

MEMORANDUM

March 10, 2023

TO: Planning, Housing, and Parks (PHP), Public Safety (PS), Economic Development (ECON) Committees

FROM: Eunice Jeong, Legislative Analyst
Naeem M. Mia, Legislative Analyst

SUBJECT: Briefing: Fire Inspections

PURPOSE: Receive a briefing on the subject

Those expected for this briefing:

- Pastora (Patsy) Warnick, Manager of Fire Code Compliance, Department of Permitting Services (DPS)
- Scott Goldstein, Fire Chief, Montgomery County Fire & Rescue Service (MCFRS)
- Matt Carrigan, Assistant Chief, MCFRS

Background information

DPS serves as the regulatory body for fire codes that are adopted from the national and state levels. There are two relevant fire prevention codes for this topic: NFPA 1 - Fire Code and NFPA 101 - Life Safety Code. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) code is a national code. The national code then gets adopted by the State Fire Prevention Commission. After a national/state code is adopted, DPS works on a regulation. Most of these types of codes work on 2–4-year cycles. The Council reviews these regulations under Method (2).

[Sec. 8-29A](#) of the County Code indicates that a building permit cannot be issued for the construction or reconstruction of a residential building without a fire sprinkler system (however, this does not cover already existing buildings). The County Code also provides a property tax credit for any residential building where a fire sprinkler system was not legally required, if installed on or after July 1, 2000 ([Sec. 52-98](#)).

In 2018, the state code was changed to require all residential high-rise buildings to have installed sprinklers by 2033. There are dozens of residential buildings in the county that have still not been retrofitted with sprinkler systems. In addition, the state code requires all buildings to have manual pull fire alarms, but there is no requirement for automatic building-wide alarms.

There are several reasons for the 2033 deadline. Many of the buildings that still need a sprinkler system are very old, so updating to an automatic sprinkler system could require asbestos abatement. In addition, installing the necessary pipework (including running a water main from the street) and other infrastructure needs can incur high costs and lead to a potentially longer implementation timeline, hence the extended deadline.

DPS has already been working on the regulations to adopt the 2021 Fire Code and 2021 Life Safety Code. The 2018 codes gave the 2033 deadline. The 2021 codes require signage if the building is not sprinklered. The regulations are currently with the County Executive.

DPS provides information online encouraging property owners to begin the process early, as well as all the different ways the requirements can be met, including alternative systems: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/DPS/Services/Highrise-Sprinkler-Retro-Initiative.html>

Committee discussion items:

The PHP, PS, and ECON joint committee is requesting a briefing from DPS to discuss fire inspections and fire code compliance. DPS will give an overview of current enforcement efforts, challenges faced, and potential solutions.

