gas before they get here or charge their cars before coming. There's no need to offer that.

**Public comment:** And how long does it take to charge a car? Are you there for two hours?

*Opinion expressed:* As a member of Capital Facilities Committee, it's also important to reiterate: the MCC Governing Board has thought about this in a 'staged' process. In order for MCC to support... whether usage by individual members of the community, or for Fairfax Co. vehicles... we need to invest at very minimum \$100K in upgrading infrastructure - parking lot electric system. The idea is that we need to be able to meet any sort of county policy that goes forward. According to the existing policy, we are trying to invest now to avoid more expensive costs later due to short-term notice. We are trying to think ahead. We invest in the infrastructure as we invest in other things - including children's programming, as well as issues of "diversity, equity and inclusion," which is key to our budget. These are all investments for the future that MCC Governing Board has looked at through our entire portfolio. We've identified anchors in order to see how we invest the resources that are provided by the taxpayers.

*Opinion expressed:* I just wanted to reiterate my support for what has just been said. I was actually the person who initiated the idea of EV charging stations at MCC. I own two plug-in hybrid cars. I commute to work in DC; many working families are coming here from DC to pick-up kids. Frankly, "range anxiety" is a big barrier for people to own electric cars. The cost is going to come down; more models are becoming available. I concur with other board members that MCC needs to plan for the future. Climate change is here and is already negatively impacting MCC facility and our community. So, I support it.

*Clarification by Executive Director Singh:* Fairfax County's recommendation was 5% of our lot – 12 spaces. Clearly, we are not going to out and invest \$900K. We want to try it out with two out of the recommended 12 spaces and see what the usage is. Based on that, we can go forward with it. The county has done its research and they are recommending that any county-owned facility is to have 5% of their lot as EV charging stations.

*Opinion expressed:* We are putting this in as a placeholder and the staff is already planning to research it, pending full funding - collaborating with the county. I expect there will be funding from other sources. But again- infrastructure is really important to us.

**Public comment:** If charging stations are put in and used by clients of MCC, I assume there will be some sort of fee structure that they will be charged to use the charging station, while county vehicles would

not be charged. It seems to me that you might want to look at that possibility in assessing the expenses.

*Opinion expressed:* There are several possible business models we could look at. We are taking it in a staged approach to make sure to provide that infrastructure) and then look at how to best serve the community by having this resource.

*Comptroller Karra continued explaining the Fund statement.*

We must work with the numbers that have already been advertised for FY2022. We project ending FY2023 with \$3.798M— with \$1M for Operating Contingency Reserve; balance is \$2.798M Capital Reserve.

*Question: FY2021 began in July 2020. During that period, MCC has been managing COVID-19 issues through this budget, and have continued to manage that, and ended-up with a surplus. That speaks to MCC staff's ability to manage this during an unprecedented pandemic. Looking forward in 2022, you said you expect it to be full operations – effectively a world that was 'before COVID-19' in terms of operations? Do we have anticipated expenditures for FY2022?*

*Clarification by Comptroller Karra:* We will do a 3Q review of FY2022 from Fairfax County in February 2022 - wherein we will revise all numbers for the current year and predict for the end of the year. We will also get revised real estate taxes proposed for FY2023. So, we will have a good idea of what the numbers will be at end of FY2022 and start of FY2023, in terms of taxes. We will have six months of actuals in February 2022; we will project what the next six months are going to be and give that to the county.

*Question: I see many reports that our property values are going up. At the existing rate, shouldn't MCC's revenue be going up? Looking at history – in the past couple of years, assessed values went up, but MCC's revenues were less than our predictions..about \$200K less in FY21; it was a surprise. If assessed values are just what they are assessing you on, people are not actually paying that. If something goes wrong, and you are due a discount or something... your value drops off. So, end result is different. We are looking at a \$22B dollar tax base in Small District 1A-Dranesville— that is very large! Thanks to the public, we have this sizeable tax base. But we don't know how it's going to turn out. We can only project from past history. The county has made some exceptions for COVID-19 if people filed for leniency or forgiveness of property taxes. It's an 'unknown;' we don't know how that is going to play out. In February 2022 we will get an accurate idea of assessed values.*

*Summary by Chair Zamora-Appel:* Thanks to Comptroller Karra, and to everyone for participating in the process. It's a complex budget that is not easy to comprehend. This process will culminate tonight with the Board approving this budget to move forward. There were no further questions expressed by board members or the public.

