



**February 2026 Meeting Date:  
SOECA will hold a meeting  
on Monday, February 23 at  
7pm at the Zinnia Restaurant  
and via Zoom.**

### **SOECA's February Meeting: Monday February 23, 2026, at 7pm**

How do we recycle in our neighborhood in 2026? How is the food scrap collection pilot project progressing and how successful is the electronics recycling program? Our speaker will be Alan Pultyniewicz from the Recycling and Refuse Services section of Montgomery County's Department of Environmental Protection. Bring your questions about electronics recycling and food scrap recycling to the meeting.

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://uso2web.zoom.us/j/84671552009?pwd=xGacPijArCd6LCobLyS3DIT6DfkTJ.1>

Meeting ID: 846 7155 2009

Passcode: SOECA

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### **Our Neighborhood Schools**

In October MCPS Superintendent Thomas Taylor announced a plan to relocate Sligo Creek Elementary School (SCES) and close Silver Spring International Middle School (SSIMS). His plan called for (1) repurposing the existing buildings on Wayne Avenue/Dale Drive as holding schools for the County; (2) reassigning SCES' current students to either the new school or another elementary school; and (3) splitting SSIMS' students between Eastern Middle School and Sligo Middle School. The Capital Improvement Program (CIP) budget the Superintendent submitted to the board of education included funding for these changes and the board passed it but voted against the expedited schedule for closing SSIMS and moving SCES. The CIP budget then went to the County Executive.

On January 15 the County Executive recommended a CIP budget to the County Council that excludes the funds to close SSIMS. He wrote that the decision to close SSIMS "must be made with full community engagement and transparency, following the Board of Education's prescribed process." (page 10) The Executive's recommendation also omits funds for the relocation of SCES. He wrote that site selection and replacement should wait until the school system completes a planned countywide elementary school boundary study "so that all available options to balance enrollment ... are understood and considered." (page 10) To see his proposed CIP, visit <https://montgomerycountymd.gov/OMB/Resources/File/s/omb/pdfs/fy27/ciprec/FY27CIPBudgetinBrief.pdf>.

The CIP budget is now with the County Council, which will hold a work session on February 19 and public hearings on February 23 and 24. The Council will approve a CIP budget in May.

While the County Executive's recommendations do not end consideration of closing SSIMS, relocating SCES, and/or converting the existing buildings to holding schools, they do require greater community involvement, coordination with studies about student enrollment that are currently underway, and adherence to current policies and procedures.

The Superintendent's proposal generated a lot of controversy and confusion. He did not discuss it with the schools' communities or make any public comments about his thinking before his October announcement.

SOECA held a special meeting on December 15 to discuss the neighborhood schools. Laura Stewart, Board of Education member for District 4, and Kate Stewart, County Councilmember for District 4, attended. Residents raised issues, including the following:

- The extremely short timeframe given to the community to understand and react to the Superintendent's plan.
- The uncertainty surrounding whether the school system had followed its own legally mandated process for closing schools.
- The failure by the school system to make public the expert analysis it is required to carry out to support school closings.
- Contradictory statements about conditions at the existing buildings and whether any historic preservation restrictions preclude the renovations needed to modernize the buildings.
- Whether or not SCES is, in fact, being relocated, or if it is being closed since it is likely that a new elementary school in a different location will serve a different student population than the current SCES.

Laura Stewart acknowledged these problems and noted that the school system must commit to following the proper process for closing SSIMS, and she promised to follow up on residents' other concerns. Regarding turning the existing buildings into holding schools, she said she didn't think it was fair to have a holding school permanently located within one community.

Kate Stewart also acknowledged the problems and concerns. Both representatives stated their hope that the remaining opportunities for deliberation and consideration of these ideas, as well as alternatives, will

lead to a plan that meets the needs of students, educators, and the broader community.

### **Neighbors Help Neighbors**

Neighbors Help Neighbors Committee is here to help you. Neighbors Help Neighbors is a free service. To get help with chores, send an email to Michael Gurwitz ([gurwitzm@outlook.com](mailto:gurwitzm@outlook.com)). Describe what you need and where you live. Your confidentiality will be respected; the Committee will seek volunteers from the neighborhood to help you.