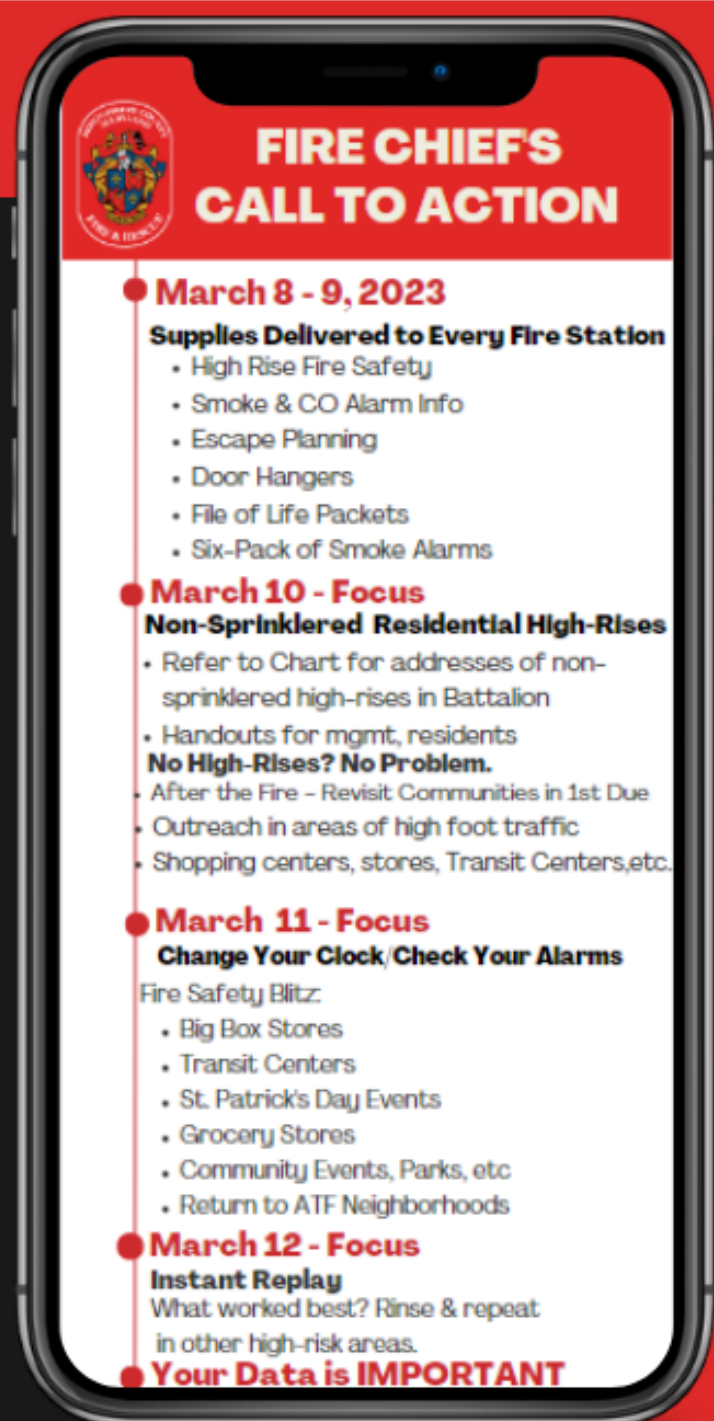
DPS and MCFRS staff are available to engage in discussion around topics such as, but not limited to:

- How to accelerate the process to install sprinklers in the County.
- What progress buildings have made to reach the 2033 deadline.
- Smoke alarms/detectors in units: Did the units at Arrive have smoke alarms and were these alarms inspected recently? Post-inspection, which party is responsible for ensuring there are working smoke detectors in units?
- Evacuation maps and drills: Where do they need to be located under County regulations and laws? Where are they located in Arrive and are fire drills and/or testing done regularly? Is placement of evacuation maps and fire drills covered by the inspection?
- Fire extinguishers: What are the requirements under the code? Did Arrive have them in appropriate places? Were the extinguishers covered by inspection?
- Emergency lights in hallways and stairwells: what does fire code require? Does Arrive have emergency lighting? Covered by inspection?

- Fire alarms: how are the alarms triggered? What is required by code? What alarms did Arrive have?
- Accommodations for deaf and/or blind residents and those with mobility issues: What is required under the code to assist people and did Arrive have protocols in place?
- Elevators and using fobs: what are the requirements for using fobs?
- Renters insurance: what is required under County code and/or leasing agreements?
- What is considered a major renovation/retrofit?
- How many buildings are not equipped with sprinklers? What effort is the County making to ensure that these buildings will meet the 2033 deadline?

Fire Chief's Call to Action

County-Wide Fire Safety Campaign
March 10 - 12, 2023



● March 8 - 9, 2023

Supplies Delivered to Every Fire Station

- High Rise Fire Safety
- Smoke & CO Alarm Info
- Escape Planning
- Door Hangers
- File of Life Packets
- Six-Pack of Smoke Alarms

● March 10 - Focus

Non-Sprinklered Residential High-Rises

- Refer to Chart for addresses of non-sprinklered high-rises in Battalion
- Handouts for mgmt, residents
- No High-Rises? No Problem.**
- After the Fire - Revisit Communities in 1st Due
- Outreach in areas of high foot traffic
- Shopping centers, stores, Transit Centers, etc.

