

## **Montgomery council OKs 9.9 percent WSSC rate hike**

Increase still must be reconciled with Prince George's

County News | Erin Cunningham

The Montgomery County Council backed a 9.9 percent increase in rates charged by the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission.

The council voted 9-0 Tuesday to approve spending limits for the commission, which included the rate increase.

That rate, recommended by Montgomery County Executive Isiah Leggett (D), would require the utility, which provides water and sewer service to about 1.8 million customers in Montgomery and Prince George's counties, to trim about \$10 million from a plan that council analyst Keith Levchenko said could have required a 12 percent increase. Prince George's County Council has backed an 8 percent increase.

The WSSC's commissioners and the two county councils will determine the rate early next year. Councilman Roger Berliner (D-Dist. 1) of Potomac said he was glad to hear that the utility still plans to do whatever it takes to make safe the water service, which has been plagued by large pipe breaks.

### **Green Party candidate not invited to forum**

A Montgomery County civic organization did not invite the only Green Party candidate running for a local office to a recent candidate forum, because it was unaware of his candidacy, a spokesman for the group said.

Dan Hoffman, chairman of the newly formed Citizens League of Montgomery County, said a forum Oct. 20 was scheduled at the last minute, and organizers were unaware of Green Party candidate George Gluck's candidacy for an at-large seat on the County to run for office June 4.

By the time organizers learned of Gluck, it was too late to invite him, Hoffman said.

Organizers also believed that adding a ninth participant to the forum, which included four Democrats and four Republicans, would make the event more difficult to moderate, he said.

"This is not unusual," Gluck said of the snub. "They play by the rules that have been set up by Democrats and Republicans, who are happy not to have any third-party competition."

If the organizers had called him — even as late as the night of the forum — he would have attended, Gluck said.

**Leggett: Census a success**

Montgomery County Executive Isiah Leggett (D) is calling this year's collection of census data a success after 80 percent of households responded to the federal questionnaire.

An accurate count of county residents could put Montgomery in line for a greater share of about \$400 billion in federal funds that are determined by the census counts, he said.

"Our participation rate, which increased by 2 percentage points from 10 years ago and is 6 points above the national average, is due to the hard work of our many community leaders who worked tirelessly to make this campaign such a success," Leggett said.