MACHINE TRANSCRIPT · CORAGGIO CONSULTING

Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Personnel and Reorganization Committee, Tuesday, June 13, 2023

Date	Tuesday, June 13, 2023
Place	Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, Virginia
Length	1h 14m (video)

- Official meeting video (Fairfax County): https://video.fairfaxcounty.gov/player/clip/2919
- Official Board of Supervisors page (Fairfax County): https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/boardofsupervisors/

> Machine transcript (speech-to-text) produced by Coraggio Consulting. Not an official county record. Names and numbers may be misspelled; check the video at the timestamp before quoting.

Speech-to-text: whisper.cpp, model large-v3-turbo. Produced 2026-11-03. Each paragraph starts with its time [HH:MM:SS] in the meeting video.

[00:00:05] This meeting of the Personnel and Reorganization Committee will come to order. Everyone can take their seats. We have two items on the agenda, but there is one item that is not on the agenda, and I think we need to call attention to something that is not on the agenda, and this is our very last Personnel and Reorganization Committee meeting with Kathy Shafrick.

[00:00:32] Kathy, not going to be the same without you, but, of course, next year it's not going to be the same without either one of us. but but i i just on behalf of the board i want to thank you for the work that you put in for all these years as a county employee moving up to becoming a department head and we wish you all the best in your new position in another jurisdiction but thank you for staying in virginia and staying with counties appreciate that very much thank you thank you and madam

[00:01:09] chairman i'm glad you started with that because i want to thank kathy as well uh seen her go through the ranks uh in the county as you and i have been here a long time uh it's been great to see and i don't think most people can appreciate how difficult her position is uh just given the scope of personnel issues and the jurisdiction of this size um kathy you've done a remarkable job we're certainly going to miss you um have other opportunities to to say that but hopefully uh Because you're still in counties and in a huge position in a much smaller jurisdiction, we hope to continue to still hear from you and see you as you work with them

[00:01:46] and take all of your Fairfax Grown talent there. But we will definitely miss you and wish you all the best. And thank you for everything you've done. Thank you. The items on the agenda are two that have been, well, they were brought up during the budget.

[00:02:05] They've been brought up by board members through other discussions. We now have some reports that Kathy is going to take the lead on. First is the hiring incentive bonus update. We do have slides.

[00:02:21] They are rather wordy, but there's a lot of information there. There was no way to create more white space on these slides because the quality of the information is really, really important. So, Kathy, take it away. Thank you, and again, I'm Kathy Shafrick, the Director of Human Resources, and with me is Adam Craddock, Deputy Director, who's going to introduce himself in just a minute.

[00:02:47] Just to start off, I will say it wasn't planned, but we're going to continue hearing some of the same themes that you've heard this morning, and I think Fairfax ends up being a microcosm of a lot of what you've maybe experienced in the community and in other places and actually globally. So these are some ways that we've successfully addressed the same problems everybody else is having, and we wanted to give you a continuing update, because as you remember, last fall we did talk about bringing together lots of the little strategies that agencies were using

[00:03:23] in creating a comprehensive program for hiring incentive bonuses. So I'm going to let Adam introduce himself and take it away himself. Thank you, Kathy. Good morning, all. My name, Adam Craddock from Department of Human Resources, Deputy Director. I appreciate being here. I appreciate your attention this morning. So for the hiring incentive bonuses on our agenda, you can see the roadmap on which we have five quick stops here today. The first is establishing

[00:03:59] the context and landscape that we're operating under in having the hiring incentive bonus program next we'll do a quick review of the current structure of that program from its inception we'll talk about some recent additions and adjustments to the program since inception we'll follow up with a year-to-date update and performance review of where we stand and then we'll conclude with some next steps and observations as we go forward.

[00:04:34] So, the first two slides set the context that we're operating under. As the chairwoman indicated, these are chock full of information. I think really the key is to recall that we have a very significant number and amount of investment that we've been implementing for attraction and retention of our employees in the county.