● March 11 - Focus

Change Your Clock/Check Your Alarms

Fire Safety Blitz:

- Big Box Stores
- Transit Centers
- St. Patrick's Day Events
- Grocery Stores
- Community Events, Parks, etc
- Return to ATF Neighborhoods

● March 12 - Focus

Instant Replay

What worked best? Rinse & repeat in other high-risk areas.

● Your Data is IMPORTANT

Fire Chief's Call to Action

Fire Safety Campaign Focus Areas

Non-Sprinklered High-Rises

Focus on High-Rise Safety

Consult the provided list of non-sprinklered residential high-rise buildings. The list can be filtered by Battalion, Fire Station and Box.

Target these buildings to provide safety information, outreach & visibility.

High-Rise Safety Handouts: Perfect for distributing, providing to each building's Management to scan out to all residents and/or put in resident mailboxes.

After the Fire – Revisit Neighborhoods

Return to ATF Communities

Return to "After the Fire" neighborhoods and canvas the areas information, door hangers.

5 Fire Fatalities in 23 Days: 1/31/23 – 2/23/23

- Four of the 5 residents were 60+
- Three of the 5 residents had contributing factors:
- Occupants attempted to fight the fire
- Delays in calling 911

See Map on Page 4

Change Your Clocks/Check Your Alarms

Theme throughout the Campaign

Spring Forward! Reminding residents about the importance of smoke and carbon monoxide alarms, changes to laws and to check expiration dates. Smoke alarms need to be replaced every 10-years. Carbon monoxide alarms typically average 7 years. Urge residents to consult manufacturer recommendations. Many people do not know the service life is calculated from the date of manufacture found on the back of alarms.

Smoke alarms are the best and least expensive way to provide an early warning system to alert someone to a potential fire emergency. Anyone who needs help or has questions can call 311 to be connected to the CRR Team.

Campaign Logistics and Data

**Materials Arrive in Fire Stations
March 8 – 9th**

➤ **Every fire station is receiving a box with the following materials (bilingual) and supplies:**

- High-Rise safety
- Smoke Alarm info
- Carbon Monoxide Alarm info
- Escape Plans

- Bi-Lingual & English-only door hangers
- 6-pack of smoke alarms
- File of Life packets for seniors/special needs/live alone

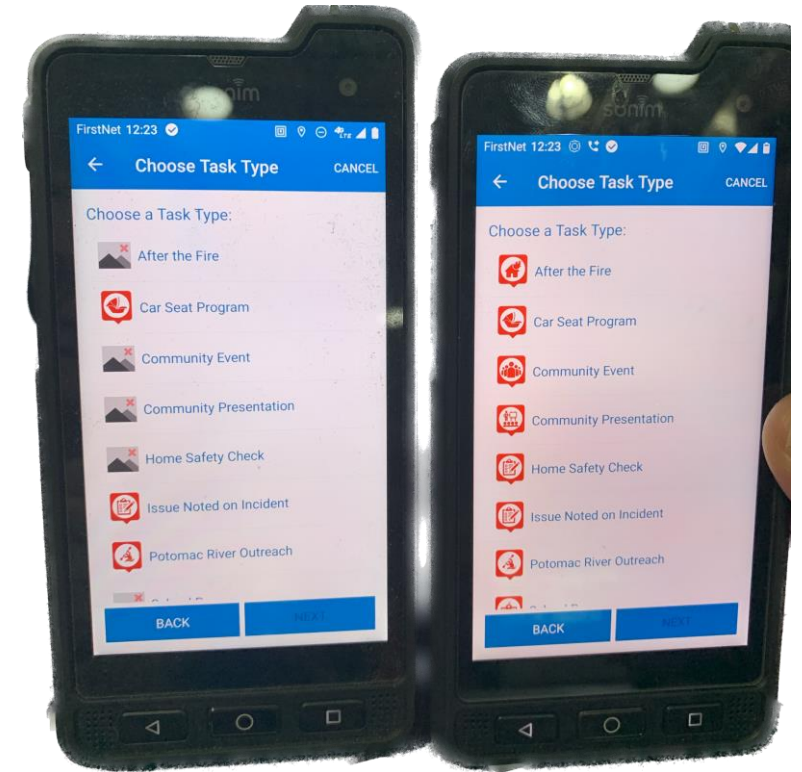
**Data is Important
Sonim Phones & RMS Computers**

