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City of Fairfax School Board Work Session, Monday, January 26, 2026

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[00:00:16] Okay, I'm going to start at 6.30. Good evening, everyone. It is, today is Monday, January 26, 2026. And this is a work session of the City of Fairfax School Board. We are going to start with our presentations.

[00:00:33] And our first one is the Superintendent's FY 2027 proposed budget discussion. So I will turn this over to our Superintendent, Dr. Wright. Thank you so much, Chair Pitches. Good evening to the rest of the board.

[00:00:49] And good evening to any members of the public that are watching with us live or that might be watching as we record, watching a recorded version in the future. Our goal this evening is to provide an update and some additional information and just an opportunity for a discussion amongst the board about the proposed budget that was initially presented on January 5th.

[00:01:13] But since that time, we have some updates in our enrollment and some updates in the proposed budget from Fairbanks County Public Schools that I think are pertinent for the discussion this evening and would like to share that with, again, the board and the community. So I'm going to go ahead

and share my screen. I have a few slides that are posted online as well that hopefully will help guide our discussion.

[00:01:34] And then at the end, I look forward to answering any of your questions. So, I'm hopeful that everyone can see my screen okay. And so, in terms of our conversation this evening, we wanna talk through some updated membership numbers, some more details on the budget.

[00:01:54] In the initial presentation, there had been some high-level numbers, so we wanna provide some more details, and then some updates from FCPS and the state, and some of the next steps in this process. So, as we get into our presentation this evening, going to start with a few things that i've shared with you already but i think they're important to look at again so on January 5th we saw this exact slide so no changes to it and it talks about the membership in the city of Fairfax schools at September of this school year so

[00:02:28] September 2025. you can see that we had 2942 city students that were enrolled in our schools what you see on the screen is our city membership which you can see uh trended downwards um so lower than what we were projecting and lower than the same time at the beginning of the 2024 school year at the elementary level in the middle school level slightly up at the high school level but down overall this is paired with the same information from Fairfax County Public Schools where you can see a similar downward trend from what they were projecting to start this school year with to what

[00:03:05] actually showed up in our schools in September. This is a trend that we've seen throughout the region, not just Fairfax County Public Schools and the City of Fairfax, but Prince William, Arlington, Loudoun, Montgomery County, and Maryland. We've been seeing this trend of lower than expected enrollment. Now, what we're going to look at here is a slight variation on a slide that was presented to the board and the public on January 5th. What this shows is two pieces of information and then an update so you can see our navy blue line that's that September membership

[00:03:41] and you can see from the last few years of that first of all it's been on an upward trend and then you can see it compared to something called our ADM which is their average daily membership and that's taken and calculated at the end of March every year and that ADM is really important because it is the student enrollment number that's calculated as a part of our School Services Agreement with Fairfax County Public Schools, but it's also factors into state funding and our local composite index and several other measures. So you can see that yellow line, also on an upward trajectory, has typically been fairly close to that September enrollment.

[00:04:21] The ADM projection that we have for this current year that we talked about in January is up over 3,000 students, and you can see that trend of having less students than we were expecting. So that navy blue line going down was going to be a lot lower than what we were expecting and what the FY26 budget was designed around. The green square that you can see is our enrollment at the end of December. So you can see that the students that were here in September, there's only a net difference of five students between September and December for our city of Fairfax

[00:04:57] students, so 2,947. So it's our anticipation that when we get to that March ADM number and that calculation, it'll happen at the end of March and we'll know what those numbers are by mid-April. We're going to expect to see a fairly similar relationship between the yellow line and the blue line that we've seen for the last few years. Now we're going to get into some of the budget summaries, and there are some very similar pieces of information that the board and the public have

[00:05:32] received and then a few new ones. So this screen looks very similar to what was shared previously, same format. There's been slight reductions in our operating costs and a slight reduction in the estimated tuition for FY27, and that is based on conversations with the city's chief financial officer and the best estimated guess we have of what our tuition bill will be for FY 2027. Now, the one thing that we did not talk a lot about on January 5th is those operating costs.