[00:05:04] In terms of our general employees, it's I think very notable to indicate that we had fully funded our salary increase pay plans for the past two years of fiscal 23 and 24. Annually we conduct benchmark surveys to review our employees for external competitiveness and for internal parity and in the past two years we have actually accelerated any of the outcomes from those benchmark surveys sooner than the standard July 1 effective date. We were also successful in

[00:05:40] completing a study of the appointed and managerial scales, something that had not been done for approximately 10 years. We are currently underway with our pay compression review for employees looking at long-term high longevity employees that have been in their roles for some time these are the our new hires to ensure some better parity in those cases we also have put a significant investment into our public safety employees as well and you can see the litany here but we have

[00:06:16] put in place the compression and longevity steps on the pay scales we had a five percent increase across the board for uniformed police we've just recently increased the starting pay for police officers. And then in fire and rescue, we recently addressed some issues with the fire lieutenant and with the master technician class. Our second slide here, I think the key takeaway is that we've also embarked on a number of initiatives that come from that broader perspective of a total rewards view

[00:06:54] and not just purely on compensation. We have implemented some upward mobility programs to enhance career development, including adding trainee positions to have a clear career path proceeding forward. We've augmented our training opportunities. We've increased our tuition assistance program from an annual maximum of $1,600 to $2,000. And we've been investing funds to allow more employees to take advantage of learning and development programs. We've also

[00:07:28] enhanced our leave of absence programs. We've added additional programs. We've added paid family leave. We've added the pandemic appreciation leave program. And then we temporarily raised the cap on our accrual for compensatory time for those who were unable to use their time during the pandemic. So, and last but not least, is what we're here today is to talk about the hiring Incentive Bonus Program. So as we move to that, the high level review of the program, you all

[00:08:04] may recall that at the end of last year, we adjusted the Fairfax County Code and the personnel regulations to enable us to award hiring incentives up to $15,000. That enables us a very nice spectrum of flexibility in which we can operate. The awards themselves are typically granted with the amount paid upon hire as soon as administratively feasible. And each award has a payback period and provision, meaning if the employee would encounter a triggering event, they would

[00:08:40] owe a pro rata portion of that hiring incentive back to the county. And so in general, we think we've got a very nimble, flexible program that we review on a regular basis. So moving to a little more detail in the programs, we've established four tiers of incentive, starting at $2,500, $5,000, $10,000, and $15,000. Each has an associated payback period, as I mentioned,

[00:09:15] of 12, 18, 24, and 36 months, respectively. And in order to assign those tiers, we go through a set of criteria you can see here, but it's assessing each of the requests and job classes on several key items such as life safety implications, operational impacts, vacancy rates, looking at market competitiveness, and then also the fiscal impact of implementing such incentives.

[00:09:49] And at this point, as of the presentation, we've invested over $1.8 million in the program with approximately $1.6 million attributable to our police officers and deputy sheriffs. And so with that, we've got more details on adjustments and changes to the program.

[00:10:13] Okay. Thank you, Adam. So these are the charts, and I'll go very quickly through these, but we wanted to bring back some of the classifications you guys have asked about and that we had talked about in the fall when we first put this together, well as provide some examples so you can see how that criteria that Adam just talked about applies in a real-world scenario these charts here again are basically hires versus resignations and that dark number that you see in the middle is the net change so if the numbers positive that means we're to the good if it's negative it means we lost more people than we brought on so you

[00:10:53] know the first one we have here is a crisis intervention specialist it's a small population. We actually only established this classification in 2016. The vacancy rate when I reported this in the fall was

around 40 percent, actually a little bit above 40 percent, and now it's down to 22.5, so it's better, but still something that we're working on. This is an example of one where when we first put the bonus in place, it was a lower bonus tier. It was $5,000, and we've recently upped it to $10,000, and

