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City of Fairfax School Board Regular Meeting, Monday, January 5, 2026

Date Monday, January 5, 2026
Place City Hall, City of Fairfax, Virginia
Length 1h 6m (video)

- Official meeting video (city, Granicus): https://fairfax.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=13&clip_id=4433
- Agenda: https://fairfax.granicus.com/AgendaViewer.php?view_id=13&clip_id=4433
- Minutes: https://fairfax.granicus.com/MinutesViewer.php?view_id=13&clip_id=4433&doc_id=f891f250-eccd-11f0-bb28-005056a89546

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Speech-to-text: whisper.cpp, model large-v3-turbo. Produced 2026-10-12. Each paragraph starts with its time [HH:MM:SS] in the meeting video.

[00:00:17] Good evening ladies and gentlemen. Tonight is Monday, January 5th of 2026 and this is a regular meeting of the City of Fairfax School Board. Will everybody please stand for the pledge? I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

[00:00:42] okay there are no changes to the agenda this evening no other announcements so the first item is the adoption of the agenda may have a motion please madam chair yes miss Kelsey I move that the city of Fairfax school board adopt the agenda as written and distributed may have a second second famous Kelsey has moved miss Hickman has seconded all those in favor signify by saying aye aye none opposed motion passes unanimously okay next we are going to move on to our

[00:01:20] student recognition this evening and I'm going to turn it over to mr. Phillips who's going to manage that sounds great thank you chair pitches and welcome everyone it's great to see you this evening great to see some familiar faces we welcome everyone to our meeting this evening where we will look again to celebrate the success of our students in just a moment I'll call the names of students we're recognizing this evening one at a time if you're with us in person tonight and you hear your name called please come to the front of the room with us we'll give you a certificate to recognize your accomplishment

and we'll take a photo together if you're listening at home or perhaps you received a state honor in the last two weeks don't worry we'll

[00:01:56] send your certificate to school for you or we'll recognize you later this year so at this time I'd like to invite any administrators up that might want to be with us in the photos let's see that there I knew we had one dr. a thanks for joining us this evening Dr. Right and board and superintendent superintendent

[00:02:20] right all right the national merit commended scholar designation is an academic honor given to approximately three 34,000 high school students who score in the top three to four percent nationally on the preliminary SAT or the national merit scholarship qualifying test congratulations this evening to

[00:02:52] Peter Choi. Peter, come on up. And we're going to take the group photo with everyone once we

[00:03:03] come up. Arhan Dasay, Kevin Nguyen, Priscilla Jang, Laura Johnson, Aniket Nardas, Sean Nguyen,

[00:03:40] Samuel Park, Fiona Rice, Noelle Sackey, Nicholas Schwilley, Siddharth Shankar, Ashley Shin,

[00:04:11] and Cheryl Zhang. And if we can get a photo with our commended scholars. Congratulations to our

[00:04:45] scholars next we're going to recognize our national merit semi-finalists a national merit semi-finalist is a high school student who scored among the highest scoring entrance typically the top one percent in their state on the preliminary SAT or the national merit scholarship qualifying test and has an opportunity to advance to the finalist competition for the national merit

[00:05:12] scholarships tonight we congratulate Rohan Desai Elias Falk Henry Mann

[00:05:28] Michael Steckle and Nathan Yoon. And now a photo. We're so proud of all of our

[00:06:06] students congratulations to all and congratulations to all of our students this year on their hard work and their accomplishments. Thank you. Okay so I'm going to take or we're going to take we'll take a five-minute recess so if everybody wants to go they can. There's still I think refreshments out in the

[00:06:43] atrium if you guys would like to enjoy those as well so you are dismissed

[00:06:49] unless you want to stay you're more than welcome to okay good evening again we

[00:09:14] are going to move on to presentations of school board and we do not have anybody signed up this evening for citizen participation so we're going to move on to miss Lucas's student report good evening and happy new year as we kick off 2026 Fairfax City schools are buzzing with energy and a reflection on a joyful December filled with performances, community giving, winter sports, and excitement.

[00:09:38] The holiday season brought our students, staff, and families closer together in celebration and support of one another. Here's a look at some of the highlights from December across our schools. At Fairfax High School, the theater department delighted audience with the Colabrett Festive Winter Cabaret performance on December 2nd, oh 12th, sorry, full of talent, laughter, and holiday spirit.

[00:09:59] Winter sports teams were in full action throughout the month with basketball, swim and dive, wrestling, gymnastics, and indoor track competing in thrilling games and meets. The popular baseball

Christmas tree sale continued into early December, raising funds for the team while spreading cheer to families picking out their perfect tree.

[00:10:16] At Katherine Johnson Middle School, the Fairfax Theater Company brought holiday magic with performances of a backstage Christmas from December 12th to 21st, showcasing student and community talent. In this heartwarming production families connected over resources for cold weather support and ongoing pta initiatives including fundraising efforts to benefit school programs at Daniel's Run. The pta order organized a canned food drive that ran throughout mid-December collecting generous donations to help local families in need during the holidays students

[00:10:53] and staff embraced the season with community building activities winter readiness preparation and joyful celebration of giving back. In Providence, the school community wrapped up the year with a hands-on learning in STEM, lab, and outdoor spaces, fostering creativity and sustainability.

[00:11:11] Families enjoyed continuing engagement through Title I programs and reflections of the school's eco-school achievements, carrying the spirit of innovation into the new year. I'm wishing everyone a bright and prosperous 2026. Thank you.