MOTION: To approve this budget and move forward in the process. **Unanimously approved.**

#### **APPROVE MINUTES OF RECENT MEETINGS**

Several sets of Minutes were ready to approve. Chair Zamora-Appel complimented Ms. Novak for all her work in preparing very detailed and thorough Minutes. She asked everyone to voice any questions or suggested revisions to these Minutes documents. No changes were requested. Three MOTIONS were stated to approve the following respective Minutes as written:

**MOTION:** That the Board approve the Minutes of the Governing Board Regular Meeting on July 28, 2021. **Unanimously approved.**

**MOTION:** That the Board approve the Minutes of the Governing Board Special Called Meeting on August 4, 2021. **Unanimously approved.**

**MOTION:** That the Board approve the Minutes of the Governing Board Meeting of the Whole on September 8, 2021. **Unanimously approved.**



Minutes of July 15 Strategic Planning Meeting are not yet ready and will be approved at the next meeting on October 27, 2021.

Minutes of the Special Called Meeting on September 2, 2021 are not yet ready and will be approved at the next meeting on October 27, 2021.

### **CHAIR'S REPORT / EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

Chair Zamora-Appel emphasized how great it was to see everyone this past Saturday at OFC Block Party! Many young people attended and all seemed have a great time! CapitalOne opened this weekend; but there is no comparison. We are doing a good job here; MCC is providing what is needed for our families. Meeting OFC staff, it was awesome - to see the work that actually happens with the budget that we approve here in this meeting. Chair Zamora-Appel relayed the Board's thanks to the staff. They did a really good job! There is a lot of positive chatter about MCC programming for the fall – especially outdoor programming. People are excited - especially young families. The children love picking up a pumpkin to decorate – every year, that's a big deal!

*Opinion expressed:* Congratulations to MCC staff for the Block Party! It was a lot of fun; my 23-year-old daughter picked up free stuff and had a good time! My daughter had been there as a middle-schooler; so it was nostalgic for her to go back to OFC. I was able to meet a lot of the staff whom I had never met before. It was really well done!

Looking forward - we will have training next week about FOIA for Board members.

Thank you, Rasheq for taking on the SharePoint project. We are looking forward to that because it speaks to sustainability. Moving toward this online site will reduce paper even more; but also, it will get us to a place to be better prepared for board meetings: we will have the latest information. This will be the place to see updated materials. It will help the effectiveness of the MCC Governing Board.

*Clarification by Rasheq Rahman:* I have been working with Ms. Novak and Vivian Brown, the IT specialist, and have developed a step-wise process. Ivy Chen and Max Blacksten will be the next level of users. We will be moving to two systems: 1. Fairfax County Microsoft Exchange e-mails and 2. SharePoint. This will be fully managed by the IT staff of the county and MCC's IT representative. Goals: Archiving and documentation purposes, including past documents. Having all the information in one place, it will be easier for us to do our jobs on the board. Once we are comfortable, we will be writing documentation and sharing it with the board – and hope to release the formal roll-out later this fall.

*Question:* Along those lines, is it possible for us to also get Slax or Teams?

*Clarification by Executive Director Singh:* Microsoft Office should include Microsoft Teams and is approved by Fairfax Co but Slax is not a county-approved product.

Hispanic Heritage Month – September 15 through October 15. MCC has a lot of full programming.

COVID-19 restrictions have returned and masks are required indoors.

Strategic Plan – We have been waiting on the Fairfax County process. We are looking forward to this because it will give us a chance to talk to the community at-large. Of the many thousands of people who pay real estate taxes - we would like to hear more. What people are expecting? What have their experiences been? How can MCC move forward to the future? Hopefully, that will happen in the next month.

Thank you to all the committees who have met – some have not yet convened. We look forward to those future meetings; let us know how we can assist you in launching. Max Blacksten has been very eager and helpful with a lot of good ideas! The committees are constituted with specific members – but everyone can participate if you are interested. Chair Zamora-Appel encouraged everyone to attend often – to learn something new. Each committee is a piece of a puzzle; once altogether, that's what makes MCC!

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Strategic Planning: We finally got approval on the strategic planning contract. We hope to have something finalized in the next week or so, with some dates in October to meet with the consultants. Full board and then we must think through: Having a small committee working with the consultants? Or... Having the full board be at each and every meeting? Whatever the board decides is fine; but we need to have everyone involved while also maintaining forward momentum.

MCC facility -roof update: Two different vendors have evaluated and they will come back on the same day and peel back layers to see exactly what is needed. An architect will provide an estimate for the floor aspect.