### **Sidewalks in SOECA**

Montgomery County's Department of Transportation developed a plan to install sidewalks within a half mile radius of each Purple Line Station in the County. Not every street will be suitable for a sidewalk, so the County prioritized proposed sidewalks based on several criteria. The Sidewalk Department surveyed the SOECA neighborhood over a year ago and made preliminary decisions about sidewalk placement and prioritization. The next step in the process is to notify the community about their plan, which the department believes will happen in the next 8 to 12 months. After we receive the department's notice, it could take up to a year for the sidewalks to be installed.

Homes on streets designated for new sidewalks will be able to meet with County engineers to discuss issues specific to their property. There will be opportunities for the public to comment on the project; to bring ideas forward about the scale, placement, and materials used for the proposed sidewalks; and to advocate for saving trees; etc.

Currently the Department's engineer is finalizing plans for the Long Branch and Manchester Place Purple Line Station sidewalks. Once the Long Branch and Manchester Place proposals have undergone the community involvement process and final modifications have been made to those plans, their engineer will begin work on the sidewalks around the Dale Drive Station.

If you want to see if your street might get a sidewalk search "Purple Line BIPPA map," then click on Project Documents. Each proposed sidewalk has a priority rating, with 1 being the highest priority. The higher a priority rating, the greater the likelihood of approval of that sidewalk. For example, the map shows a priority

rating of 1.3 for a sidewalk on the odd-numbered side of Pershing Drive from Springvale Road to Bennington Drive; a proposed sidewalk along Ellsworth Drive has a priority rating of 1.5 to 1.9 depending on whether it is south or north of Dale Drive; and the sidewalk along Windsor Street has a priority rating of 1.3.

If you want to see the Department's work "in action," sidewalks are currently being installed around the Piney Branch Purple Line Station.

It should be noted that County budget constraints may delay the sidewalk project but as of right now, the County plans to move forward with sidewalks around the Dale Drive station.

### **Remove Lanternfly Egg Cases Now**

To control the lanternfly population, it is recommended that we remove spotted lanternfly egg masses now. To remove them, scrape them into a bag with rubbing alcohol or hand sanitizer. You can use a plastic card or putty knife for this. Or crush them thoroughly until you see liquid coming from the mass. This ensures that the eggs can't hatch. Watch this video for more information:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6UMsoK\\_MLZw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6UMsoK_MLZw)

### **Highlights of November 17, 2025, SOECA Meeting**

SOECA held its membership meeting on Nov. 17, 2025, with guest speaker Mariah Davis of Nature Forward. She discussed the environmental, social and economic effects of data centers.

Max Glikman of Enterprise Community Development reported on the plans for the Seabury at Springvale Terrace senior housing development. Demolition may begin as soon as December 2025 and is scheduled to be completed in May 2029. The construction plan involves Monday through Saturday work, 7 am to 6 pm. A tower crane will be in place on the site.

Cornelius Kuteesa of the Silver Spring Regional Services Office introduced himself as the new Community Projects Manager. The Regional Office is an arm of the County Executive. Ann Vorce reported on the Rain Garden tour that visited 17 SOECA homes in October. Finally, Chris Reynolds announced a special meeting on December 15, 2025, where Council Member

Kate Stewart will discuss the process for the county's Capital Improvement Plan.

Full minutes for the membership meeting can be found on [SOECA.org](https://www.soeca.org).

### **Membership Matters**

Gym memberships are expensive and if you want to end them you must turn in a "too weak" notice. For the low, low price of \$20 per household per year (\$10 if you're retired or a single person household) you can become a member of SOECA. Why would you want to become a member you ask? While we don't hand out those fancy Members Only jackets (yet), you do earn the right to vote in meetings AND you have the satisfaction of knowing you're doing your part to improve your neighborhood. For instance, SOECA helped fund the rehabilitation of the stucco arches at Ellsworth Dr. and Franklin Ave. Of course, there's that epic block party we throw every year. To join, simply navigate to <https://www.soeca.org/about-us/join-soeca>.

### **Remember to "Bring Your Own Bag"**

A new county law went into effect on January 1. It bans plastic carryout bags in most, but not all, stores and imposes a 10-cent fee for paper bags. The "Bring Your Own Bag" law should cut down on plastic pollution and help protect the environment.