[00:11:27] Do board members have any questions for Ms. Locas? Okay, thank you. That was a great report. Now we will move on to the superintendent's proposed 2027 budget. I'm going to throw it now to Dr. Wright.

[00:11:45] Good evening, and thank you for the introduction.

[00:12:08] Chair Pitches, Vice Chair Sessori, and board members Bartlemy, Hickman, and Kelsey, thank you so much for being here this evening, and I'm looking forward to presenting the 2027 fiscal year superintendent's proposed budget. I think we all know each other, but for any of our members of the public at home, my name is Dustin Wright.

[00:12:27] I'm the very proud new superintendent here in the city of Fairfax School System, and it's an honor to be with you here tonight. Before I begin, I'd be remiss if I didn't share some words of gratitude. To put a budget together like this takes a lot of work, and prior to the winter break, I've only been on the job for about three weeks, and it takes a lot more than three weeks to do something like this.

[00:12:48] So a huge thank you to Dan Phillips, Carrie Dorsey, and Barb King for all of their support. I also want to acknowledge the collaboration and partnership and really great feedback and insights from our partners on the city government, specifically our chief financial officer, J.C. Martinez, and our budget director, Gwen Riddell.

[00:13:09] Both of them were extremely supportive while we were developing this on a pretty quick timeline. A big thank you to our public for engaging by watching this presentation and engaging in some of the opportunities that will be available and that we'll discuss with the timeline at the end of this presentation.

[00:13:27] And then finally to the City of Fairfax School Board and our City of Fairfax City Council. These elected bodies provide tremendous support for the city schools and we wouldn't be able to do what happens in our schools every day, which you just saw with some of our students, without that support. Tonight's budget should hopefully reflect three key priorities throughout the discussion.

[00:13:49] The first is strengthening the connections we have between our schools and our community to provide wonderful schools for the city of Fairfax, for our families and community members with school-age children and for our families and members without school-age children. All of them rely on having really great schools as a part of our community.

[00:14:07] The second is supporting and empowering our outstanding educators and staff members at each of our schools. We need to give them the resources that they need to be able to provide exceptional experiences for every single student, every single day. And then finally, we want to be keeping our students at the center of all that we do.

[00:14:24] Through the budget and the resources and everything that happens in our schools, we want our students to have the access and opportunity every single day to meet that limitless potential that we know they each have. We want them to go out after their experience in a City of Fairbanks school to not only be successful in the world, but to go out and impact the world. And hopefully that will be a result of that experience they've had here.

[00:14:47] I want to orient everyone to the structure of the presentation so you know where we are headed. We'll begin with who we serve and how our system is structured. And then we'll spend some time on our school services agreement with Fairfax County Public Schools and how that tuition bill is created and calculated and the impacts of our membership on that agreement.

[00:15:09] And that's important because that's one of the primary cost drivers of our budget. And then we'll conclude with a proposed budget and the timeline ahead. I think all of us are familiar, but here in the city of Fairfax, we have four schools and an academy.

[00:15:26] And these four schools make up a single cohesive system, but each has its own identity. And we love that about all of our schools, but they are aligned in expectations, programming, and outcomes. Each of these schools plays a distinct role in a vertically aligned system from early learning all the way through graduation.

[00:15:43] And although we have a small division here in the city of Fairfax, our students have access to a broad range of pathways. The breadth is made possible through thoughtful design and strong partnerships. Our size allows for personalization, while our partnerships allow for scale.

[00:15:59] And you're going to hear variations on that theme throughout the presentation. I think all of us are familiar with some of these key aspects of our school division, some of the things that make it special and unique, but I think it's important to continue to highlight it.

[00:16:15] We have four high-performing and fully accredited schools, and we saw evidence of that prior to the winter break with the results of the state accreditation system that came out in December. We're supported by an engaged community. We're strengthened by the longstanding partnership that we have with Fairfax County Public Schools through our SSA, and we have the best of both worlds.

[00:16:38] We have that small city feel with the resources of a large school district. To continue to acclimate everyone to our school division, we've talked about this school services agreement a little bit, and we'll get into details here in a few slides, but that's been in place for 47 years in its current form.

[00:16:57] It was initiated in 1962 and then renegotiated in 1978, and it's been in that current state since then. In our four schools, we have approximately 5,400 students. 2,900 are our city residents, and then

another 2,500 are county residents that attend our city schools, and we'll talk more about that throughout the presentation. And then we have an elected five-member school board and a superintendent and central office staff to support the schools.

[00:17:25] I'd like to take a few moments here to talk about that school services agreement that manages how our school system operates and also is a big driver of the budget that we're going to discuss this evening. As we talked about earlier, it was initially established in 1962, but it's important to note that there are four key stakeholders in that school services agreement. There's the City of Fairfax Schools, the City of Fairfax City Council, the Fairfax County Public Schools, and then the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors. The third bullet, I think, is a really good encapsulation of how the agreement works, where FCPS manages and operates the day-to-day at our

[00:18:05] city schools. They hire the staff and develop the curriculum. And our city school board oversees the contract. They provide wonderful supplemental resources and they maintain the four city-owned school buildings. Doctor, do you mind if I just jump in from it? Sure. And just for the public to understand, when we say maintains, we don't do the minor maintenance, we do the major maintenance.

[00:18:27] So when, you know, a bathroom needs to be fixed, typically FCPS, that would be their responsibility. Thank you for that clarification. And as we look at this next slide, we'll start to see some more of the specific details of that SSA and get into some of the things that Chair Pitches was just referring to to help kind of really understand it at a granular level.