[00:11:27] we're continuing to monitor it. I will say that like all of this we're being nimble as Adam suggested but we're also you know it takes some time to collect the data to actually see what's actually a trend and so we are very closely following the people who are getting these bonuses and I'll talk more about that toward the end. So if we go to the next slide these are some new additions. These are different types of examples. The first one, the wastewater or plant operation. This is something that I know you guys have heard about in terms of some of the challenges

[00:12:06] with recruiting. The vacancy rate is decreasing. One good thing that we've also done, and I want to say this, the hiring incentive bonus isn't some silver bullet that's going to solve all the problems. One of the big things, as Adam mentioned, and I want to reiterate it here, is doing it in conjunction with things like regrades which we did do for this classification it did go up one grade as part of the regrade study plus along the same themes that you heard in the last presentation in the last committee meeting it is we are putting in upward mobility programs and trainee programs

[00:12:43] and those have been a great success but again it takes time for people to go through those and for us to see what the real impact has been but we're very optimistic and and happy about those family services, we have not only put in this new hiring incentive bonus, but we've added an environmental stipend, which also helps with retention, because, again, you've got people you're bringing in, but you also want to keep the people that you have.

[00:13:11] And we've looked at areas that are particularly hard to fill, areas like CP, Child Protective Services, or in-home services staff, which you may also know as Protective and Preservation Services. So we are targeting this because there is, just like there's no silver bullet, we are tuning our response based on the data that we're seeing, the information, and the partnership we have with the agencies who know these jobs and know what it takes to get people to come in.

[00:13:42] The last one on this slide is an example of a single incumbent classification. We do have a bonus for this one because it is just so particularly hard to fill. and well we've got the agency's gone out several times and we've assisted them with with a recruitment we're hoping the bonus might be just enough to to seal the deal so we go on to the next slide with nurses I know you've heard a lot in the news I'm sure about nurses this is actually one area where we've had a bonus for many years it was a much smaller bonus this is one of those

[00:14:16] little programs that we pulled together with the broader hiring incentive bonus program so that we can have a better more holistic and more equitable approach to this so the original bonus going back many years was two thousand dollars they've been brought into the county-wide program the vacancy rate is still high i will say too that when we've added positions in some of these areas makes the vacancy rate look high because, you know, as soon as we have positions, changes the equation. So that, but it is a place where we are seeing progress. And again, we're going to

[00:14:54] continue to follow, especially with the change that we've made, that it's now up to a $10,000 bonus to match what some of the surrounding jurisdictions as well as other competitors have. And I will talk a little bit again because what we also find for many of these positions is not just the money that makes people want to come to the county. And I'll talk about that in a few slides from here. So moving on

to fire and rescue, several surrounding jurisdictions have also experienced the same shortages in particular for paramedics. So we have added a bonus in for

[00:15:32] that matching the highest bonus that's available in the surrounding jurisdictions so there is a ten thousand dollar bonus for this in addition to other programs that we have where we are trying to create more interest in that job supervisor grows pointed out to me vcu has a program that we have been able to get you know 11 people through and those are all in addition to the hiring incentive bonus. We're not letting up on any of the other things that work in terms of getting the right

[00:16:05] people here. Next we have police, which I think you all know is a good news story. This has been one of our most successful applications of the hiring incentive bonus, and I've heard in many other meetings that you've hopefully heard this data that it is the largest academy class that we have right now in almost 10 years, which is great. It is also one of the most diverse. So this has been still work to do, not resting on any laurels, but just that these are strategies that work.