*Question: Do we have a sense of whether or not the county will provide funds?*

We don't know yet. We must define the problem and get the estimate before we can ask Fairfax Co. for support. But yes – we are informing Facilities Management dept. and keeping on-track with them. The county will let us know if there is anything they can do.

Participation: OFC had 480 people at the Block Party; it was packed; concert on Saturday had 360 people. Game night attendance has been variable at OFC – ranging between 5-12 people. Spread the word about that! McLean 5K has 314+ people registered; the highest number of advance registrants ever. Outdoor events are very popular. Harvest Festival has 40 families on the waiting list with a capacity of 500). It is very popular! We are looking at what we can do differently for next year.

*Question: Have we addressed the concerns of the neighbors?*

We arranged timed entries + security personnel directing traffic + letters going out to the nearby neighborhood.

Upcoming events: House of Terror – 50 enrollees with a 250 capacity); Monster Mash there are 89 out of 187 spots registered. OFC is also doing Trunk-or-Treat. We are getting local families to sign up to do a decorated car.

For safety control, we are buying and bagging the candy; it will be held outside - minimal interactions with people.

Classes: We have moved some classes to hybrid. It will be interesting to see if that continues. Hopefully, we can get back inside the building soon.

Internal operations: Operationally, we are working on updating our SOP's. This will flow into the county's Emergency Action Plan ...mandated that every agency initiate... or update... their Emergency Action Plan. MCC has those documents in place, but they are outdated.

Workforce staffing: We are going through a Workforce assessment of our whole organization, making sure we are on-track for equity, staffing needs, programming needs, and also managing post-COVID-19 needs.

Sustainability: Two staff members from each agency will be nominated for county-level sustainability efforts – Joe McGovern and Jennifer Garrett will lead it for MCC. Executive Director will sit-in on as many meetings as he can.

Website redevelopment: The website re-development kick-off meeting will be next week. We will start addressing such problems as cookie tracking and keeping track of which newsletter or website is being accessed - to have the ability to track usage of a QR code and other promotions.

Liaison with local groups: Executive Director Singh will make a presentation at McLean Citizens Association on October 7. It's a short 20-minute presentation about MCC.

Opportunities for Board to assist: Great upcoming opportunities to interact with residents: we need volunteers to help with McLean 5K race packet pick-up; ArtFest. MCC staff is slammed; any help you can give us is appreciated.

ACTION ITEM: Ms. Novak will send the e-mail from Mike Fisher about MCC Board members assisting with McLean 5K packet pick-up on Friday, October 1.

Social Media posts: Sabrina Anwah will send out the October social media posts toolkit to Board members.

Ally Week: Supervisor Foust will be coming to the family event for Ally week events and the inter-faith panel.

*Opinion expressed*: I want to say thank you for organizing Ally Week. I have close family members who are lesbian, and this is really important for me personally and for the community. It's important to me that these events are

open to families...as being fun, but also having meaningful discussions. Thank you to MCC staff and to Executive Director Singh for organizing that. I've signed-up and have been sharing it around on social media.

#### **LIAISON TO FRIENDS OF MCC**

Rasheq Rahman met with Cecilia Closs to establish a mutually-beneficial relationship of the MCC Governing Board with Friends of MCC organization. Friends of MCC was supposed to have met in early September but they postponed to October 4 at 7:00 p.m. Rasheq updated Cecilia with a schedule of MCC events. Friends is excited to partner with MCC for major activities. Rasheq will approach them about various opportunities for partnership and express the MCC Governing Board's ongoing mutual support. He is looking forward to that and will hopefully have more outcomes to share next month.

#### **OLD / NEW BUSINESS**

Two committees have not yet met, the Elections & Nominations Committee and the Ad hoc 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee. Therefore, no current reporting in tonight's meeting.

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#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Chair Zamora-Appel invited the public to introduce themselves and give verbal remarks if they wished. Several people had signed-up in advance to speak; all were verified as being Small District 1A-Dranesville residents. Each person was allowed three minutes to speak.

#### **Jeffrey Shapiro:**

I want to talk about the Drag Queen issue. I'm probably as tired of talking about it as you are of hearing about it; but I don't think we have gotten to the bottom of it or gotten appropriate feedback, or really had any kind of dialogue. I sort of feel like I'm talking to a wall. I know that everyone here is very energetic and focused on MCC; and this was something that MCC did. So, I do think it's an issue that needs to be discussed.