➤ **Ever wish there was an App to quickly and easily enter your CRR data? Good news! There is.**

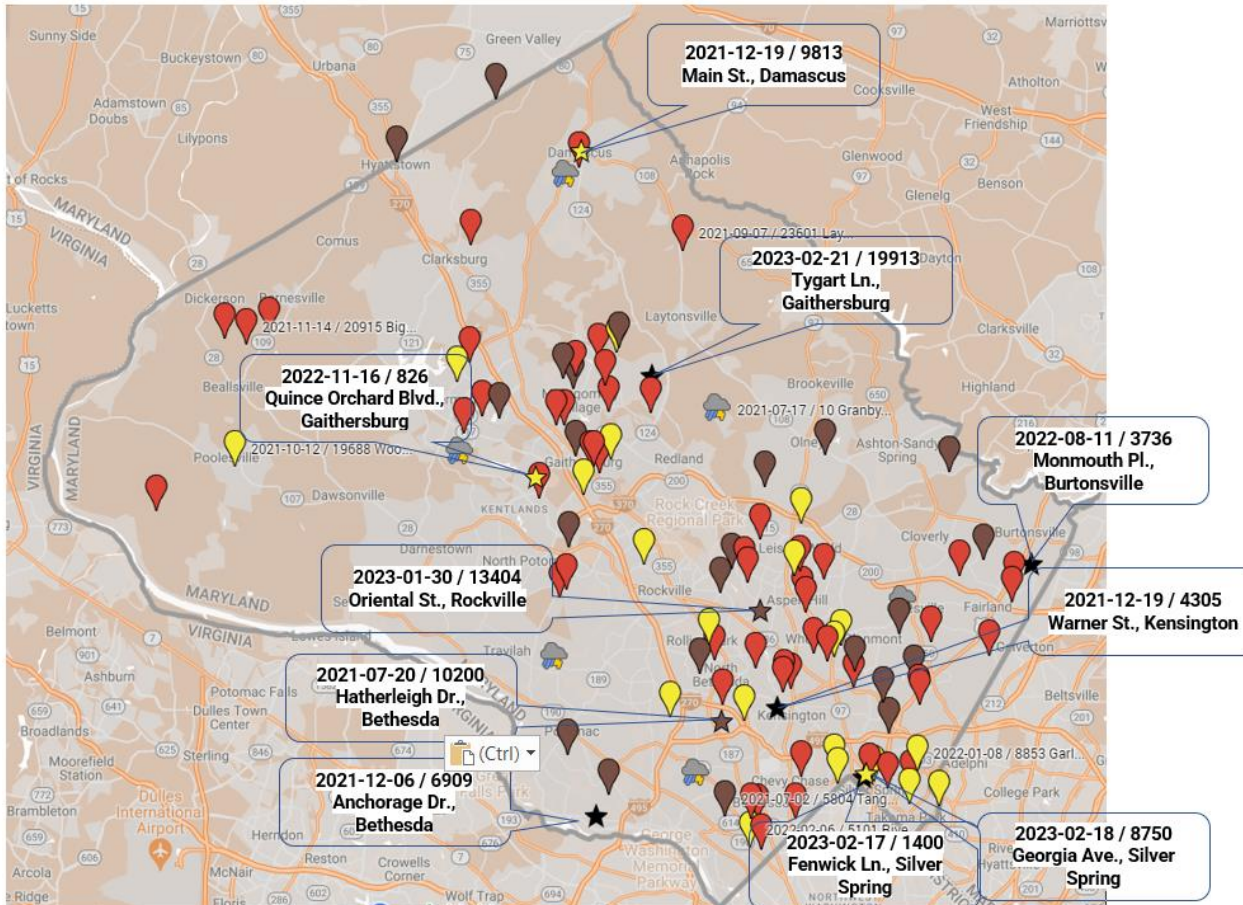
While currently in final testing, the Athena App is available to enter your data on all CRR outreach and activities. The app also has a feature to upload pictures that capture your great work in the community. Pictures may be used on social media and other channels to showcase your great work in the community.