### **Environment Committee**

**How Trees and Sidewalks can Co-Exist.** If your yard will be affected by a new sidewalk, you should start figuring out your design plan now. One size doesn't have to fit all-- it is possible to improve safety and save our trees. Design is crucial, and your input will matter when the County's proposals are in the design phase. Also, watch a talk by Conservation Montgomery's Amanda Farber to the Montgomery County Civic Federation on how sidewalk design can realistically accommodate trees:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zG\\_\\_Du7EzVo&t=11s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zG__Du7EzVo&t=11s). To see how East Silver Spring handled the challenges, go to:

<https://montgomerycountymd.gov/dot-dte/projects/EastSilverSpring/index.html>.

The SOECA Environment Committee hopes to lead a "Trees and Sidewalk" walk or talk this year.

**Salt Management.** Please be mindful of salt management this winter. Salt is very harmful to our drinking water, wildlife, and infrastructure. For tips on salt management, see the County’s SaltWise website. If you see excessive salt in the County, please report it with a photo to the County’s MC311 system.

**Recap of December 18, 2025, Safe Silver Spring Meeting**

Many thanks to Alan Bowser for posting a recap of Safe Silver Spring’s December meeting on our email list. Here is a summary.

Commander Jason Cokinos oversees the Third District, which spans from Burtonsville through White Oak and Hillandale to downtown Silver Spring. He noted some positive trends in 2025: Overall crime in the Third District has decreased by approximately 9% compared to last year. And many types of violent crime are down – Shootings by 18%; Robberies by 6%; Carjackings were the lowest since 2019. There have been 8 homicides year-to-date (equal to last year). Most were domestic-related or tied to illegal marijuana disputes; none were random attacks on the public.

Other types of crime are also down: Stolen Autos by 19%; Retail Theft by 22%. The police are helped by a new state law allowing police to aggregate retail thefts into a single case to increase penalties for repeat offenders. Lastly, even with seven new officers, the Third District is still roughly 15% short of its authorized officer strength.

The police drone that had been in downtown Silver Spring is temporarily grounded due to safety concerns about a nearby construction crane, but it should return soon.

In response to a question about cut-through traffic, the Commander suggested that "no through traffic" signs or speed bumps might be necessary. And in response to one about ICE raids, he noted MCPD does not participate in immigration sweeps.

**Many Thanks to ...**

- \* Our Board members, under Elicia John’s leadership and with the help of our Social Committee, for organizing and promoting our own holiday light tour.
- \* Aaron Weaver who has agreed to chair SOECA’s Membership Committee.

- \* Our Super-Block and Block Captains who live by the credo “Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from their appointed rounds,” and we thank them for their selfless service.
- \* The Social Committee for organizing several successful events: a Halloween Parade on October 31st, a get-together at Zinnia’s Restaurant in October, and a holiday season happy hour in December.
- \* All members of our Environment Committee for organizing a Rain Garden Walk in consultation with the County’s Department of Environmental Protection and Friends of Sligo Creek. This was just one of their many projects in 2025.
- \* Grant Hodgson and Mercina Tillemann for leading the effort to restore the Spanish arches at Ellsworth Drive and Franklin Avenue. Also many thanks to all who donated to help with the effort.
- \* Zinnia for hosting our membership meetings.

**SOECA Committee Leadership**

SOECA’s Public Safety Committee needs a Committee Chair. If interested, please send an email to Chris Reynolds at: urban.economist@gmail.com. Here is a list of current committees and leadership:

- \* Environment Committee–Anne Vorce
- \* Land Use Committee–Chris Reynolds
- \* Membership Committee–Aaron Weaver
- \* Neighbors Help Neighbors Committee–Michael Gurwitz
- \* Public Safety Committee–Open
- \* Purple Line Community Advisory Team–Robert Samors
- \* Social Committee–Angela and Matt Hood
- \* Technology Committee–Jonathan Bernstein

**SOECA Boundaries**

Colesville Road on the West; Cedar and Fenton Streets on the South; Bonifant Street and Wayne Avenue on the East; Franklin and Caroline Avenues on the North.



**SOECA Officers**

Chris Reynolds, President  
 Elicia John, Vice President  
 Matthew Murawski, Vice President  
 Cody Uhing, Treasurer  
 Diana Rowny, Secretary

**Email List**

To join the email list go to: <https://groups.io/g/SOECA/join> and fill in your email address; or email SOECA+subscribe@groups.io and include your name and address in the email.