[00:06:07] I'm going to go back one screen to where we just were. So that top line, those operating costs, and these are a part of our budget outside of that tuition bill, outside of our debt service and outside of our CIP. So you can see these operating costs on the screen of some of the things that make up those operating costs. And there are lots of important components of what we do in the city of Fairfax to support our schools, to support our staff, to support our community, and most importantly, to support our students. I've taken the opportunity to break down those costs for the board and the public on the screen here. And what you'll see is

[00:06:44] FY25, the FY2026 estimate, and really the biggest estimate there is salaries and benefits. And that just is based on decisions that the city council makes. And then FY 2027 is proposed. And then finally, the change or difference between the two of them. You can see a change in the salaries, which is intended to provide the city of Fairfax schools the opportunity to have flexibility for positions that might need to shift or change based on the bond-funded

[00:07:21] referendum or the the bond-funded renovation work that will be happening in the future or any unanticipated challenges but just the opportunity to have some flexibility there the other change that you'll see is in our contract services and that's an increase in our school our school supplementary instructional funds and i'll talk about that in detail in a minute and then the final increase you'll see is in the travel and training fund and city-wide that number was reduced in FY2026, and the city council has signaled their support to return it to the FY2025

[00:07:55] levels for this upcoming square. I'm now going to specifically go into our contract services, that large number on there. That consists of several different things that we do here in the city, and I just want to break that down. So that 480,770 number that you see, we're going to break that down a little bit on the next screen. And so you can see that here. There's some slight shifts in our grounds contract and our professional services, which is where some of our legal fees

[00:08:30] and other things are there. I recommended an increase in our communication support for, again, some of those things that we think are going to be needed as we embark on this very, very large and complex challenge with the school renovations. So that's there for the board to consider.

[00:08:49] And then the biggest thing that you see is a shift in our supplemental instructional funds for our schools, which is a really great resource that we provide here in the city. And what we're actually doing is returning to, for several years, it had been at \$285,000 and returning to that number. So not an increase over the past, but an increase from a reduction that was seen last year in FY26.

[00:09:12] And then the final piece of information that we want to provide the board and the public is what was presented last Thursday night by Dr. Reed to the Fairfax County Public Schools School Board, where Dr. Reed presented her superintendent's proposed budget.

[00:09:31] So you can see an overview of the entire budget on the first bullet, where it totals to around \$4.1 billion. And you can see the increase in that percentage over last year's budget. Specifically to the city

of Fairfax schools, Fairfax County always provides some estimates on the revenue that they'll receive as a part of their budgeting process from our tuition payment. And you can see their estimate there. And it's at \$77 million. And you might recall on a previous slide that we, in coordination with the city's

[00:10:06] chief financial officer, we have a number that's less than that in our proposed budget for this evening. And the biggest reason for that is because that \$77 million is based on a projected enrollment of 3,103 students for the city of Fairfax. And it's our belief that that's a very high estimate. And so the number that we put in our budget is more realistic to what we'll actually end up paying in terms of tuition. There are mechanisms within the city's budgeting process where if the tuition bill is slightly higher then we'll have the ability to address that.

[00:10:45] And then the last slide for everyone to consider is the next steps and none of these have changed from what was shared on January 5th. You can see that next Monday the city of Fairfax schools will We'll have the opportunity to vote and approve this as their advertised budget.

[00:11:04] At the end of February, the city manager for Fairfax will present their budget to the mayor and city council. Our city of Fairfax schools team will have a conversation with the city council in March, and then there'll be a set of public hearings related to the budget. We're still on a TBD about that city of Fairfax budget open house, so whether that will take place or not.

[00:11:24] and then the final vote by the um the city of fairfax mayor and city council will take place on may 5th um so with that chair pitches um that is the update that we have for this evening and i'm happy to answer any questions uh that um you or the board may have uh thank you dr wright i i i failed to say something in the very beginning of our meeting um the board and the superintendent and all of the city school staff would like to acknowledge and recognize our custodians and all

[00:11:58] of the maintenance people who have been working so hard to uh with the snow removal and all the other things that go along with um these snow days so i just want to make sure that we recognize that hard work especially with the temperatures where they are so thank you to all our support dr right to say a few words yeah I couldn't I couldn't echo what you're saying enough and I was able to be at all four of our schools multiple times today and once yesterday evening to kind

[00:12:34] of see the conditions and they're they're very difficult so and a lot of progress has been made there's still more work to be done but our custodians our maintenance workers are working incredibly hard so we appreciate that support and they're doing that hard work and some very tough and challenging conditions. So I thank you for acknowledging them. Share pitches. It's well deserved. Okay. Ms. Bartlemy, do you have any questions or comments, suggestions for Dr. Wright in terms of the budget? I think at this point my questions have been answered, but I'll let you

[00:13:11] know if I think of something else. Great. Ms. Kelsey. Yeah, I have a couple questions. On the National Board Certified Teachers. I know we knocked it down last time. I'm just curious the number of teachers that we've had this year, just because we're knocking it down again.