[00:18:52] You can see some of the information about oversight. I would like to highlight some of the really important things about collaboration. Our city school board members collaborate with their county school board counterparts with ongoing communication at all times of the year.

[00:19:10] Myself, I'm constantly working with Dr. Michelle Reed, the superintendent of Fairfax County Public Schools. And then to help understand kind of the experience for our students, for our city students, they're all able to attend city schools, but they have access to all the FCPS resources, such as special education services, academy programs, IB programs, and even magnet schools such as Thomas Jefferson.

[00:19:33] Our city residents participate on advisory committees that support the school system. And we welcome City of Fairfax, in our City of Fairfax schools, we welcome county students into our buildings through the boundary process. And so that's something we'll talk about a little bit later as well, about those county students that attend our city schools.

[00:19:53] And then a great clarification that Chair Pitches gave us, the city is responsible for the major capital improvements to our school buildings. And we've seen evidence of that through the recent bond process that the city went through, and we appreciate that support. At this point in the presentation, we're going to start to talk a little bit about who our students are and the membership and the enrollment that we're seeing at our schools.

[00:20:20] So the information that you see on the screen right now talks about the enrollment that we saw at the start of this school year. That's our September membership numbers. And you can see that we had 2,942 students in September.

[00:20:35] And I'd like to help orient everyone to some of the information on this table. What you're going to see on that second column is the membership by level of our city students. And then what you're going

to see in that third column is the change when compared to September of 2025, the start of the school year, to September of 2024, the start of last school year.

[00:20:58] And you can see some of those shifts. And then in the fourth and fifth column, it's a similar presentation of information just for Fairfax County Public Schools overall. And we presented this information at our December board meeting from the FCPS DIT team. And you can see a lot of blue downward arrows on there, which is a downward trend in enrollment.

[00:21:18] And this downward trend is happening region-wide in the Washington, D.C. area. We've seen lower-than-expected enrollments at Fairfax County Public Schools, Arlington, Loudoun, Prince William, Montgomery County, and Maryland, all of those schools have promoted much lower enrollment than they were projecting at the start of the school year.

[00:21:41] So there's a trend that's going on in our area, and again, we'll continue to talk about that as we move through the presentation. This next slide builds on what you just saw, which is that September membership number and something called our average daily membership, or ADM.

[00:22:02] And this is an important distinction that I think is, I'm going to spend just a minute here to help everyone understand how these two numbers are created and why they're important. So those September membership numbers are what we're looking at at the start of each year.

[00:22:18] But the ADM, or average daily membership, is something that we look at throughout the school year, and it's a really important number for lots of reasons. And essentially what it is, it's an average of the membership throughout the entire school year. It's defined by the total aggregate daily membership, and you divide that by the number of days school was in session during the school year.

[00:22:42] This ADM impacts our state funding. The ADM is used to develop the local composite index, which is another key driver of our budget. And then it is the key number in our school services agreement with Fairfax County Public Schools. So for the rest of the presentation, we're going to talk about that ADM.

[00:23:01] But while we're on this slide, we want to show two important things. First is that blue line is our September membership number, and the yellow one is that ADM, which is typically measured at the end of March. And you can see that for the past three school years, not only those numbers are fairly similar when they're compared, but they've also been on that upward trajectory.

[00:23:25] As we talked about in the previous slide where throughout the region, there's been lower than expected enrollment. You can see that that's the case as well because that blue line dips down. We were probably expecting it to be a little bit higher at the start of the school year, and it ended up being lower. The projection of our ADM for this year, so the best estimate that was done at this time last year, you can see in the yellow line.

[00:23:49] We'll have a better idea of how those numbers are going to come together later in this school year, and we'll continue to monitor that as well. But all of our school division partners around the area are looking at similar charts where they're seeing this gap between their projection and their enrollment.

[00:24:09] We just talked about how that ADM is important because it's one of the key drivers of the school services agreement and the tuition bill that we have with Fairfax County. And so we're going to

take a look at the history of our tuition bill right now. What you can see on the screen is the last 10 years of tuition bills that we've received from Fairfax County Public Schools.

[00:24:33] In a minute, we'll talk about how this tuition bill is calculated. But what you can see is that upward trajectory of the tuition costs, while also you can see, especially in the last several years, the upward trajectory of our enrollment. And that is rebounding from the dip that we saw during the COVID pandemic.

[00:24:52] As the overall costs have gone up, you can also see that cost per student increasing each year. Now, I'd like to note that the FY2026, the year that we're currently in, those numbers are estimated at this time because we won't know the exact cost from Fairfax County for their operating costs until the end of the fiscal year.

[00:25:13] There's some end-of-the-year true-ups that happen where they look at costs that weren't originally budgeted but are still operating costs. And they have to factor all those in before understanding what the total budget can be. And we'll talk in a few minutes about what is the impact of some of those year-end true-ups.

[00:25:33] But that's where we are right now as it's estimated for the 2026 year. Some of the key factors that are in place when we think about how our tuition bill is calculated are the following.

[00:25:48] It's that ADM, that average daily membership of our city of Fairfax students, and then the total operating cost for Fairfax County Public Schools. Those two key numbers are the bulk of what makes up our tuition bill and how it is calculated. Some of the secondary factors are the percentage of our city of Fairfax ADM to the Fairfax County Public Schools ADM.

[00:26:11] And it's important to know that we have to monitor how relative those are to each other. If both enrollments are going up, we're going up and Fairfax County is going up, we're probably going to see our percentage stay pretty similar, which then, again, is going to impact our tuition bill.