My main point is: truth is important. It's important in life, it's important in individuals and it's also important within a community. At this Drag Story Hour, the first person made a statement which I thought really captured the event: "I am a non-binary transgender woman, which is a lot of words to say that I am a normal woman that gets to define what that means for myself." That's just not a true statement that was presented to children. In the first place, I am a man... and will always be a man. And I will never be anything but a man. To say that I can be a woman whenever I want is just not presenting reality to children. Now certainly, adults may choose to participate in a fantasy. And we all know the score; we all know what this is all about. But children are different because they are still trying to understand reality and the fact that we live in the world of men and women.

So, I think that statement, with the philosophy that drove the selection of books and the presentation of the performers... I think it was an enticement to lure children into the story hour. Sort of like a pedophile luring kids into his car with candy). And then it was the lewdness, which has already been talked about. These were adult sexual performers and they were performing to little kids.

I've been somewhat disappointed that we haven't heard back and at least gotten an agreement that we're not going to do this again. We have to pay for this organization; we're in the tax district. The MCC is not supposed to be a missionary organization; it's supposed to represent the community. And right now, I think you are making war on a segment of the community. I've looked at some of the emails about this: it was instigated by the Executive Director. It was not the result of a groundswell of requests, or an 'organic' kind of event. It was instigated as a specific event by MCC and I just think it was inappropriate on many, many levels. I would like to hear that we are not going to do it again. I'm not trying to re-litigate what's past. But at least have an honest dialogue. And if you



really think that it's appropriate for this, I'd like to have a discussion and not be talking to a wall. Anyway – I'm over time and I'm going to stop now. But I just want to urge that MCC focus on representing the best of the community... but not focus on trying to help 'lift' the community to specific values, which that's the spirit that this is coming from: "We are bringing our values to the community..."

**Christopher Henzel:**

On June 26, MCC used taxpayer funds to pay drag performers to put on two performances for small children age 4 through 8. Since then, area taxpayers have repeatedly asked the MCC Governing Board this simple question: Will there will be any further taxpayers' funds spent in this way? Taxpayers have raised the issue in e-mails to the board, in the local media and during the brief period at each board meeting which is set aside for public comment. At board meetings on July 15 and July 28, Board Chair Barbara Zamora-Appel stated that there would be a public meeting of the board at which the board responded to this simple question. However, during their meetings over the summer, board members and MCC staff have urged each other not to respond to public comments.

I and other public commenters have posed this simple question to the board at meetings on: July 15, July 28, August 4, September 8, and again this evening. There has been no response. Instead, the board discussed at its special meeting on August 4 a new rule that would limit public comment. On September 8, the board held a "closed meeting" from which the public was excluded, as well as all MCC staff except for Mr. Singh. Up to now, the board has published no Minutes for its meetings since the July 15 meeting when Ms. Zamora-Appel first made this commitment. During tonight's meeting, there was a vote to approve some of the Minutes that have been built up over the summer. We heard some discussion that there seemed to be some element in some of the meetings that some members of the board didn't want to see recorded. I hope the Minutes that are ultimately published will accurately reflect the Chair's commitment to address the drag performers funding issue.

Did the board discuss funding for drag performances during its September 8 "Closed Session"?

Has it had further discussions on measures to muzzle public comment? Maybe the Minutes will tell us.

But it shouldn't be this hard to find out what the board is doing. If you on the board believe that what you are doing is right, and that Fairfax taxpayers support it, there is no need for secrecy. In view of the continuing lack of transparency surrounding the MCC and it's Governing Board, it is really frightening to me to hear this board's discussion about its budget. An operation as opaque as this one should not be entrusted with millions of dollars in taxpayer money.

**Cole Mallard (representing his wife, Kathleen Mallard, who was unable to attend) – verbal remarks presented during this meeting on 9/22:**

I'm not Kathleen but I am her husband, so she's asked me to read her remarks if that's all right.

Good evening and thank you for the opportunity to speak to you on the topic of McLean Community Center programming budget. My wife and I and our parents have resided in the MCC district for over 60 years. We appreciate the many wonderful cultural performing arts festivals, family events, and so on, by the MCC that our residential tax dollars have funded.

So, we were very upset that our tax dollars were spent to pay for the Drag Queen Story Hour for toddlers and young children sponsored by MCC with the Fairfax County Library system several months ago. And now MCC is sponsoring another event: the LGTBQ+ Ally Week next month. We've read the MCC's budgets for FY21, FY22 and proposed FY23. It's not clear which funding stream these events fall under.

Our question is really more about the appropriateness of these events for the McLean Community and how tax dollars are spent. Across this country and around the world, extremely powerful and wealthy LGTBQ lobbies are

pushing their agendas at break-neck speed. Sometimes this is done under the guise of ‘reaching out’ to LGBTQ youth who might be school drop-outs, runaways, or just confused. We’ve been told this is the rationale MCC gives for offering these LGBTQ programs.