[00:13:35] I'm just curious if we've had any teachers that have asked for additional funding past what FCPS gives or? So that's a great question. So I'll have to get those exact numbers for you, Ms. Kelsey. I don't have them off the top of my head. We haven't had anybody reach out to us during that time. And it's, again, my understanding that, you know, that that area has been reduced significantly because of the support that Fairfax County Public Schools is now providing. And that we've have, you know, we put a little bit in

there to in case there's any, you know, sometimes there's costs associated with applying or taking some of the assessments. But I can find out more information.

[00:14:15] But to my knowledge, we haven't had anybody reach out in the time that I've been here. Yeah, I just don't want us to knock it down because FCPS is covering most of it. And then we do have someone who comes up and we don't have the funds to cover that. So I just want to make sure that that thousand would cover what we have kind of in the past.

[00:14:36] My other question, well, I'll do one and then I may need to go back. My other one is with the facilities, and I'm sure I'm going to steal a meets on this one. But since we are now taking over all the turf stuff from what the city was previously doing, the maintenance and stuff is since our number is still the same, will that cover or will we need to increase that with the turf maintenance and all that stuff that we would do?

[00:15:08] Yeah, so that number, you know, should, you know, keeping that number at the \$20,000 should, again, is designed to start building up, you know, funds for when we, you know, potentially need to do more turf work in the future and cover any annual maintenance costs that we have right now.

[00:15:33] Hopefully our costs are going to be reduced a little bit because we're about to have, if the CIP is approved in full, there'll be a new rectangular football field at main stadium field at Fairfax High School. But yeah, that funding is there to support any of the ongoing costs that we have.

[00:15:52] Okay, I just want to make sure since we weren't covering that before, and now we are, that we do have the funds for that. Okay, Ms. Pitches, I may have a go back, depending on what others ask. Yes, I was wondering if you could speak a little to the school supplemental funds in terms of going back to the amount that had been done, I guess, probably pre-COVID, and if those funds are being used, and if you have thoughts on, like, how did you get to that number in terms of the increase?

[00:16:21] So that's a great question. So in terms of the number for the increase, we were just going back to what it was done. I think it had been that I'd need to double check. It was definitely that number. It was definitely 285,000 in FY24 and 25. So we're just going back to that.

[00:16:42] We had about \$208,000 allocated for this year, and our schools submitted supplemental instructional fund. Basically, they're proposals of how they would spend that money, and they were able to submit each of the schools enough needs to use all of that \$208,000.

[00:17:04] It's my expectation that those needs will be there again moving forward and probably even greater as there's been some budget cuts in other areas from the Fairfax County Public Schools resources that are provided to our buildings. So I think being able to effectively and responsibly use that \$285,000 is something that will not be a challenge for our schools.

[00:17:30] But in this current year, they definitely have submitted proposals that use all of our funds that we've set aside for FY26. Okay, thank you. I just want to keep that kind of area in mind. If we do you know we don't know what city council is going to request or approve if there are areas you know that we do have to cut that we would kind of you know look at what makes sense and what doesn't make sense in terms of that area yeah absolutely necessary yeah um I wanted to

[00:18:07] just briefly go back to um national board certifications um the what's the expectation for teachers receiving that on using city funds to remain in buildings is that like a three-year guarantee or five-

year guarantee like what's is there any kind of expectation type when they're using city funds for that no that's a wonderful question so um that's definitely one i will have to play the um the i'm new here card and uh get back to you and provide provide an update i so my

[00:18:41] I when I've worked in previous divisions, it's typically been a three year commitment so that if that's sounds familiar to you, that that's at least in the ballpark of what what's it probably is.

[00:18:57] But to verify that for sure, I'll have to go back and find that out and work with our staff to provide an update to the board. I appreciate that. And then just I want to thank you for addressing a number of questions I already had. The one that I wanted to make sure that I asked publicly is around the debt service.

[00:19:16] I had asked you whether the debt service that was listed in our budget includes what the CFO of the city had presented in September with Davenport around with the additional funds tied to renovations.

[00:19:32] And I wonder if you could speak onto whether that number is included in there and then what happens when the city council approves that funding. Hopefully they do. And then what happens with that budget going forward, just for transparency sake.

[00:19:49] Yeah, thank you. A really important question. And I'm going to try and do my best to answer the question, but also not speak for our CFO, the city government, or the city manager or the council. And that's something that I know Mr. Martinez, if we need additional information, he's always been extremely supportive to be willing to come and speak to the school board.