[00:26:28] Same thing if both enrollments drop. If our enrollment goes up and their enrollment goes down, we're going to have a greater percentage of the overall students, which means we're going to have a greater percentage of their operating cost impacting our tuition bill. And those are some of the things that we've seen in the last few years where our enrollment has grown, and that has multiple factors.

[00:26:47] It's just the students in our schools. Some of it's the new development that's opened up in the city, which is increased housing. availability. But we always want to monitor how those two work together. Some of the other secondary factors are the amount of students that we have at each level, because the school services agreement has different cost points for elementary, middle school, and high school. They're not drastically different, but they do make a difference. We'll talk at a few points during this presentation, but the number of county students that attend our city of Fairfax schools

[00:27:21] impacts the classroom rental credit that we receive so every county student that attends Fairfax high school there's a classroom rental fee as a part of our tuition bill and we'll receive credit from Fairfax county for that and then we already discussed that year-end true-up adjustment so as we move to the last stages of this presentation you're going to see three slides that I think just kind of review just but in graphic form what we just talked about with our ADM, the FCPS operating costs, and then our overall tuition bill. So you can see those

[00:27:58] trajectories. If I was a better graphic designer, I would find a way to overlay all three of those at once and make it really clear and easy to understand. But I was unable to do that. But I think as you look at the three of them in succession, hopefully it will show that similar trend line that we're seeing for each slide. So here's that average daily membership that we've been talking about, not that September enrollment, but that ADM. And you can see that upward trajectory, especially since 2020. And then you can see the projected numbers that we have for not only our

[00:28:31] current year, but for FY 2027, which we're talking about tonight, and then FY 2028. We will have more information later on this year when Fairfax County releases their budget about some of the enrollment projections. But right now, these are the numbers that we've been operating on. And again, if we need to make those adjustments throughout the budget process this spring, we will do so.

[00:28:57] You can see a graphic representation of the operating costs for FCPS. And so through last fiscal year, FY 2025, you can see the trend that it's been on. So not too dissimilar from the upward trend of our average daily membership. And then you can compare when you put those two together, you'll see the impact that it's having on our tuition costs as it continues to increase over time. The last section of this presentation for this evening is taking a look at the proposed budget for our FY 2027 year, the process that we're working through this spring.

[00:29:37] So again, to orient everyone to the information on this slide, that second column talks about fiscal year 2025, the one we just completed. And so all of those numbers are fixed and complete, and that year has been wrapped up and so you can see our operating costs, our tuition, our debt service, and our improvements. The third column is the estimated budgets for FY 2026 and again they're in that estimated category because of the tuition bill that we won't know that final cost until the end of the year but working with Mr. Martinez and his team we have some pretty good estimates. We've looked at some of the historical trends and we think we have got a pretty good

[00:30:16] number to work with. And then we're in constant communication with Fairfax County to try and calibrate to make sure we have the best information and the most timely information as possible to determine what that number is going to be. And then as we look at the fourth column, that's the proposed budget for FY 2027. What you'll see on there is \$1,298,429 for operating costs. You'll see an estimated tuition. So again, not knowing exactly where Fairfax County is going

[00:30:50] to come in. We're estimating the tuition is just over \$74 million. You can see our debt service, which is decreasing each year. That improvement line is something that has been in place for several years. It probably could fit in our operating cost category, but that improvement line is something that has been dedicated to maintaining the turf fields throughout the city.

[00:31:14] And so when you add all those together, you get a total FY2027 proposed budget number of \$80,189,606. In that final column, you can see some of the changes from our current year to the proposed year.

[00:31:34] And so the operating cost shifts. Most of that is from increases in our school supplementary instructional funds and some additional communication supports that we think we'll need as a part of the renovation process.

[00:31:50] And then the bulk of that increase is the anticipated tuition increase. One other piece of financial information that I think is important for the board and the public to understand is the state

revenue that the city of Fairfax schools receives each year.

[00:32:08] This revenue usually falls into two categories, sales tax and basic school aid. And this is another one of those factors that are impacted by our ADM. You can see on here the actual funding that we received from the state in 2025.

[00:32:26] Right now, we're forecasting the number in the third column for this current year. And then this is our best projection on what we think 2027 will look like, again, in collaboration with the city's finance team.

[00:32:43] Governor Youngkin released his budget right at the end of December. And that budget will then be worked on in the legislative session in Richmond that will take place over the next few months. That's something that we're looking at and monitoring closely.

[00:32:59] There's some calculation tools, modeling tools that the Virginia Department of Education provides to give us some estimates on where we think that'll end up. But again, if these are numbers that need to shift throughout the spring based on what we're hearing from Richmond, we'll do so accordingly.

[00:33:15] And then the final piece of information, which I think is good for everyone to know, is just how our general fund here in the city of Fairfax is dispersed to our schools and how that compares to our partners.

[00:33:31] So the city of Fairfax allocates a substantial portion of its general fund to the schools, and this reflects the city's longstanding commitment to education. And you can see some helpful regional context with some of our peer jurisdictions. The last slide before we wrap up is a preview of the calendar and what will happen next in this budget process.

[00:33:57] So tonight you're hearing the proposed budget, and there's a few key timeline spots throughout the next few months that I think is important for everyone to know about. On January 22nd, Fairfax County Public Schools will hear Dr. Reed's proposed budget.

[00:34:14] And because of the impact of their operating costs on our tuition bill, I think that's going to be a good indicator for some of the things that we're talking about this evening. And, again, we'll monitor that closely. The first meeting in February, the school board will have the opportunity to vote on the budget.