I have a message for the MCC Board: If you want to help these youth, the most important programs you can offer are the beautiful and healthy things of this world, in the form of performing and fine arts such as classical music, literature – activities that lift them above the confusing and sometimes dangerous LGBTQ lifestyles.

The same is true for our innocent little children. The Drag Story Hours have no redeeming value but only serve to confuse them, even at times to the point of traumatizing. And finally, engage our young children with the lovely, fun music and dancing and yes, story hours that do not entail scary readers who frighten them. Thank you.

**Cole Mallard (the following comments were submitted in writing on 9/23):**

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Good evening and thank you for this opportunity to speak to you on the topic of the McLean Community Center programming budget and special thanks to Ms. Novak.

My wife and I and our parents have resided in the MCC District for a combined total of 70 years. We have enjoyed many wonderful cultural, performing arts, festivals, and family events put on by the McLean Community Center over the course of the years.

We were thus stunned by the Drag (Queen) Story Hours for toddlers and young children sponsored by MCC with the Fairfax County Library system several months ago.

And now, MCC is sponsoring another event – LGBTQ plus Ally Week in early October.

We have read the MCC budgets for FYs 21, 22 and proposed for FY23 and it is not clear which funding stream these events fall under. However, our concern is really more about the appropriateness of these events for the McLean community.

Across this country and around the world, extremely powerful and wealthy LGBTQ lobbies are pushing their agendas at breakneck speed. Sometimes, this is done under the guise of reaching out to LGBTQ youth who might be school dropouts, depressed, runaways, confused, etc.

That is the rationale that MCC gives for offering these LGBTQ1+A programs.

MCC Board, if you really want to help these youth, the most important services McLean Community Center can offer them is to engage them with the beautiful and healthy things of this world, in the form of performing arts, fine arts, classical music, literature, and activities that lift them above the confusing and dangerous LGBTQ lifestyles.

The same is true for our innocent, sweet little children -- the Drag story hours have NO redeeming merit but only serve to confuse them, even to the point of traumatizing them.

Engage them with fun music and dancing, and yes story hours that do not entail scary readers who frighten them.

Thank you and please take these remarks into thoughtful consideration.

**Robert Jordan:**

I am here to offer comments on how MCC might strengthen its commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and access to its strategic approach, future programming and budget. First, let me thank the MCC for highlighting the importance of diversity and inclusion in its current programs which reflect the interests of the majority of McLean residents. I'm specifically referring to the current programming focused on the LGBTQ community and celebrating Indian Festival Day. I'm pleased that diversity and inclusion is going to continue these important elements of MCC programming. In FY23, significant portions of The Alden Theatre and MCC proposed budgets are earmarked for these elements. I think it's important to recognize that McLean is a very ethnically diverse community. For example, enrollment at McLean High School is 26% Asian Pacific Islanders, 12% Hispanic and 6.5% multi-racial or other. At Langley High School the percentages are similar. These figures approximately reflect the composition of McLean's overall population. While we do not necessarily reflect the diversity among Asian Pacific Islanders and Hispanic populations, nor do they include residents of European or African origin – I want to suggest that MCC in the future focus on an approach of programming that celebrates the diversity of the individual countries of origin of McLean residents. This coordinated programming could be termed: "national festival" approach – to include a variety of activities that highlight the culture of one nation each month. It can be scheduled for one week during the month. Activities could include: music and dance performances in The Alden Theatre; arts or handicrafts exposition in coordination with MPA. Food theme could feature local restaurants specializing in the country's cuisine; screenings of films that represent the country's culture; discussions of the country's literature; reading of children's stories from the specific country. A festival approach would allow MCC to heavily promote its focus on diversity within the McLean community. It would rely, in large part, on significant involvement by community representatives from the specific country during planning and implementation of the event.

**Deb Bissen (McLean Project for the Arts):**

First of all, I want to thank the board and the MCC staff for their cooperation and support for our upcoming MPA ArtFest – it's always a wonderful day of community spirit and the arts in our community. So MPA is very happy to be able to offer that again, and we are looking forward to a beautiful day in the park! Secondly, we have a new exhibition opening up in the gallery on the second floor: "Not Strictly Painting" – this is our 13<sup>th</sup> edition of that. A virtual opening is available tomorrow night on ZOOM. The show is curated by two local curators. The gallery is open to the public on Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons and Saturdays with dates shown on the MPA website. We are limiting the people in the gallery to six at a time – to provide social-distancing. Lastly, Fall classes are starting this week – if you are still interested or know someone who would be interested, there is still opportunity to join us. information is available on MPA website. We are excited about MCC's involvement in the upcoming "Art of Mass Gatherings" event – MPA ArtFest is an example of a community festival and hopefully will give ideas on how we can make the festival even better, especially in terms of sustainability and different things that can help improve it for our community in future years. I hope you'll join us on Sunday, October 3rd in McLean Central Park.