[00:20:13] provide some of that information. To answer directly about a few parts of the question, the numbers that we're seeing on there for the debt service does not include anything related to the upcoming bond. So that approximately, I think it's \$4.3 million. I'll point it up real quick. The approximately \$4.3 million is from previous school projects. And so it does not include anything related to the upcoming bond-funded renovation work. For the upcoming

[00:20:50] school year, or for the upcoming budget year, FY27, it's estimated that the principal and interest for the bond would be about \$1.8 to \$1.9 million. And so it's my understanding that that would be found in the city's operating budget, and it's not currently reflected on ours. I can double check to see if that's something that we want to reflect in the school's budget, but the bonds are getting pulled by the city government. So I think it was explained to me that that's where it will be reflected. But for our presentation here, it does not include any of the debt service for the

[00:21:26] upcoming bond work. Thank you. I would just like to go back to the CIF funds. In terms of uh the fy26 um usage uh we won't know specifically how much of that money has been used until the end of the school year and we always budget a little bit more because sometimes things come up with uh you know after the fact we talked about you know sometimes it'll be

[00:22:04] requested that um a group is going to go to a national competition and they'll request funds to help with transportation or those types of things so um i i echo um what dr wright said that our schools use that money very uh appropriately and respectfully and they're grateful for that additional funding um i am in favor of keeping it at the amount that it has been for at least 10

[00:22:39] years, which is \$285,000. It benefits our students and the staff that work with our students. So that's all I'll say about that. But I know how important that those funds are to our schools and to all the

people who work in our schools. And Dr. Wright, I don't have any other questions about. You and I have had a lot of conversations already. I think we, you know, we've worked out all

[00:23:15] the details together. So I will just move on. If anybody else, Ms. Kelsey, do you want to go back? Sorry, I just wanted a clarification real fast. You said, Mr. Dr. Wright, that the uh tuition agreement and stuff that you got from fcps does that include the um collective bargaining agreement increase as well are you i know we pay a little bit yeah can i just clarify

[00:23:49] so you're asking you know the when i showed the um the estimated budget from fairfax county public schools does that include any um of the well they recommended the 77 million and you put ours at 73.7 um if does that include like were you taking an account because they are also increasing salaries or does that salary not is that because is that on this uh budget or is that on the next budget cycle yeah that would be yeah no great great question so i i think i um i think

[00:24:28] i um hopefully i'm going to try and do my best to answer what you're asking so um that that's \$77 million that Fairfax County public schools estimated will be our tuition bill is our percentage of, of their proposed budget for next year.

[00:24:45] The, the budget that we're currently in FY26 was the first year where the collective bargaining agreements with their educational staff kicked in. So a lot of their increased costs for this current year were related to compensation. If, if you take a look at any of their materials for this upcoming year fy 27 it's the same thing almost near i think it's the large majority of that increase that they're looking for is related to increases in staff compensation their their collective bargaining agreement that they signed with the teachers and support staff had a bigger

[00:25:23] increase last year and it actually reduces a little bit this year but but yes it does factor in that so that you know that 73 to 77 million dollars is what we think are percentages of the overall Fairfax County public schools budget and it includes any increases for their teaching staff okay I just wanted to make sure that was taken into account and to that when we had a little bit lower than they did thank you that's all I had yeah you bet okay so we will move on to the next item, which, um, Dr. Wright, I'm going to ask you to speak to the FCPS boundary adjustment

[00:26:02] update. Absolutely. So, uh, thank you, Chair Pitches. I'm happy to speak to this. Um, um, earlier in the budget discussion, we talked about, um, some decisions that Fairfax County public schools made at their board meeting last Thursday. So, uh, the superintendent proposed her, uh, budget. Um, and one of the other big things that they did is, um, the board voted on the superintendents recommended adjustments to the boundaries in Fairfax County public schools that that vote passed by the school board and so those recommended adjustments will go into effect

[00:26:42] starting at the beginning of next school year. I would like to share with the the board and the public the budget adjustment or excuse me the boundary adjustments made by Fairfax County public schools that will impact the city of fairfax schools to clarify first um there were no none of this boundary adjustment never looked at anything within the city of fairfax that that is all the purview of the city of fairfax school board um but as i know that everyone on this call knows but for our public um we have about just over 5 000 students who attend our city of fairfax schools as you heard earlier about 2 900 of them are our city students and then there's approximately

[00:27:21] 2,500 county students, county residents that attend our schools. There was one budget, or excuse me, I keep saying budget, I've got budget on the brain. There was one boundary adjustment that was voted on by the Fairfax County School Board that will impact some of those county students that attend our schools. It was for two SPAs, or school planning areas, which is a boundary terminology that they used that are in the Greenbrier East Elementary School neighborhood.

