



THE VOICE OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY BUSINESS

Lisa Cines, Chairman
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Georgette "Gigi" Godwin, President & CEO

Public Hearing on Proposed FY 2016 Operating Budget
April 14, 2015
Testimony by Gigi Godwin
Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce

For the proposed FY 16 Operating Budget, the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce continues to advocate for investments in schools, transportation and public safety. A vibrant and healthy community is an attractive place to be.

The slow revenue growth in the budget demonstrates that we need policies that grow the economy and provide access to opportunity for current residents and the next generation of talent. Economic development is of utmost importance.

The Montgomery County Government is a great partner in helping MCCC members succeed. The Montgomery County Council has approved important master plans, identified transportation priorities and worked on initiatives ranging from the green certified business program to streamlining the permitting process.

These "business friendly policies" result in our members:

- placing new orders,
- attracting new customers,
- making new deals,
- discovering new technologies, and
- changing the marketplace for the better.

As these businesses expand, they

- do more business with each other,
- hire more people,
- pump dollars into the local economy, and
- create access to opportunities our residents need.

We think you will agree that these are good things. And, according to a recent article in the Washington Post ([see attached](#)), business (or voluntary trade) is one of the best ways to combat poverty.

But there is more to be done to help our businesses succeed, especially with the pressures of a global competition and a slow economic recovery that makes success for businesses even more difficult to achieve.

Therefore, we support an independent economic development entity that is:

- **Publically funded,**
- **Advised by a Private Sector Board of Directors,**
- **Staffed by credentialed economic development professionals, and**
- **Singularly focused on retaining and attracting business.**

We have shared our ideas about an effective economic development effort with the County Executive as he considers how to move forward. Our letter to him is attached to our testimony.

At the same time as we bolster our economic development efforts, the county must take necessary steps to level the playing field for our Montgomery County businesses and make sure our companies can continue to compete, win and grow.

That is why, once again, **we strongly urge the County Council to sunset the FY 11 100% increase in Energy Tax** which continues to impact non-residential consumer disproportionately at the rate of 68%. It is a burden to existing businesses and a barrier to attracting new businesses and it undermines all other efforts being made to make Montgomery County more business friendly.

We appreciate the many good things the Montgomery County Council has done for the quality of life in our County. We look forward to working with you to leverage our many assets to bring more economic activity to our local economy. We need more “business-friendly policies” - like an independent economic development entity and a repeal of the increased energy tax - to generate more economic activity to sustain what we have and be competitive in the future.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to making Montgomery County the County that works for business and the residents they employ.

Attachments:

MCCC Letter to County Executive

[MCCC 2015 Legislative Agenda](#)

[“Business Rx”](#) and [“Middle-aged Capitalism”](#)