**Small District 1A-Dranesville resident (no name given):**

I am a resident of Small District 1A-Dranesville and I have been a resident of McLean for close to 30 years. I also object to McLean Community Center funding drag queen/king story hours for young children. This only serves to confuse the child; and it's cruel to bring children into an environment that they cannot understand. I was at the first performance on June 26 and the only comment that one child made was when Majic Dike showed her purse in the shape of a dog and called it "cat." But this young child said, "No, it's a dog." And she said: "It's a cat." Now, what kind of a message are we sending to children when we tell them something "A" is "not A – it's B." That an orange is not an orange – it's an apple. Well, that is just not treating children properly. So therefore, in conclusion: I would

say that the McLean Community Center board should no longer promote or fund any drag queen story hours for young children.

Chair Zamora-Appel thanked members of the public for their presence tonight and for expressing their opinions. After each person spoke, she responded:

We appreciate your taking the time to share your comments regarding \_\_\_\_\_ *topic* \_\_\_\_\_.  
All community feedback is valuable and will be taken into consideration.

All MCC Governing Board meetings are open to the public. You can view the board schedule on our website at: <https://mcleancenter.org/about/governing-meetings/meetings-agendas>

Thank you.

**The following public comments by Small District 1A-Dranesville residents were submitted in writing in advance of this meeting:**

**1. Mark Clemente**

From: Mark Clemente <[clem1979@aol.com](mailto:clem1979@aol.com)>  
Sent: Tuesday, September 21, 2021 12:57 PM  
To: Novak, Holly R <[Holly.Novak@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:Holly.Novak@fairfaxcounty.gov)>  
Subject: Drag Queen Story time

Ms Novak,

I just learned that \$900 of our taxpayer dollars was spent on paying drag queens to read to our children at the library. Is this true? If so, I am horrified that we are subjecting our children to this dangerous nonsense, then being asked to foot the bill.

If you have any say in this matter, do the right thing and let's stop polluting the minds of our children with this nonsense. Enough is enough. Corruption of innocent children is (or should be) a crime.

Common sense should prevail. This isn't complex or thorny. Do the right thing by our children or we will all pay the higher future cost to our diminished culture.

Sincerely,  
Mark Clemente

**2. Alice Middleton**

**From:** Alice Middleton <[cathcap@aol.com](mailto:cathcap@aol.com)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, September 21, 2021 3:59 PM  
**Subject:** McLean Community Center budget for 2022-2023 input from a taxpayer

Dear Mr. Singh and Ms. Novak,

As you consider the MCC budget for the upcoming fiscal year, I wish to state that as a taxpaying member of the Dranesville District, I STRONGLY object to ONE DOLLAR of my tax money being used to support or pay for Drag Queen/King story hour(s) in Fairfax County.

The recent June 26th drag queen/king story hour at the Dolly Madison Public Library was not in the best interest of our children. It only served to confuse children about things as simple as a dog or a cat and/or a male or a female. Children are not well served by such a program.

I was in attendance at the 10:30 performance on June 26th and found the performance of the three drag individuals (paid a total of \$900 of my tax dollars for two performances, I understand) to be a complete waste of time and money. The children in attendance seemed to walk away confused and upset.



Please eliminate from your budget (if even considering) and/or **do not** fund any drag queen/king story hours (or other events) with my hard earned tax dollars. It is not in the best interest of our community, young children, or the people of Fairfax County.

Respectfully submitted,  
Alice Middleton  
6313 Hunting Ridge Lane  
McLean, VA 22101

### 3. Lissy John

Dear Mclean Community Center Governing Board,

My name is Lissy John and I'm delighted to speak with you today. Just last year I ended my 3-yr term on the MCC governing board and understand the dedication it takes to volunteer as a Board member and serve as Executive Director of this organization. Thank you for your service in bettering our community.

I'm here today as a private citizen, a mother of 3 young children, and as a person of faith to express my support for the inclusive approach you have taken toward your programming, particularly with respect to the LGBTQ and the Indian-American communities.