[00:27:52] And so we're all very familiar with our elementary feeders of Daniels Run and Providence, but we have several other really important feeders to the city of Fairfax schools, Willow Springs, Eagle View, Greenbrier West, Greenbrier East, Mosaic, and Powell. So two communities within the Greenbrier our East neighborhood have been reassigned and they're not going to have any impact on our elementary schools, but it'll have impact when those elementary students come and attend Catherine Johnson Middle School and Fairfax High School. So the estimate based on the boundary

[00:28:29] process is that there will be approximately 23 students who should be attending KJ next year that will attend rocky run that will reduce katherine johnson's capacity from 103 to 101 and from that same neighborhood in the green bar east community there will be approximately 45 students who will attend fair who should be attending fairfax high school that will now attend chantilly high school which will reduce our capacity at fairfax high school from 99 to 97 And everything that I just shared is in that boundary review document that was put out by Fairfax County Public Schools.

[00:29:10] The only thing I would add is that there is some things still to be seen in terms of all of the details about these reassignments. And then there's also the Western High School that is being opened by Fairfax County Public Schools and what boundary impacts that will have.

[00:29:28] And if that will have any impact or kind of a domino effect to the Fairfax high school boundaries, because we have several families and communities that live in that western part of the county that attend our school. So that remains to be seen. But for what was voted on by the board of the Fairfax County board last week, it is two neighborhoods in the Greenbrier East community.

[00:29:50] Thank you, Chair Pitches. Thank you, Dr. Wright. We'll move on to the last presentation, which is the review and finalization of our February retreat agenda. Could the clerk, thank you, share that?

[00:30:10] Okay, so we'll just wait a minute so we can all see it. So the main presentations on the agenda is Dr. Wright will share his entry plan and give us an update on where he is nearly 60 days in.

[00:30:30] At that time, it will be more than 60 days. And then we will talk about roles, responsibilities and communication in terms of our new relationship. we have a new superintendent i shouldn't say new the relationship is new with the superintendent um uh just so we can you know have conversations around how our office works and you know what is expected of each of the parties um who work for the city of fairfax schools um we will talk about

[00:31:08] policy manual um we haven't looked uh haven't updated it since anything since 22 i don't believe there has been a need but i want uh board members to read through that policy manual and um please if there's are any areas where we need to make adjustments or amend the the policies that we we have in place um the retreat will be a time for us to look at that uh those changes um then

[00:31:42] we will talk about the renovation timeline um that will be dr right uh and then we have student staff recognition brainstorming and that will involve all of us um and that's a lot to get through. We'll work

to get through as much as we can. It is prioritized, you know, it is listed by priority. And then of course we'll have lunch and we likely will have a working lunch by the looks

[00:32:14] of this agenda. And then we will look at our calendar and review that to see if board members have any suggestions or um ideas for presentations they'd like to add to uh the upcoming calendar this is also a time to do that um and then we will talk about superintendent and board matters and then we should be able to wrap up at 1 30. so does anybody have any um concerns or comments or

[00:32:50] uh additions for the retreat agenda okay doesn't look like anybody has any all right um the uh the other um update i wanted to give uh board members is on our fcps um i'm sorry our fcps committee reps uh we had our our we were informed by fcps that the the shack committee rep um is no

[00:33:25] longer um has dropped i don't want to say dropped out has uh is not going to um continue her representation um so we did have another person who had applied for that position um so uh miss dorsey is going to reach out to that individual to see if they are interested in um fulfilling that that responsibility. Does anybody have anything else that they want to discuss? No. Dr. Wright,

[00:34:03] do you have anything to discuss any further? Are we good? Everybody's all right with the budget. There are no more go backs for that. I just want to give everybody an opportunity. I know it's odd to be back online, you know, virtual. I kind of never thought this was going to happen again.

[00:34:26] So I just want to make sure I can see everyone, but I just want to make sure that everybody gets an opportunity. Okay, so we're good on the budget and the retreat agenda. No questions about the boundary update. Dr. Wright did a great job of letting us see.

[00:34:51] It has a very minor impact on our schools, thankfully. I did attend the hearing and, you know, it seems that there's, you know, they make a change and they change it back and they make another change. And, um, thankfully the last, uh, the last hearing I went to, there was, um, nothing that was upsetting for us. So I was, I was thrilled about

[00:35:24] that. Um, okay. Well, I, if there's nothing else before the board, I will adjourn the meeting at seven Oh five. Thank you very much. Have a good night. Yep. Everybody have a good night and be safe. Thanks. Have a good night, everyone.



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