FYI: Crews used the App very successfully for the Chief's 3-day safety blitz in 2022 on lithium battery and scooter safety. It's easy, it's intuitive, it's fast, it's MCFRS.

[Five Step Guide on Page 6](#)



Do We Have a Fire Problem?



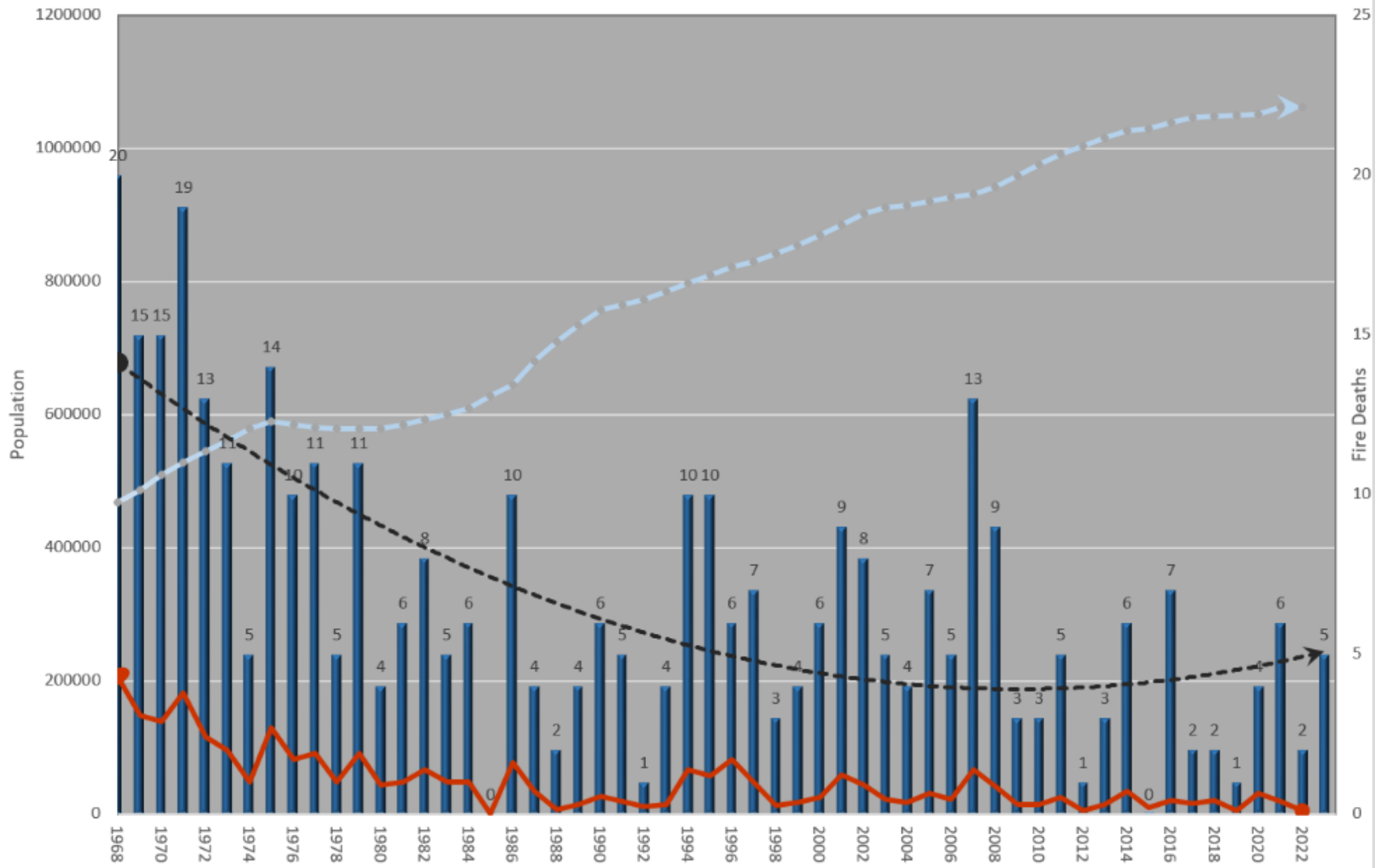
- Red Teardrop is a fire that only was a RID
- Green Teardrop is a fire that was a taskforce
- Yellow Teardrop is a fire that was at least a second alarm
- Black Star is a fatality that was a RID fire
- Green Star is a fatality that was a taskforce level fire
- Yellow Star is a fatality that was at least a second alarm.