I was so happy to see programs such as the Drag Queen story hour as part of your Pride celebrations and the upcoming LGBTQ Ally week being held on the Plaza. The Trevor Project reports that suicide is the 2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause of death amongst young people ages 10 to 24, and LGB youth seriously contemplate suicide at almost 3x the rate of heterosexual youth. They also report that LGB youth are almost 5x as likely to have attempted suicide compared to heterosexual youth. Our LGBTQ children are constantly bombarded with messages that they are not normal, they are less than, or are somehow immoral. As a society we talk about protecting our children and about being inclusive but so few are willing to do the real work of rethinking how they operate. Those that do are often faced with pushback from a small but vocal minority who reject change, even if it saves lives. I applaud you for doing the good work of supporting our vulnerable LGBTQ youth. God doesn't make mistakes, and I believe that any of our children, regardless of gender or sexual orientation, should feel welcome in our community.

I was also personally inspired by the Indian-American programming you've put forward, like the Diwali celebration and Garba virtual workshop. As an Indian-American myself, I grew up seeing very little programming that celebrated my culture. The absence of it suggested that our iconic celebrations, dances, and cultural practices weren't welcome in American society or was a thing that only non Americans do. But I am an American, just like so many other first- or second-generation immigrants in Mclean. It's wonderful to see the MCC educate the broader Mclean community on the different ways we can be American and to create well-rounded, globally minded citizens. I look forward to taking my children to not just the Indian-American events but to other cultural events as well.

In summary, thank you for everything you do for the Mclean Community. I continue to enjoy bringing my children to the MCC and look forward to many more programs to come.



4. Kristin Crouch

*September 22, 2021*

McLean, VA 22101 – September 22, 2021

Ms. Holly Novak  
Secretary, Board of the McLean Community Center  
Mr. Daniel Singh  
Executive Director  
McLean Community Center  
1234 Ingleside Avenue  
McLean, VA 22101

*1571 Dominion  
Hill Court  
McLean, VA  
22101*

*Crouchkristin@  
yahoo.com  
(703) 893-1031*

Dear Ms. Novak,  
Dear Mr. Singh,

It has come to my attention that, through the financial support of the MCC, the Dolley Madison Library hosted "Drag Story Book Hour" on June 26 of this summer with a target audience of "babies and toddlers, preschoolers, and school-age children."

As a tax-paying resident of McLean, I object to exposing young children to this type of sexualization in a library setting. It detracts from Fairfax County Public Library's mission of promoting literacy and learning, while using taxpayer dollars for an activity which violates the conscience and morals of this taxpayer.

During their middle and high school years, my children used the resources and services of Dolley Madison Library. As a parent, I was grateful for the support my kids received in their education and learning. This work is proper to the role of any library in society – to serve as a safe haven for kids. Our youngest children – indeed, all children of any age – deserve to be able to learn and thrive in an atmosphere free of the hyper-sexualization of the outside world.

During the upcoming MCC budget deliberations, I request respectfully that no funds be allocated for this type of activity. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

*Kristin Crouch*

Kristin Crouch

## 5. Jeffrey Shapiro (Letter to Editor – *Fairfax Times* July 30, 2021)

In reply to Drag Story Hour article

July 30, 2021

Dear Editor,

I write concerning the Drag Story Hour held in the McLean Library on a Saturday in late June 2021. What Happened: The Drag Story Hour was advertised for All Ages, including Babies and Toddlers, Preschoolers, and School Age Children. It was advertised as a joint production of the Fairfax County Public Library and the McLean Community Center, which would tend to create an expectation of wholesome family entertainment.

According to reporting in the Fairfax County Times, Majo Dylis introduced herself as a Drag King. She had a beard and mustache made from glitter. Peregphone Rose introduced himself as a trans-binary transgender woman, which is a lot of words to say that I'm a normal woman that gets to define what that means for myself. He proclaimed his pronouns as she and they. At one point, he introduced a stuffed toy dog and said it was not a dog but a cat. When one of the children became upset upon hearing the stuffed dog called a cat, a woman in the audience asked, "Please don't confuse the children." Kamani Sutra told the children that when he in drag his pronouns are she / her, and when he's not in drag his pronouns are he / they. The book he read to the children was about a South Asian trans woman and her son. (The name, Kamani Sutra, of course, is a thinly disguised play on the Kama Sutra.)

In an email from MCC Director Singh to a McLean resident (dated July 7, 2021), he described this show as part of the provision set forth by Fairfax County's One Fairfax Initiative. He also said it was part of this community's heritage.