[00:16:41] Next we have in behavioral health. This also is an area where we did a regrade for people in these positions. So turnover has slowed down and we have implemented a hiring incentive bonus. So you can see it's good when we're able to hire a lot of people, but it's even better when we're hiring people and not having other people turn over. So I think this is a trend that is going definitely in the right direction. And also, for the last several years, we've had lots of discussions about

[00:17:20] employees that need the commercial driver license, licensure. And we've had some obvious positive trends since we put the hiring incentive bonus in and this is an example actually where we broke the hiring incentive into two payments so because we were seeing so much turnover and so much matching with the private sector just to you know dole it out a little bit differently and also not to create a situation for certain classifications obviously if there's a payback provision it's

[00:17:56] going to be harder in some areas than others. So again, same strategy, but just applied a little bit different way that just makes it, I think, a little more effective. And on the next slide, we have the heavy equipment operators and supervisors. That's also been a challenge for private and public sector for the last several years. But looking back 15 months, You know, we've had 17 employees be promoted into the supervisor position, which is a great new story.

[00:18:30] So even though it creates a vacancy, it also means that we have that upward mobility, which people are really looking for, and that's how we keep people here for the career that we want them to have. We're also continuing to use with all of these through our workforce planning efforts, where we meet with the agencies.

[00:18:50] It's a meeting with D&B folks, it's human resource folks and the agencies where we look at all of their pain points, as it were, in human resources and try and address them in different ways. So it's going to be a multi-pronged strategy on all of this that's going to be done in cooperation in conjunction with what the agency, you know, the expertise that they bring to it as well.

[00:19:15] So just some observations and next steps. You know, in the industry, you'll know, you can hear that it takes about 12 months to fully realize the impact when you put some of these bigger programs like the hiring incentive bonus.

[00:19:31] And we're about six months in, and we're seeing a very positive trend. But it's something we are still carefully monitoring, and we are going to granular levels as well as pulling out any trends that we can

and continuing to assess as we have other pain points pop up.

[00:19:48] Some of them are getting better. Some new ones are being created. It's just something that we're going to, you know, be actively monitoring with the agencies using the metrics that we have developed and are working with the agencies on. And we'll be providing you a update on a semi-annual basis.

[00:20:09] Just like this is about six months from the first time we talked to you about it, we'll have another update in six months, Especially as it relates to some of the public safety classifications and the human service classifications, which I know have been places where you've heard about.

[00:20:25] And these are real, true public safety, public, you know, very emergency-based types of positions. So those obviously have a very high priority as well. So that's all I have. Okay.

[00:20:41] Thank you, Kathy. Well, we have plenty of time for discussion, but let me start with a couple of things and then I'm going to turn it over to the chairman. We have, I don't know that the bonus has been in place long enough to see if it's, you know, how many people have actually taken the bonus and then decided that this was not the fit that they expected and are now having to pay back the bonus.

[00:21:09] We do have some data on it. It's mostly been in public safety where we've had that. I believe maybe one other agency where someone had to move out of the area. And we haven't so far had a problem with the repayment of it.

[00:21:28] But it is also to keep people from shopping around and getting a bonus here and a bonus here and a bonus here, which is something that has happened. So it's a very small number in relation to all the positions. And actually, you know, we put this bonus into place to address what we have identified as an emergency situation.

[00:21:54] So, but at some point, we need to be looking at weaning off from this bonus idea. At what point do you think we will get to some sort of level of stability where we are no longer having to identify, you know, significant number of dollar figures to hire people that they actually will come here because the salaries are appropriate?

[00:22:24] Supervisor Gross-Bruno, that's a really, really good question. Looking back over the last three years, that is, this is the world that we're in. I'm hoping in the next three to five years we can actually answer that question, but I'm not sure.

[00:22:40] When we look at paramedics, we're now doing a class, as Kathy stated, and we're being a little bit more creative. But we have so many other opportunities to work here where it's going to take us three to five years to get back to where we were at a minimum.

[00:22:59] It's one of those things that we put into place certain responses to emergencies, but sometimes the tendency is to leave that in place, and we really need to get back to some level of that this is a very good place to work, that you should be coming here because of the salary and the benefits and the career opportunities, not because there's an upfront bonus. It may be built into other things, but we do really do need to try to wean ourself off of these situations.