Link to heat maps by Battalions:

<https://arcg.is/OXLyLu>

Montgomery County Residential Fire Death Data vs Population Growth 1968 - Present



Some Ideas on where to focus outreach

- 1 Grocery Stores, Big Box Stores & Shopping Centers
- 2 Non-Sprinklered Residential High-Rises
- 3 Conduct *After the Fire* outreach in Communities impacted by recent fires & in high risk communities
- 4 Transit Centers, Gyms, Libraries, the MVA & the County's Regional Service Centers
- 5 St. Patrick's Day Parade (Rio)
- 6 Community Centers, Rec Centers, Senior Centers, Aquatic Centers & Parks
- 7 Gilchrist Center and other Multicultural Centers

County's Event Calendar

St. Patrick's Day Parade - Gaithersburg

Sat Mar 11, 2023

10:00am

Age: All Ages

Price: Free

Location:

Rio Lakefront Shopping Center
209 Boardwalk Place, Gaithersburg, MD, 20878

Map

Invite a friend Add to calendar Website

The city of Gaithersburg hosts its annual St. Patrick's Day Parade with Celtic dancers, bagpiper bands, school groups, clowns, fire trucks, horses, and more.

St. Patrick's Day Parade begins at Rio Boulevard and Grand Corner Avenue. Free parking is available in three garages along Washingtonian Boulevard.

