Minutes
February 7, 2024

Call to Order
Chair Winder called the meeting to order.

Roll Call and Pledge of Allegiance
Chair Winder, Vice Chair Makhija, and Commissioner DiBello were all present.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Montgomery County’s Controller, Karen Sanchez.

Opening Commissioners’ Comments
Chair Winder:
➢ Executive Session
   ❖ An Executive Session for the County Commissioners was held on Thursday, February 1, 2024 to discuss potential litigation

➢ Governor Shapiro’s 2024 Budget
   ❖ Governor Shapiro announced his proposal for the [2024-2025 PA budget](#)
   ❖ Commendations to Governor Shapiro for his commitment to advocating for many key programs and priorities that impact not only the residents of Montgomery County, but all residents across the Commonwealth
   ❖ The 2024-2025 proposed budget advocates for:
     ✓ More funding directed to higher education, including our community colleges;
     ✓ Increased investment in public transit, which would directly benefit all SEPTA riders;
     ✓ Strategic investment to enhance economic development in PA;
     ✓ Addressing critical housing needs, which would directly fund programs that we administer like Homeless Assistance Program and Whole Home Repairs;
✓ Adding $16 million in SNAP benefits;
✓ Leverage federal funding for childcare;
✓ And other key investments for protecting our more vulnerable, ensuring access to mental health services, protecting the environment, and more

❖ I support the investments that impact our Montgomery County residents and encourage our state delegation to support these items

❖ Black History Month
   ❖ All year long, is an opportunity for us to focus attention on the contributions of African Americans to the United States, and here in Montgomery County
   ❖ Some of those people and places to celebrate include:
     • Camp William Penn in Cheltenham Township was the only training camp for African American soldiers in PA, and the largest in the nation, during the Civil War
     • Abolition Hall in Plymouth Meeting was a hub for anti-slavery speakers and a station on the Underground Railroad
     • Edward Hector, from Conshohocken, was a private in the Third Pa. Artillery, Continental Line, and has become symbolic of the many unknown Black soldiers who served in the American Revolution
     • Dr. Martha Settle Putney, born right here in Norristown, joined the Woman’s Army Corps in 1943, became a first lieutenant and eventually commanded a unit of Black medical technicians in Chicago. During her service, Martha was credited for helping to establish policies regarding equality for all members in the U.S. Armed Forces.
     • James A. Bland, famous composer of “Carry Me Back to Old Virginny” and many other songs, was buried in Bala Cynwyd
   ❖ Recently, I had the honor of participating in a roundtable discussion at the Whitehouse with other Black leaders about issues affecting our communities
   ❖ Also, I have the great honor of being the first Black woman elected to the Montgomery County Board of Commissioners and would like to acknowledge two others:
     1. Tina Lawson is the first Black woman to be elected as Register of Wills
     2. Dr. Janine Darby is the first Black woman elected as Coroner in Montgomery County
   ❖ Join in celebrating more accomplishments in Black History each Wednesday during February at our Black History Month Program, which begins today at 12 p.m.

❖ Juneteenth Art Contest
   ❖ We are happy to launch our annual Juneteenth Art Contest for the school children of Montgomery County
This year’s theme for the Art and Prose of Freedom Contest is a “Hope for a Brighter Tomorrow”

We invite all students in Montgomery County public, private, parochial, or home schools to use their creativity and submit art that embodies hope, celebrates freedom, and inspires action for a better future

Students can submit poetry, a short essay, or art by Sunday, April 7th

Winners will receive $100 gift cards and will be invited to join us at the County’s Juneteenth Flag Raising event

I hope that any parents, art teachers or English teachers can consider if any of their curricula dovetails with the contest theme

More information is available at: [www.montgomerycountypa.gov/juneteenth](http://www.montgomerycountypa.gov/juneteenth)

**Public Comment**

We’ve heard the feedback from the public and acknowledge the need to have more time to discuss County issues

Commissioner DiBello suggested incorporating additional opportunities for public comment into our Board Meetings

Our County staff worked with all three of us individually and proposed a solution that will give the public more time to discuss issues germane to County business while still being efficient in the use of our community’s time

Starting today, we will have two opportunities for public comment during the board meetings

The first public comment will be available during the start of the meeting and must pertain to subjects on the agenda for that day’s meeting

The second opportunity for public comment will come at the end of the meeting and can pertain to any issues that may come before the Board of Commissioners

This is just one example of how this Board is committed to listening and working with the residents of Montgomery County, and we look forward to continuing to find opportunities to collaborate and engage in respectful dialogue

**Vice Chair Makhija:**

**American Heart Month**

February is also American Heart Month

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for men, women, and people of most racial and ethnic groups in the US

About 1 in 20 (5%) adults over 20 years old have coronary heart disease

17.4% of deaths were caused by heart disease in 2021

These numbers are higher for certain demographics:

- 22.6% for Black (Non-Hispanic)
- 18.6% for Asians
- 18% for White (Non-Hispanic)
The [CDC](https://www.cdc.gov) website outlines basic steps that people can take to keep and stay heart healthy.