[00:23:36] And we have made it clear to the agencies that these are not evergreen. These are things that criteria that's on slide six that Adam went through are criteria that we're reviewing twice a year with agencies, and it may be that we step down in tiers rather than just get rid of it, it will really depend on,

again, things like the vacancy rate, the operational impact, the life safety impact, the competition, vacancy rates, fiscal impact.

[00:24:09] It's all these things together that goes into the calculus of whether they get a bonus or not. Thank you. Thank you. And then my other question is really just a quick one on the tuition assistance program, which was increased. Now, this is for tuition only.

[00:24:25] This is not for the ancillary things that somebody may be taking in college. It's for tuition. And how many people, how many employees actually are taking advantage of this? Do you know? Oh, we're going to actually talk about that a little bit in the next presentation.

[00:24:42] All right. That's fine. That's fine. I think that's all the questions I have. Mr. Chairman, do you have? I do. First, thank you for the presentation and for giving us the metrics and the update because I know, you know, these, once the board authorized them, we weren't necessarily getting as clear a picture of how they were being utilized. And so I really, you know, appreciate this level of detail. I also appreciate that as of July 1, we're adding the paramedics because clearly that vacancy rate is way too high. And what we've seen is certainly compared to police what this has done with that vacancy rate and hopefully can expect the same with FRD.

[00:25:21] I guess one of the things that's unclear to me is I know we were talking to a lot of the agency heads and talking to a lot of the employees, but are we point blank asking people who get this bonus how big of a factor that was in them deciding to come here? We do have a new employee survey, which I'm going to talk about in the next presentation, where we do ask them things like that. And generally speaking, it's for targeted classifications. It, anecdotally, we've heard has made a difference, absolutely, especially in police. They've been very vocal about how big

[00:26:00] of a difference that has made for them. Okay. And I'll talk a little bit more about the new employee survey shortly. Okay, good. I'm glad we're measuring that because I, you know, to Penny's point yes I don't think a lot of people looking at jobs right now are thinking through long term thinking about these as careers of benefits of growth within the organization where we have very clear and distinct advantages over some of the other folks who are offering hiring bonuses but if that gets them in the door and then once they're here they realize those things then we have a retention benefit that you know we that we get through this and so I think that's an important factor. And then the other one is, and it's kind of mentioned in here in terms of the

[00:26:40] tiers that you look at, but one might focus on the cost of these signing bonuses without factoring in the overtime amounts that we're paying. And I know it pales in comparison. And so to me, while yes, we'd like to wean off of this and we're hoping that we can, this still to me is a tremendous savings over the overtime costs that we're paying, not to mention the exhaustion, the workplace health and other stress factors that are harder to enumerate, but certainly we know how much we're paying out in overtime, and that is stressing our employees out,

[00:27:16] and that cost has to be factored into when and if we think about weaning ourselves off of this because this still is a much more economical way to go, especially getting the diversity of the candidates coming in, as you mentioned with the police recruitment class, a much more economical way to go in the long term until we can stabilize in some of these areas.

[00:27:36] And so I think this is something we have to carefully watch, maintain our position of competitiveness and getting people interested in coming here, and then making sure once they're here that we're focused on, like a laser, all the benefits of working for Fairfax County once you're in the door as an important part of retention. And so thank you for the data here.

[00:27:58] much appreciated. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On the bonus incentives, are new employees given, are they counseled as far as the tax implications, income tax implications? If you've got your starting salary, you've got a $15,000 bonus this year that's going to show up on your income tax, But the next year, it's going to drop, probably triggering an audit because of the change, the significant change.

[00:28:33] So do they have tax counseling opportunities? So generally, the county doesn't provide tax, you know, consulting with employees. But we do provide them really good resources where they can do a paycheck simulator or, you know, where they can go get tax information separately.

[00:28:53] Okay, so they also receive something in writing about their bonus and payback and all of that. Yes, absolutely. Thank you. Let's see. I saw Supervisor Walkinshaw's hand first and Supervisor Herity, and then we'll go back and forth.