Month	Tile	Table	Day	List		
WEEK OF MARCH 5, 2023						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Public Comment Open on Regional Fair Housing Plan						
The Trawick Prize: Bethesda Contemporary Art Awards 9a Free Food 9:30a Commission on Aging - Health and Wellness Committee 10a Sixx Cool Moms Purim Party!	The Trawick Prize: Bethesda Contemporary Art Awards 9:30a PS 9:30a TE 10a Tiny Tot Puppet Show 1:30p PHP +2 more events	The Trawick Prize: Bethesda Contemporary Art Awards 8:30a Board of Registration for Building Contractors +17 more events	Holi The Trawick Prize: Bethesda Contemporary Art Awards 8a 2023 Virtual Fruit Growers Meeting +22 more events	The Trawick Prize: Bethesda Contemporary Art Awards 8a Silver Spring TMD Advisory Committee 8a Silver Spring TMD Advisory Committee 8:30a Soil Amendments Workshop +24 more events	The Trawick Prize: Bethesda Contemporary Art Awards 8:30a Friendship Heights TMD Advisory Committee +7 more events	The Trawick Prize: Bethesda Contemporary Art Awards 8a Driver Safety Outreach at Gaithersburg MVA +7 more events
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Public Comment Open on Regional Fair Housing Plan						
The Trawick Prize: Bethesda Contemporary Art Awards 9a Free Food 12p Gallery B Presents Variety Show: A Photo Ensemble +4 more events	The Trawick Prize: Bethesda Contemporary Art Awards 9:30a ECON/PS 10a ECON 12:30p State Legislation 1:30p PHP 1:30p PS +6 more events	The Trawick Prize: Bethesda Contemporary Art Awards 8:30a Friendship Heights TMD Advisory Committee +16 more events	The Trawick Prize: Bethesda Contemporary Art Awards 8:30a Oak Chapel Food Distribution - Registration Required - Call or Text: 240-462-6086 +15 more events	The Trawick Prize: Bethesda Contemporary Art Awards 9a Board of License Commissioners +23 more events	The Trawick Prize: Bethesda Contemporary Art Awards 9a Food Pantry by Appointment - Only for Zip Codes 20850, 20851, 20853, 20852, 20853, & 20854. +4 more events	The Trawick Prize: Bethesda Contemporary Art Awards 9a Olney Food Distribution at Mid-County HUB at Harvest 9a East County Food Distribution - East County Community Center +6 more events
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
Public Comment Open on Regional Fair Housing Plan						
The Trawick Prize: Bethesda Contemporary Art Awards 9a Free Food 12p Gallery B Presents Variety Show: A Photo Ensemble +2 more events	The Trawick Prize: Bethesda Contemporary Art Awards 1a Commission on Aging, Communications 9:30a PS/EC 9:30a TE 1p Commission on Aging, Communications +6 more events	Norouz The Trawick Prize: Bethesda Contemporary Art Awards 8a Bethesda Urban Partnership, Inc. Board of Directors 8a Meeting with Board of Education +14 more events	Ugadi The Trawick Prize: Bethesda Contemporary Art Awards 7:30a Criminal Justice Coordinating Commission +16 more events	Ramadan: The Islamic Month of Fasting The Trawick Prize: Bethesda Contemporary Art Awards 9a Food Pantry by Appointment - Only for Zip Codes 20850, 20851, 20853, 20852, 20853, & 20854. +21 more events	The Trawick Prize: Bethesda Contemporary Art Awards 9a Food Pantry by Appointment - Only for Zip Codes 20850, 20851, 20853, 20852, 20853, & 20854. +7 more events	The Trawick Prize: Bethesda Contemporary Art Awards 9a Olney Food Distribution at Mid-County HUB at Harvest +5 more events
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
Public Comment Open on Regional Fair Housing Plan						
Ramadan: The Islamic Month of Fasting						
The Trawick Prize: Bethesda Contemporary Art Awards	The Trawick Prize: Bethesda Contemporary Art Awards	2023 Montgomery County Energy Summit	Ram Navami	8:30a Kids Day Out/Tea	8a Driver Safety Outreach	