[00:34:33] And then that will start moving on to the work with the city council where you'll hear the city manager present a budget to the city council at the end of February. Our city of Fairfax schools team will present specifically to the city council at the beginning of March. And then throughout the rest of March and April, there's opportunities for public hearings and a city of Fairfax budget open house.

[00:34:54] We don't have that exact date right now, but we'll definitely provide that as soon as it's available. And then the city of Fairfax mayor and city council will vote on their budget on May 5th. Again, I want to emphasize the gratitude I have for all the support our schools have received while developing this budget.

[00:35:15] I appreciate the opportunity to walk through this proposal and to highlight its focus on our community, our staff, and most importantly, our students. I think this budget reflects stewardship and strategic intent on behalf of our students and community, and I look forward to the discussion and any of your questions this evening.

[00:35:33] Thank you so much. Thank you, Dr. Wright. Miss Barlman do you have any questions? I have a comment first. I just appreciate that you broke down and explained a lot with SSA to the constituents

because I think you caught some nuance and some details that I think are often not understood so I appreciate that. And then

[00:35:59] I need to find the graph I was looking at. So on the tuition history our estimated is not like the slope is not keeping up with the recent trends i think it's on page 14 or slide 14 the city of fairfax tuition history we're gonna try and get it back up on the screens if our slides can go

[00:36:38] back up there that would be great so i think this is the one yeah i was just wondering if you could speak at all to the fact that our estimate is the slope is decreasing a little bit um i think it might it would be you know to give you a specific direct answer i'm not able to do that um it's Probably some combination of it depends, which I know is a sneaky, nonspecific answer, but just probably a combination of a lot of different things.

[00:37:11] But I think what we're hopefully seeing is I think we saw some very significant increases in past years, and that one of the reasons we're seeing a slightly different slope is just the estimation process that is helping us have a better idea.

[00:37:30] Again, a big credit to Mr. Martinez for helping us with that. But I think it's having a clearer idea of where we're going to be, whereas some of the estimates in previous years might have been on the lower side, and they ended up being significantly higher. It might also just reflect just some of the less drastic increases that we're seeing in Fairfax County's operating costs.

[00:37:53] I think it's definitely something we can look at a little bit more to see if I can get you a more specific answer. Ms. Kelsey. Yeah, one of my questions just on the membership versus ADM slide, just want clarification.

[00:38:14] The numbers in parentheses are just saying that's the difference between the September and the March numbers. Absolutely. That's the blue ones? Okay. I just want to make sure that I'm reading that correctly. And then my other question is, do you know, when does FCPS send out these projections for the next couple years?

[00:38:40] Like when, and I know it's towards the end of the year, but do you know, because I'm just, in my mind, I'm kind of thinking because last year, Fairfax County was also decreased in their numbers. We were increased, but I'm just curious why they have so much increase.

[00:38:59] You know what I mean? Like, because they already kind of saw that trend coming, why they're making such a big increase in the ADM numbers. Yeah, I think that's a great question. So I'll always have a caveat in my response to say I'm not going to speak for Fairfax County.

[00:39:16] But we typically see through their budget process is when you're seeing a lot of their enrollment projections. So on January 22nd, I think we're going to have a really good idea of what they're projecting for the next year. So the numbers that were lower than they were expecting, I think on this previous chart, and if we can just stay on the slides for the time being, I think that would be helpful for everyone.

[00:39:41] When we saw their September enrollment of \$177,000, that what they projected in their budget was somewhere around \$180,000 or \$181,000. And that was in the budget that came out around this time last year. So I think in a few weeks we'll see what their projections are.

[00:39:57] for the upcoming school year and and they even look out beyond there so i i think soon is is the answer of when we'll know what some of their projections are and i think that will also give us some good information on where where some of our projections might need to shift okay thank you miss heckman okay i have a couple so i'll do two and then go for a call go back later um so i think very similar to what uh miss kelsey is saying i also i have some concerns between slide 9 and slide 12 in terms of, again, those projections of the ADM going up while our membership is going down.

[00:40:35] And I know they are not tied to each other, but there is likely some sort of correlation in some way, shape, or form. Well, let me just clarify. Membership is basically on September 30th, they count the number of bodies in the building.

[00:40:50] March 30th, the ADM is a calculation based on numbers days present and number of days absent by that particular date. So there is a little bit of a correlation but it's very loose which is I think my concern so what I'm seeing is on slide nine is typically they are much closer together right as we're looking on the chart here and that is a really big gap between what we saw on September 30th and what the projection is. As you said I know you didn't A didn't make the projection. But I'd be curious that once that September 22nd or December, what are we in,

[00:41:29] January 22nd presentation happens, if we could get some updated information and if that does change, if those estimates do look different, since I think that would obviously impact our budget. And I know you're in a tricky position of having to budget before a budget is provided for you. But I think there is some room to kind of look at that and see how, you know, the reality is actually going to possibly affect us.

[00:41:57] Do you want to speak to how they get to that, where that estimate comes from? Absolutely. So I definitely appreciate some of your recognition around some of the trickiness around this process. I would say that it's my, if I had to, I don't know what the ADM will be, but I don't, remember that number is a projection.

[00:42:24] So when we have that calculation later in the year, it could look different, okay? And, you know, it may match a similar type of delta that you're seeing in previous years. And then we will have that ADM number here in a few months, and we can definitely keep everybody updated as to what that is.