[00:29:09] Thank you, Madam Chairman. Thank you. I think some good news on a lot of fronts. I just want to just drill down on a couple of them, and I raised the nurses issue before, and I'm still trying to reconcile, and I think the increase to 10,000 is great. I'm still, though, trying to reconcile a 29% vacancy rate, and you you gave some of the explanation of it, but also paramedics, equivalent to 29% vacancy rate,

[00:29:45] and we're going to $10,000 for each of those categories. Police officers, I think we've seen great success, and we should continue the $15,000 bonus. We're currently at an 11% vacancy rate for sworn police officers. And I worry and maybe disabuse me of the notion that there's important and there's urgent. And police officer where we have minimum staffing standards is both important

[00:30:20] and urgent. Maybe a nurse is less urgent, but equally important in terms of public health and public safety. And I just want to make sure we're not prioritizing the urgent at the expense of the importance. And also, if we have a 29% vacancy rate for paramedics where we do have minimum staffing standards, and there's obviously a life safety component, why are we not, and you're authorized to go to 15, why are we not going all the way to 15 there? So I think you raised some

[00:30:59] good points and there is um no perfect answer where we can just plug in a formula and have you know chat box tell us what we what we should give as uh as the uh bonus we have to be careful about how we use these these dollars but i will say for the nurse specifically since you brought that up first that is increasing to ten thousand dollars as of july 1 so we haven't seen the impact of that yet and the between working with the agency they feel that will make a huge difference because especially for nurses when we're competing with hospitals we have a you know it's a different

[00:31:38] climate here versus being in a hospital and our climate's better so it does help a lot with um i say that very um partisan uh way of saying it uh but it it is something that we have a lot to offer them in addition to the bonus, and the bonus is competing with many of the bonuses with similar type of jobs. And we think that the agency feels as well that this will make a big difference. And we'll continue to watch it. It's all these different data in terms of operational impact, et cetera. Now, on EMS, the operational impact is great, and we

[00:32:18] are looking at matching. So, and this is one case where we have market data where we can look across and see what the highest bonuses out there that we would be competing with and we are matching it sometimes when you raise it too high it's like an arms race where everybody gets up to the top pretty quickly so we do have the ability if it's not working at 10,000 to quickly move it up to 15. Okay and I and I'll just say from my perspective and and the police staffing issues have gotten a lot of attention understandably correctly unfortunately there have been some

[00:32:53] who try to politicize it, I'll just speak for myself. For me, nurses and paramedics are just as important, and I'll let you determine what's urgent, but just as important as police vacancies.

[00:33:09] So as we move forward, I just hope that we'll keep that in mind. I'm sure you are, but I just want to make it clear. Those are just as important. Thank you. I had Supervisor Herity and then supervisor, Stork. I don't know where to go with that one, but many of us, and I agree 100% on paramedics and nurses, and that's why in everything I've put out, you see paramedics and nurses right behind police officers. Paramedics, we're dropping from an all ALS response to ambulances to BLS,

[00:33:48] so we've already stepped back in some degree as a result in terms of serving our residents, So I think we need to look at it. I'm glad we go to 10, and I'm glad you've got the reevaluation process in place, and we need to keep that in place. And as the chairman said, we're going to make sure this isn't permanent.

[00:34:06] I think it was the chairman who said that, that this doesn't become a permanent thing, that we do it. But where I was going to go before the paramedic and nurse comment was, and I think it was you, Kathy, who mentioned many, a couple years ago, and I thought it was, they called it the great resignation.

[00:34:24] You said it's the great re-evaluation. I think we need to spend as much time now looking at the flexibility to keep our people here because people are re-evaluating their lives. And to be competitive, it's not only what it takes to get you in the door, but what it takes to keep you here.