These include:

- Understanding and managing risk factors such as blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar
- Lowering sodium, fat, sugar, and increasing fiber

A few minutes of daily activity can help manage stress.

Learn more about taking steps to a healthier heart and lifestyle at: [www.hearthealthysteps.org](http://www.hearthealthysteps.org)

**Chief Public Defender Christine P. Lora Appointed to Statewide Committee**

Congratulations to Montgomery County’s Chief Public Defender Christine P. Lora, who has been appointed by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court to the new statewide Indigent Defense Advisory Committee.

In December 2023, Governor Shapiro signed into law Pennsylvania’s first ever state [Indigent Defense Fund](https://www.hearthealthysteps.org), with an allocation of $7.5 million.

A new Indigent Defense Grant Program will provide grants and training to improve indigent defense services statewide which are currently funded at the County Level.

Up until now Pennsylvania was one of two states that did not have state funding for public defense.

Christine has been appointed to the Committee that will oversee the grant funding and provide recommendations for the indigent defense system statewide.

Every resident of Montgomery County – every Pennsylvanian – deserves fair treatment under the law and deserves strong defense when they need it.

Adequately funding public defense and creating level standards across all counties and communities in Pennsylvania improves the equity in our justice system.

We congratulate Christine on her appointment to continue her calling in public defense work, and we are proud that she is representing our County in such important work.

**Montco Anti-Hunger Network (MAHN)**

Today we will be voting on half a million dollars of additional funding to the [Montco Anti-Hunger Network](https://www.hearthealthysteps.org) (MAHN).

This money goes to the direct purchase of food for County food pantries to support our residents.

Approving these funds renews the County’s commitment to food stability for all residents of Montgomery County.

Our local pantries and volunteer organizations perform lifesaving work every day.

We support the work you do, and we thank you.
Lunar New Year

- This coming Saturday, February 10th is the Lunar New Year
- We are welcoming the year of the dragon
- On behalf of Montgomery County, we wish all those who celebrate a happy new year

Commissioner DiBello:

- Thanks for attending the meetings and showing interest in our community priorities
- This Board is focusing on gathering data, information, and making informed decisions on key priorities in our County
- The County has opportunities for commerce and employment which can be found on our website
- We are excited about the new public comment guidelines and the EMS Tax Rebate Ordinance that will meet our community’s needs

Announcements, Commendations, Presentations & Reports

1. Valley Forge Annual Report – Mike Bowman, President & CEO of Valley Forge Tourism & Convention Board

Public Comment – Limited to 3 Minutes

(Speakers may comment on matters that are or may be before the Board of Commissioners. All public comments must be relevant, or “germane,” to County business. This means that the subject matter of all comments must be limited to items or issues which are currently before the Commissioners for consideration, or which may come before the Commissioners for consideration at a future meeting. Speakers may present comments once during the meeting.)

1. Marlene Laska commented on the public comment guidelines being changed.

Approval of the Minutes

Chair Winder made a motion to approve the January 25, 2024 minutes of the Montgomery County Board of Commissioners’ meeting.

Vice Chair Makhija seconded the motion.

There was no Board comment. There was no public comment. Chair Winder brought the motion to a vote, and it was adopted with all in favor and none opposed.

Active Volunteer Real Estate Tax Rebate Ordinance Hearing – Maureen Calder, First Assistant Solicitor; Dean Dortone, Chief Financial Officer

1. Call to Order

Commissioner Winder called the Hearing to Order.
This hearing is regarding a proposed Ordinance to provide a tax rebate for volunteer members of fire companies and emergency medical service agencies. At the conclusion of the hearing, the Commissioners will vote on Ordinance 2024-1. During the hearing, the public will be permitted to offer comments on the Proposed Ordinance, but first Dean Dortone and Maureen Calder will explain and give background on this Ordinance.

**Public Comment on the Ordinance - Limited to 3 Minutes**
These comments have been transcribed.

**Adjournment**
Chair Winder made a motion to adjourn the Active Volunteer Real Estate Tax Rebate Ordinance Hearing.

Commissioner DiBello second the motion.

There was no Board comment. There was no public comment. Chair Winder brought the motion to a vote, and it was adopted with all in favor and none opposed.

**Ordinance**
*Active Volunteer Real Estate Tax Rebate Ordinance – Maureen Calder, First Assistant Solicitor*

Chair Winder made a motion to approve the Ordinance as described by Ms. Maureen Calder.

Commissioner DiBello seconded the motion.

There was no further Board comment. There was no public comment. Chair Winder brought the motion to a vote, and it was adopted with all in favor and none opposed. The full text of the resolutions 24.C-18 can be found [here](#).