[00:42:43] And it might be possible as we look on slide 12 where we have projections for those out years that some of those numbers will be different in February or March as we have different information. Okay. And that number, we receive an estimate from FCPS, and it's also based on birth rate, like what they're predicting the kindergarten classes will be like.

[00:43:07] Some of those children who are born that year don't end up showing up for kindergarten, and also predicted student yields from new development. So that's a huge delta, like Dr. Wright said. We're hoping that it's going to follow our historical trends and be a little bit closer to the membership number of September.

[00:43:32] So we're all going to keep our fingers crossed on that. Perfect. That's exactly what I was essentially getting to. And I want to make sure that the public is aware that we are aware that that looks like a huge delta right now and that we're kind of watching that there. So I want to talk a little bit about operating costs.

[00:43:49] You have, you know, obviously there's been an increase in operating costs from FCPS, which increases our tuition costs. Is it possible that you can give just a couple examples of what has increased in

the last couple of years? Because I know, as Barron was saying, that there has been an increase.

[00:44:07] I think it would just be helpful to kind of have a little bit of information on those things that have been more costly in the past two, three years. For the Fairfax County Public Schools operating costs? yes that we then that transfer to us great no i think that's a great question i think um you know again has you know can't speak for them specifically but i think what you're seeing a lot of those costs typically a school budget is 85 to 88 percent personnel costs the most important resource that i think you know any of our community and government local government

[00:44:42] organizations have are our people right so our teachers our staff members our bus drivers our counselors. The salary costs, the benefit costs are some of the key drivers for that. So as we've seen regional labor markets, benefits and inflation, I think that's where a lot of those increases, you know, because it's so much of their budget, when there's an increase, it's typically tied to something there. I mean, in previous divisions I've worked at, when they look at estimating what health and medical benefits are, they typically look at a 10% increase each year now that's probably on the high side and you hope it comes in lower but somewhere around

[00:45:22] five to eight percent of costs increasing per year just to keep doing what you're doing in the previous year is not unheard of in school divisions so I think those are some of the as you saw hopefully in the Fairfax County budget process last year there were actually reducing it throughout the budget process so even with that you still saw the increase in overall costs so It's mostly personnel and the benefits and the support and the salaries that go with them.

[00:45:51] Thank you so much. And then I highly encourage anybody who's watching tonight to also watch on January 22nd to continue to hear what those changes are, because they do impact us, and then we'll do our best to also distribute any of that information to the city. And then I'll take a go back later. Okay, Ms. Sessori. If you, just for a point of clarity for the public and whatnot, I know we're talking about different operating costs, operating costs with FCPS and operating costs with the city of Fairfax and our school system.

[00:46:20] Slide 15 does that, just sort of looping in the FCPS operating costs within tuition. I just want to give a plug here that we did have a wonderful presentation from our acting superintendent at the time, Mr. Phillips, on November 3rd with those operating costs, highlighting the SIP and such for that.

[00:46:41] So anybody who's watching this is welcome to go back and look at that presentation. And Ms. Essary, can I make a quick plug? Go for it. There are several footnotes throughout the presentation that have hyperlinks on them to a lot of the source documents.

[00:46:58] Perfect. The CIP on slide 15 that you're talking about is actually linked down there at the bottom. So anybody who wants to look at that presentation that Mr. Phillips gave is linked right there for them. I appreciate those hyperlinks quite a bit. I want to kind of take a moment, and I know having been in education for a bit, I'm familiar with the year-end true-up adjustments, but I know people in the general population may not know what those look like.

[00:47:23] And so we talk about year-end true-up adjustments. Can you elaborate a little bit more? Absolutely. So when a school system creates their budget, a school board is going to vote on the budget, and they're going to appropriate the funds, and they're going to have all those funds accounted throughout the year.

[00:47:44] There might be additional funds that they have that are one-time only funds that they might be able to spend, whether it's a carryover or an additional grant, or there might be additional costs that they didn't initially budget for. I can think in the past year the state mandated, which I think was a good thing, it mandated bonuses for teachers.

[00:48:04] That was not something that was in their original budget, but it was an additional cost that took place at the end of the year. So they had their original appropriated funds that were a part of the budget that was approved. And then there's typically in a lot of places, and Fairfax County Public Schools has followed that trend over the last several years where they have additional money beyond what they allocated in the budget, and that's what that true-up process is.

[00:48:30] And so because much of those additional dollars are operating fund dollars, they go into our overall tuition bill. Fairfax County typically does either in the summer or early fall, they provide a presentation that talks about what those funds are and share that information with the public.

[00:48:47] So that's why we typically get our final tuition bill. And I think it's in September is when you received it this year because they need the extra time after the fiscal year is wrapped up to know what that is. And to clarify, too, I think we had a slide from last year, sort of a three-year window.

[00:49:07] We're going to go into proposed budget, actual budget, and then that true up piece, right? And so it's sort of the cyclic, talking about past, present, future monies and whatnot. So I just want to, I know that might be a new term for people listening in. I might have a go back, depending on what Ms. Sigmund says.

[00:49:22] You can, I mean, we're at the end. That's true. That's true. Just go ahead. I'm just going to, I'm just going to, just to highlight again, like, we're not, you know, voting on this tonight. As you highlighted in your calendar, that's in February, and we'll have a work session on January 26th further talking about this, too.

[00:49:41] And a second public hearing as well. And a second public hearing. I appreciate you highlighting that one. Do you want to go do your go back, or do you want me? Okay, go ahead. Okay, I have to go, too, so, yeah. I don't have a lot, so. I had one more, just a specific question for you for the improvements where you discussed the turf field.