[00:34:41] And I'd appreciate it. Some kind of high-level thing is to, and just looking at which slide was it. It was one of the early slides. Oh, come on. Trying to get the words you used. the work-life balance options and what we're doing there are we doing job sharing have we looked at it positions like IT hiring remote I know we had had a prohibition on hiring outside of Maryland Virginia and DC which makes no sense to me as a business person but those kinds of those kinds of

[00:35:19] opportunities I don't know what you know you can speak to them briefly now but it'd be interesting to see what we're doing in response to that because I know a bunch of things industry is doing, and I'd like to see how we're kind of comparing with that. Alicia Seard-McCormick, Deputy County Executive. That's very helpful that one of the things that we wanted to highlight was all of the things that we've been doing to retain people, the things that actually drive people to come work for us.

[00:35:43] It's not just the money, obviously, and you'll see a lot of that in the next presentation as well. So we can kind of consolidate that into a nip for you to kind of have, because I do think we've focused a lot of time and energy on some of the non-compensable things as well. make us a really good employer. Thank you for that. And something that you had mentioned, Supervisor Herdy, the great re-evaluation, I think it was in the Washington Post within the last several days, it may have been Sunday, I don't remember, there was a large article about the move to the four-day work week, which has not been something, I mean, it's been discussed before,

[00:36:20] but this time they were talking about a 32-hour four-day work week, which was, oh my goodness. So it's something that's being discussed in the business world, whether it gets to, it's been around for a long, long time, going to a four-day work week.

[00:36:41] We'll just have to keep that in mind as things change, as people's attitudes toward work change. For me, it's been sort of stunning to see the change over the times I've been in office and in the workforce, just amazing what people want these days.

[00:37:08] And that's going to be more leisure. When we get to our, I think it's our Human Services Committee discussion about parks, it's all about leisure time and how are we going to fill that. So it's going to, over the decades, it's going to be a significant change, but it's been a significant change over the past many decades, too, if we look back the way we were in the 60s and what we are doing now.

[00:37:36] So I had Supervisor Stork and then Supervisor Lusk. Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to kind of follow up a little bit on Supervisor Walkinshaw's questioning and I guess I want to maybe make sure I understand.

[00:37:53] We clearly have vacancies, but I'm not sure. And here I want to talk about the denominator, not the numerator. And we've been talking mostly about the numerator. And does the denominator that's here, in terms of vacancies and percentage vacancies, et cetera, does it include the commitment and the plans of the board to, particularly with respect to crisis intervention specialists and the work to, I guess, increase the amount of co-responders that we have,

[00:38:26] does it include all of that as part of the hiring deficits and needs that we have? I know we have a co-responder model that's operating in one part of the county, but it's not operating county-wide, something that I know I believe and I know I think the board deeply believes in.

[00:38:42] So that in particular I wanted to focus on. Short answer is yes. As soon as you authorize the positions, we increase the denominator, which then makes the vacancy rate look bigger because we haven't had a chance to even fill those positions yet. So you'll see a little more rollercoaster of effect, you know, like it looks like a big, huge vacancy, and then we're able to fill them, and then we get into whatever the regular turnover is.

[00:39:09] So, and I have to admit, I'm unclear. Have we fully authorized the co-responder model around the county? Yes. Really? 24-7? Well, I think I'm hearing the similar kinds of questions that I've had.

[00:39:27] So is it 24-7 around the county, or can you maybe, and I don't know if it's maybe we need to have a separate conversation, public safety or wherever, but I just need to make sure that I understand where we are with that. We'll get you that information. That's good. Tom Arnold.

[00:39:42] Sure. Tom Arnold, Deputy County Executive. Right now, we've got the three teams in service between 10 and 12 hours. The goal is to move to 12 hours for the three teams where they're a hybrid now between 10 and 12 and then by July 1, if all goes well with CSB hiring, we'll have a fourth team.