Submit Your Calendar Events

View Month

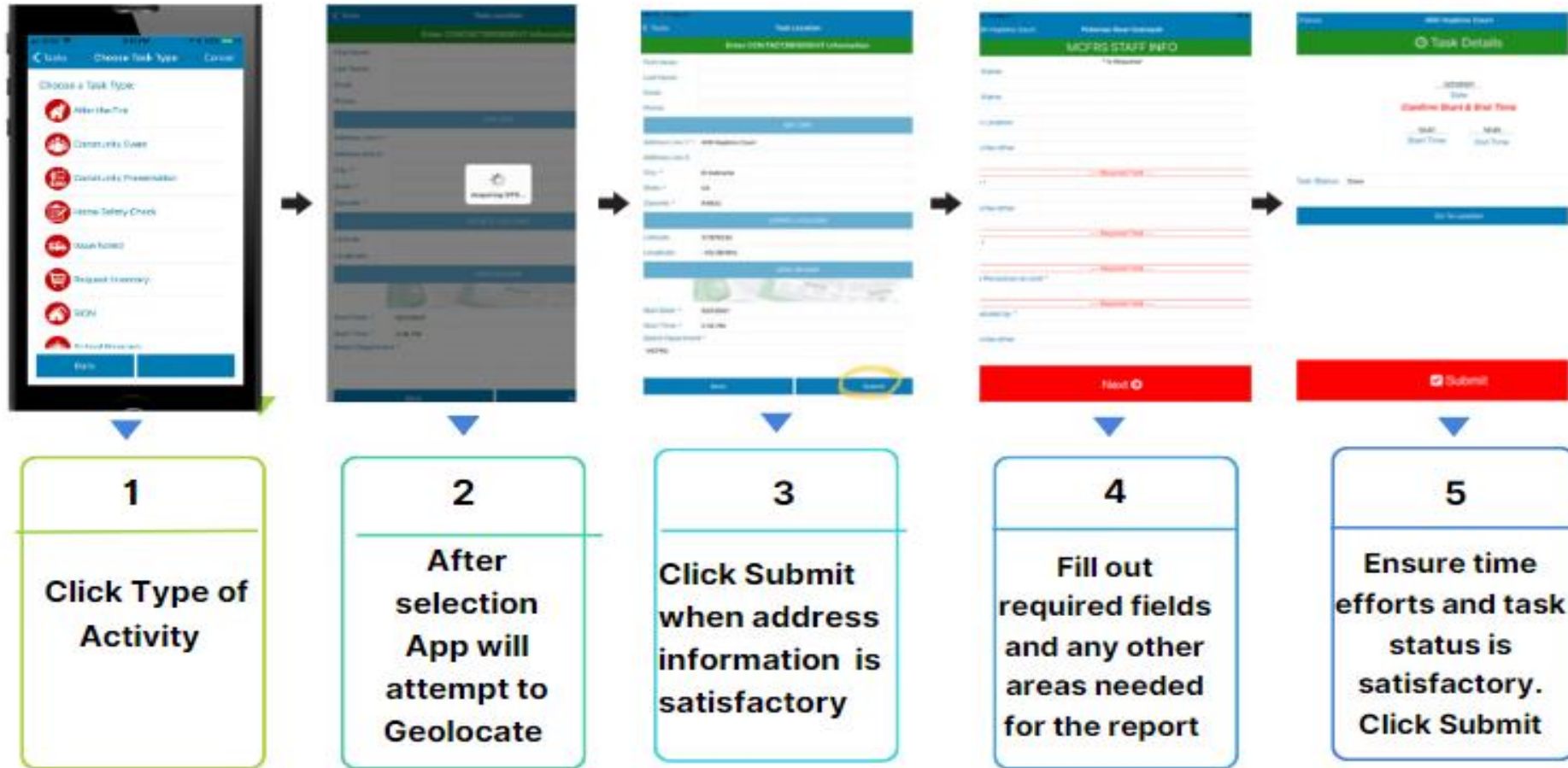
Category

- Boards, Committees & Commissions
- Budget Forum
- Business
- Career
- Community Events
- Council and Committee Meetings
- Councilmember Events
- County Executive
- Educational Class
- Elections
- Environmental Protection
- Food Distribution
- Government
- Health
- Holidays
- Media/Press
- Parks & Recreation
- Public Safety
- Recycling
- Regional Services
- Seniors
- Substance Use
- Town Hall Meetings
- Transportation
- Volunteers

<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/mcg/calendar.html>



Your Data is Important. Enter Reports on the Athena App



Game Plan



FIRE CHIEF'S CALL TO ACTION

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