[00:50:03] Um, it was my understanding that with the replacement of the field, that PRAB, it's something that there's, PRAB is going to be taking over, not PRAB, but, uh, Parks and Rec is going to be taking over the more of the maintenance. Am I misinformed on this?

[00:50:21] There's a really good chance I'm going to need to phone a friend on, on this one. Um, um, and, or, or, um, have mic troubles real quick. i i think there's some information on that um i don't know if mr phillips wants to try and address that but before he does i would say um even with that um and some of the conversations we had we thought about that even with that it would be a good best practice to start building up those capital accounts again um for even um any future uh needs that we might have um but it's just proposed at this point mr phillips thank you for the question so the turf field used to be a

[00:51:01] project that was under Parks and Recreation and this coming year they're going to move it to schools so it's actually the opposite but the \$20,000 will service well as a as a fund to do maintenance now we also have the baseball fields and the practice fields and things like that so there was thought that we can leave it out because we're planning to buy the new turf field if you know pending approvals we're

asking for that the CIP but the 20,000 is not that much in maintenance and it's probably a good practice to have those funds available okay thank you for clarifying I knew it hurts something and I a few changes like that this year that's true yeah thank you absolutely

[00:51:40] okay first I would like to say that Fairfax High School achieved distinguished status so need to put that out there that's very impressive I the only thing I would like to clarify I don't even know if it needs clarification but on slide eight that the net change for FCPS membership those numbers include the city numbers as well so when you're they are not net of those so just keep that in mind other than that I would say you know we talked

[00:52:20] about operating costs I think collective bargaining is probably you know it's a driver probably for some of these salaries and benefits going up more than we probably they would have maybe in the past I dr. Wright can probably will in his conversations with dr. Reed figure out what are some of the other factors that are going to drive up their operating costs do you okay yes miss

[00:52:54] Kelsey sorry quick clarification just came in my head these numbers are city kids only in city schools, not city kids that go to county school. This is only counting the city kids in our schools, correct? So if I can, just so we're all together, if I can have my friend put up slide eight or put the slide back up. Yeah, eight, nine, someone run there. So 2,942 is the number of city students that we have total. Total. Okay, so this is counting the ones that are also going to

[00:53:32] county schools we have approximately and i have the exact numbers um i can give them to you if you let me shuffle through papers for a minute awkwardly but uh we have about 2700 students in our four city schools and then we have approximately 200 that attend non-city schools they attend either county or other placements yeah i just wanted to clarify that because in my head question yeah so thank you yep okay any other go backs miss accessory could you take a moment and just go back to the slide where we compare the transfer of funds. I don't have my slide flipped

[00:54:09] to it at the moment. Between the counties. Slide 17. See if we can get that. I just want to take a moment and I would be remiss to highlight the value that we do get from our relationship with FCPS. And, you know, like with any relationship, you know, there

[00:54:49] all kinds of differing opinions about those you know or any kind of relationship um but we have an incredible i think value for our money where we're transferring only 80 38 from our general fund to schools for our cost here compared to other but we're still part of one of the best school districts not just in the state but perhaps even in the country too where we're able to leverage so much opportunity, as you mentioned, not only for our 2,700 students, but our 200 students that are in county schools, maybe attending academy programs and immersion programs,

[00:55:27] AP, et cetera. So I just want to emphasize that. And I apologize for taking up more time, but I just want to highlight that slide very much as we go into the budget conversations of that there's value here. And as you said, that's an investment in our students, in our community here.

[00:55:44] So thank you for letting me have that time. Of course. Ms. Lucas, do you have any questions for Dr. Wright? Nope, not today. Okay. All right. We're going to let you sit back now, Dr. Wright. Thank you very much.

[00:56:00] Okay. And so now this begins the public hearing of which we have, unless Mr. Martinez would like to speak. Okay, moving on to action items. Okay. The approval of the December 1st, 2026 meeting

minutes. I think the clerk has provided those minutes. May I have a motion, please? Madam Chair. Ms. Hickman. I approve that the City of Fairfax School Board approve the minutes of the December 1st, 2025 school board regular meeting

[00:56:36] as printed and distributed. Okay. May I have a second? I second. Okay. So Ms. Hickman's moved. Ms. Bartle may have seconded. The City of Fairfax School Board approved the December 1st, 2025 regular meeting minutes as printed and distributed.

[00:56:52] Are there any changes, modifications, or additions? Okay, being none, all those in favor signify by saying aye. Aye. Aye, none or opposed, so the motion passes unanimously. The next action item is the approval of the 2026 legislative program.

[00:57:10] May I have a motion, please? Madam Chair. Ms. Sessori. I move that the City of Fairfax School Board approve the City of Fairfax School Board 2026 state and federal legislative program as printed and distributed. Okay. May have a second. I second. Okay. So Ms. Sessori has moved. Ms. Bartle may have seconded. City of Fairfax School Board approve the City of Fairfax School Board 2026 state and federal legislative program as printed and distributed. Any changes, additions, modifications, corrections? Anybody? Okay.

[00:57:48] All those in favor, signify by saying aye. Aye. Aye. No members are opposed. The motion is unanimous. Okay, moving along, we will go to superintendents matters. So, Dr. Wright, you get to talk again. Thank you, Chair Pitches.

[00:58:05] And good evening to everyone. In our superintendent's report for this evening, we have a few things to share. December was a very exciting month for me. And I don't know if it was the first month on the job here in the city of Fairfax, But there was lots of great things to participate in and lots of wonderful people to meet.