**Resolutions**
1. **Approval of an Amendment to the Public Comment Guidelines – Maureen Calder, First Assistant Solicitor**

   Chair Winder made a motion to approve resolution number one as described by Ms. Maureen Calder.

   Commissioner DiBello seconded the motion.

2. **Commissioners’ Appointment to the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission**
On motion of Chair Winder, seconded by Commissioner DiBello, it was adopted that Neil Makhija be appointed as the Commissioners’ Representative to the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, and to designate Scott France, Executive Director of the Montgomery County Planning Commission, as the first alternate to Commissioner Makhija, with Matt Edmond of the County Planning Commission serving as the second alternate. All such appointments serve at the pleasure of the County Commissioners, and in accordance with the current duly adopted by-laws.

3. **Commissioners’ Appointment to the Schuylkill River Passenger Rail Authority**

On motion of Chair Winder, seconded by Vice Chair Makhija, it was adopted Thomas DiBello be appointed to the Schuylkill River Passenger Rail Authority for a term that begins immediately and expires on January 1, 2027, serving in accordance with the current duly-adopted By-Laws.

There was no Board comment. There was no public comment. Chair Winder brought resolutions #1-3 to a vote, and it was adopted with all in favor and none opposed. The full text of the resolutions 24.C 19-21 can be found [here](#).

### Personnel

**February 7, 2024, Personnel List – Chief Human Resources Officer, Catherine Halen**

Chair Winder made a motion to approve the February 7, 2024, Personnel presentation as given by Chief Human Resources Officer, Catherine Halen and to authorize the proper County Officials to execute the same.

Vice Chair Makhija seconded the motion.

There was no Board comment. There was no public comment. Chair Winder brought the motion to a vote, and it was adopted with all in favor and none opposed.

**Advertisement of Bids, RFP’s, and RFI’s – Exhibit A**

Chair Winder made a motion to approve the Advertisement of Bids and RFP’s for Montgomery County on attached Exhibit A, and to authorize the proper County Officials to execute the same, subject to the approval of the County Solicitor.

Commissioner DiBello seconded the motion.

There was no Board comment. There was no public comment. Chair Winder brought the motion to a vote, and it was adopted with all in favor and none opposed. The full text of the resolution 24.C-22 can be found [here](#).
Awards of Contract – Montgomery County – Exhibit B
Chair Winder made a motion to approve the Contract Awards, Amendments, and Renewals for Montgomery County on attached Exhibit B, and to authorize the proper County Officials to execute the same, subject to the approval of the County Solicitor.

Vice Chair Makhija seconded the motion.

There was no further Board comment. There was no public comment. Chair Winder brought the motion to a vote, and it was adopted. The full text of the resolution 24.C-23 can be found here.

Awards of Contract – Southeast PA Regional Task Force – Exhibit C
Chair Winder made a motion to approve the Contract Awards, Amendments, and Renewals for Southeast PA Regional Task Force on attached Exhibit C.

Commissioner DiBello seconded the motion.

There was no further Board comment. There was no public comment. Chair Winder brought the motion to a vote, and it was adopted. The full text of the resolution 24.C-24 can be found here.

General Public Comment – Limited to 3 minutes
(Speakers may comment on matters that are or may be before the Board of Commissioners. All public comments must be relevant, or “germane,” to County business. This means that the subject matter of all comments must be limited to items or issues which are currently before the Commissioners for consideration, or which may come before the Commissioners for consideration at a future meeting. Speakers may present once during the general public comment period.)

1. Michelle Moyer commented on dealing with crime in Montgomery County, working on policies, policing, and pre-trial services.

Closing Commissioners’ Comments
There were no Board comments.

Upcoming Meeting Dates
1. Board of Commissioners’ Meeting – Thursday, February 22, 2024, at 10am

Adjournment
On motion of Chair Winder, seconded by Commissioner DiBello, the February 7, 2024 meeting of the Montgomery County Board of Commissioners was adjourned.
There was no Board comment. There was no public comment. Chair Winder brought the motion to a vote, and the Montgomery County Board of Commissioners meeting was adjourned with all in favor and none opposed.

**Salary Board**

**Public Comment on Salary Board – Limited to 3 Minutes**

There was no public comment.

**Salary Board**

Chair Winder motioned to approve the February 7, 2024, Salary Board presentation as given by Chief Human Resources Officer, Catherine Halen, and to authorize the proper County Officials to execute the same.

Commissioner DiBello seconded the motion.

There was no Board comment. There was no public comment. Chair Winder brought the motion to a vote and the February 7, 2024, Salary Board was adopted with all in favor and none opposed.

**Adjournment**

On motion of Chair Winder, seconded by Commissioner DiBello, the February 7, 2024, meeting of the Montgomery County Salary Board was adjourned.

There was no Board comment. There was no public comment. Chair Winder brought the motion to a vote, and the Montgomery County Salary Board meeting was adjourned with all in favor and none opposed.

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➤ MontgomeryCountyPAChannel

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