As one attendee reported, when she displayed disapproval of this event, Director Singh angrily told me that if I was concerned about the well-being of children I should write to the Pope.

Why This Is Wrong for Fairfax County: Using taxpayer money (each performer received \$300/hour), the Fairfax County government enticed families with young children to an event featuring sex performers, with obscene and/or sexualized names, in burlesque clothes, and discussing their own perceived sexual identity, which in some cases shifts depending upon the situation. The announcement for the event did not fairly disclose this content to the public.

There was nothing wholesome about the Drag Story Hour. It exposed young children to adult issues of sexual identity, blurring the boundary between male and female. One of the most disturbing aspects of the event was Peregphone Rose deliberately gaslighting the children by referring to a stuffed dog as a cat. We all know what that was about. The statement intentionally incited confusion as to whether words represent reality. The technique was to groom the children to accept that, just as a dog can become a cat if we just use a different word, likewise a man can be a woman if we say so.

Director Singh justifies this event as part of Gay Pride. But that gloss does not help. First, the criticism would apply to a heterosexual version of the same event. It is not appropriate for Fairfax County to deliberately expose young children to the denizens of exotic adult entertainment. Period.

Second, there is no Fairfax County heritage of exposing young children to drag queens. It was Director Singh who initiated this unprecedented event. Furthermore, he revealed there was a didactic intent according to this reported statement: "We created our version of an all-inclusive

Drag Storybook Hour. One of the goals of Drag is to point out how people exist on a spectrum and are not in binaries, so we felt the open-ended framing was more useful. Director Singh was not celebrating the community's heritage but attempting to shape its future according to his own views.

Director Singh justifies this event as intended to reduce suicide among gay teens. But this storybook reading event was for young children and any connection to preventing teen suicide is nonexistent or speculative. If anything, this event would tend to be harmful to young children. They are just learning to understand and name reality, which is why at least one child was vocally upset when Peregphone Rose called a stuffed dog a cat. Part of reality that young children are still learning is that humanity is composed of male and female sexes. Director Singh hired these performers to blur this reality before the children are even old enough to understand it.

Director Singh also wraps the event in the mantle of the One Fairfax policy. Maybe so, but the One Fairfax policy, claims to foster equality and social equity defined to include all religions within the county. This One Fairfax event intolerantly trampled deeply held religious beliefs in the McLean community. So much for inclusivity. It was likely problematic to many more citizens who, even if not particularly religious, would naturally perceive this event as wholly unsuitable for children.

Fairfax County can do better. Perhaps the MCC and the McLean Library would consider a children's story hour led by senior citizen volunteers. The volunteers could read beloved children's stories. Call it Story Reading Hour with McLean Seniors. The goal would be to entertain the children in a wholesome way in a safe and nurturing setting, i.e., the opposite of Drag Story Hour.

My specific request is this. I ask that the Board of Supervisors explicitly forbid the use of taxpayer dollars and facilities to produce and/or host Drag Story Hour or any variant of it.

A Fairfax County government event should not push a divisive agenda that tangles deeply held beliefs among the citizenry, creates an unsafe environment for children, and uses them as ideological props. That is not what representative government is supposed to do.

I would respectfully request that the prohibition be announced publicly as soon as possible, so that Fairfax County citizens can rest assured that this depraved event will never be repeated.

Jeffrey Shapiro

McLean, VA

**6. Paul Kohlenberger**

From: Paul Kohlenberger <[paulkohl@msn.com](mailto:paulkohl@msn.com)>  
Sent: Thursday, September 9, 2021 9:35 AM  
To: Novak, Holly R <[Holly.Novak@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:Holly.Novak@fairfaxcounty.gov)>  
Subject: Budget presentation deck

Hi Holly—

When you get a chance, please forward a copy of the budget presentation slide deck that had been distributed to members of the Board before last night's meeting. Thanks!

Best,  
Paul

**REPLY:**

Hi Paul. The presentation slide deck that was referred to in Wednesday night's meeting was preliminary DRAFT data. Ashok Karra assures me that the final Fund statement + complete PowerPoint slide deck for the FY23 Budget Proposal will be published on MCC website on September 15.

The Public Hearing on FY23 Budget will be held on September 22 at 6:30 p.m. Public comments are welcome at that meeting; please let me know if you wish to speak.

Sincerely,  
Holly

**ADJOURNMENT**

Nothing else was mentioned as a topic for discussion this evening.

With no further business, Chair Zamora-Appel adjourned the meeting at 7:50 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted, Holly Novak - Executive Assistant to the Governing Board