September 28, 2026

Artie Harris, Chairman
Montgomery County Planning Board
2425 Reedie Drive, 14th Floor
Wheaton MD 20902

RE: Request to Reschedule Planning Board Work Session on the Friendship Heights Sector Plan's Site-Specific Recommendations

Dear Chairman Harris:

We write on behalf of our respective communities to respectfully request that the Montgomery County Planning Board reschedule its October 22, 2026, work session, and any other session for which it is known in advance that all Board Members cannot attend. We understand that Commissioner Pedoeem has announced she will be absent on October 22, the date on which the Planning Board intends to discuss the Friendship Heights Sector Plan's site-specific recommendations. Those recommendations are of the utmost importance to our communities, and we believe they warrant the participation of the full Board.

These site-specific recommendations will carry consequential and long-lasting outcomes for the area and the residents within our communities. Decisions of this magnitude call for the attendance and full participation of all sitting Board Members, to the extent possible. We see a distinction between an unanticipated absence, known only the day of or the day before, and a scheduled absence known a month in advance. Illness and emergencies happen and cannot be planned around. An absence known well ahead of time can be, and here we believe should be, accommodated through scheduling.

Given the anticipated timeline for transmitting the Sector Plan to the newly elected County Executive and County Council following the General Election, there is adequate time to move the currently scheduled October 22 work session, and the subsequent November 5 session, to dates when all five Board Members can attend. The September 24, 2026 Staff Report presented during the Planning Board's first Sector Plan work session confirms that the Council is not expected to take up this matter until early 2027. A short adjustment now would preserve this schedule while strengthening the Board's deliberations on one of the most consequential portions of the Plan.

As the September 24 work session demonstrated, the five Board Members bring differing viewpoints and perspectives to these discussions. That range of views is precisely what makes full participation necessary. The give-and-take of a live discussion, in which Members question staff, respond to one another, and refine their positions, cannot be replicated when one Member is absent.

If the Board is unwilling to grant our request for rescheduling, we ask, at a minimum, that the written comments Commissioner Pedoeem stated she would provide to her fellow Board Members be posted online and in advance so that the public – and ultimately the Council - can review them. In making this request, we want to be clear that we do not think that written comments can adequately substitute for Commissioner Pedoeem's active participation in a live meeting. Making them publicly available would, however, help ensure transparency and give the public insight into the various perspectives informing the Board's decisions.

We appreciate the Board's work on this Sector Plan and your attention to this request. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss it with you and are grateful for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Lou Morsberger
Vice Chair, Chevy Chase Village Board of Managers

Francine Klein
Chair, Village of Friendship Heights Council

Rohit Khanna
Mayor, Town of Somerset

cc: Montgomery County Council
Jason Sartori, Director, Montgomery County Planning Department
Elza Hisel-McCoy, Chief, West County Planning, Montgomery County Planning Department
Members of the Montgomery County Planning Board