[00:58:23] So we've talked about this entry plan that I'm engaging in, which has three different phases. And the first one is listening and learning. And so we've been able to do a lot of that during those three weeks in December. I've met with over 60 people during that time, and that includes city council members and the mayor and school board members, All of our principals, FCPS staff, community leaders.

[00:58:50] We've been meeting with our architects that are part of our renovation projects and much, much more, and it's been wonderful. I've also been able to not only be in our schools during the day, but to attend several wonderful, wonderful exhibitions of the talented students that we have here in the city of Fairfax.

[00:59:08] So I was able to go to both the Fairfax High School band concert. Noelle was here earlier, and she played timpani during the last piece that was played. I was also at the KJAMS band concert as well, and I will take a moment of privilege to say I was there as the superintendent and as a very proud dad.

[00:59:28] We went to the Fairfax High School Parent Coffee, which is great to see Dr. A working and connecting with the parents in her community. There was a fabulous rising 7th grade tour that took place at KJMS. So not only do all of our feeders, 6th graders were there, but our 7th graders were, excuse me, our 7th and 8th graders were there hosting those 6th graders, serving as tour guides, presenters, and just great leaders that would have made us all proud.

[00:59:57] Several athletic events, Fairfax High School wrestling meet, boys and girls varsity basketball game, swim and dive meet on the Friday before winter break where I was given the privilege of handing out the cards which meant all the swimmers probably went in the wrong events but but it was really great and then I also I was able to go with my daughter to the Academy MTAS MTAS cabaret concert where they did a movie themed night there was popcorn and everything it was great so lots of wonderful exhibitions of our talented students. I would like to take this time

[01:00:34] also to preview another portion of that entry plan and some community listening sessions. I'm excited to share that there'll be three of them, two in person and one virtual and these will all be taking place in February and we'll be getting all those dates out to everyone. There will be one on February 4th, February 11th and February 18th and these sessions are designed to give our families staff students and community members opportunity to talk about three really important questions what makes our schools strong where they see opportunities for growth and what hopes they have for the future beginning next month during our school board meetings i'll either use

[01:01:14] this time or a different time on the agenda to provide our community with a dedicated renovation update so everybody is able to stay in the loop on what's happening so i just want to preview that for our community and then i would also before looking ahead briefly i also want to take this opportunity to welcome dan alexander the new city manager for the city of fairfax and we know that he'll be a great partner with our city schools and i think his first day was today so welcome to have him aboard in terms of looking ahead there's a few things we want the community to know about and to preview on monday january 12th fairfax high school will have their community and curriculum

[01:01:50] night on uh wednesday january 14th there'll be the rising seventh grade curriculum night at kjms and on january 15th there will be an orchestra concert at providence elementary and by looking down the dais i think i just took someone's announcements away so i apologize i'm new here um it is early in the year so there's not a lot for it but okay get get it all out okay we just won't have to repeat it all right all right so blame the new guy all right um so those are some of the things that we have looking ahead and with that chair pitches that concludes the superintendent's report thank you okay uh miss barlmay i just wanted to say we're really glad

[01:02:27] to have you on board and appreciate how you have hit the ground running because you have done a lot already in a short period of time um so thank you and i don't have anything to add i think all the upcoming events are they're they're covered all right miss kelsey do you have anything no okay

[01:02:44] I just want to say my thanks also to the entire team for their work on the budget I know this was a long process and it was not something that happens overnight and so thank you to everybody who put in the work both Dr. Wright and also those behind the scenes who've been working on it I want to encourage anybody who is available to either watch or attend the January 10th Fairfax County School Board meeting where Dr. Reed will be presenting the boundary review information 8th January 8th and then there is a public on january 10th um so everybody has that information and attends those and then just

[01:03:20] wishing everyone a wonderful break and happy end to the second quarter which is going to be over really soon um accessory just want to thank also dr rey for um hitting the ground running um i can't tell you how many texts i got saying superintendents here i had a moment where i was like dr rey no our city superintendent which is fantastic to see at especially the swim and dive i'm gonna plug that yeah i was

pretty impressed with that one we definitely need volunteers by the way they asked me to be a timer at the event and i it's very easy to i had to leave early otherwise

[01:03:54] i would have jumped right in um i also want to take a moment and um i it's uh it's election season or starting to be and i just wanted to highlight um a conversation i had in that um our work sessions before i joined the dais used to be all at fairfax high school and and um with the board here when we met during our retreat it was decided that we would rotate through our different schools and i'm really excited that our next work session will be at daniel's run elementary school on the 25th i think it's a great opportunity for us to pop into schools as we see those so um if anybody's wondering where we're at that's where we are so um thank you so much and

[01:04:33] i'm so glad that you guys made it through the first day of school back so all right i'll pass it off okay um i'd just like to congratulate our students again this evening that we recognized and congratulate fairfax high school for um their stat distinguished status um i am looking forward to warmer weather so we just need to get through this month and next month and then you know spring sports will be starting um and other than that i don't think there is anything left before the

[01:05:09] board um does anybody have anything before i adjourn the meeting okay i wanted to say thank you for coming to our swim meet i was a little surprised to see you there after i swam i think kevin was too but it was a it was i was like oh my goodness um but it was great thank you so much i got lots of pictures of dr right at various events that i would have never thought he was a gun i mean it was impressive i will say very impressive

[01:05:42] thank you and you have to say that you you were a band and are still a band person right i'm not going to say yeah we're not a superintendent's not allowed to have favorites yeah but i'll just love a good band okay um i am going to adjourn the meeting at 7 38th



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