[00:40:01] So the county will be broken up into the four quadrants then. So we're going to come back and present to the board in August with an update on where we are with co-responder. one of the other options we're looking at right now is using telemedicine. And so we think that's a way to kind of a force multiplier to be able to have access out there and not having to rely on the teams. I mean, you know, anything with the geographical breakdown of four quadrants, it's still a large county to cover. So we're looking at those

before we would come back to the board with a request for anything additional with co-responders. So we'll give you an in-depth plan of that come August. But right now, three teams, 10 to 12 hours a day, July, hopefully the

[00:40:37] fourth team and there'll be 12 hour shifts that explanation is very very helpful so getting back to my question i started with is are the is all of that in the denominator or just the three teams and the fourth team will be in the denominator soon help help me understand kind of just so i have a sense of the amount of vacancies or the and then in turn how are we going to try to anticipate that and address that so alicia seared mccormick again um yeah so the the fact that the fourth team is in the process of being set up means that those positions are in the denominator for us to start the recruitment process for them.

[00:41:13] Excellent. Okay. Well, thank you all very much. All right. I have Supervisor Lusk, and I just want to do a time check. I know that the board would very much like to have an hour for lunch, so I'm going to try to keep this to that. Maybe we'll go over about five minutes, but we do have another item to go through that I think will also generate some discussions.

[00:41:36] So, Supervisor Lusk. Thank you, Madam Chairman. I'd like to ask a quick question on the enhanced training opportunities. I appreciate that you've increased the tuition assistance program. Can you help me in terms of the number of participants who are able to take advantage of it?

[00:41:56] And do we see an increase in that as well, actual number? Yeah, let me get you the exact number. There are a large number of people that are able to participate. So it is about 414 people, it looks like, that are in the bigger program.

[00:42:21] And we basically have been able to fund everybody's request because we've taken money from other sources to even augment more how much is available for employees on that front. Oh, that's correct. So everyone who's requested has been able to go into the program.

[00:42:37] That's even better. And then second, on the leadership and development, you noted that you're funding additional staff to participate in that. What does that mean? Like how many more? Is there a number, or what's the expansion of that program?

[00:42:54] Let me get you the exact data on that. I don't want to guess. Okay. I'm just curious. Those are only two questions I had, Madam Chairman. Thank you. Supervisor Palczyk. Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll be brief. Again, excellent work. A couple of follow-up questions.

[00:43:11] So number one, and I'm glad Mr. Leonard's here, because as we look at early childhood and child care options, I know a question has come up around the ability to access and afford child care, especially those employees working, not the nine-to-five shifts.

[00:43:27] So my first question is, have we looked at that already, or is it something we should continue to look at where we have, or maybe we should look at child care hours and additional locations for staff? That is reviewed regularly.

[00:43:43] I'll have to find out when the last time we've looked at that. And we've also looked at providing a contract to have services for people that's maybe not working in these buildings to be able to use some of those child care.

[00:43:58] Perfect. So we'll continue to look at that and maybe a follow-up. Sure. Appreciate that. And then the other one, do we know, have we looked at making it easier and promoting the Federal Student

Loan for Public Service Forgiveness Program? And I believe the schools have looked at a way to promote that and help with that annual filing.

[00:44:18] I don't know if we've looked at that as well. We have done both. We have promoted it. And when the rules changed, what was the last fall, we had a tremendous number of people come through, which was great. And we are looking at ways, it's on our website for, you know, to entice people to come work here, especially in professions that require a lot of educations, like attorneys or, you know, engineers, et cetera.

[00:44:45] That's where we've honestly had a lot of success with that. So do we have some data? You do have data on that? I've been curious. Yeah, I can get you data. Okay, that'd be great. Thank you. That's all. And with that, it's a good segue to our next item, which is time to hire. This is an issue that the board had identified as something that was of great concern to us because, at least anecdotally, we were hearing that it was taking so long to get through the county processes that we were losing good potential employees because they would take offers from other jurisdictions.

[00:45:26] So, Kathy? Okay. All right. So while we've revamped the hiring bonus, that's a smaller piece of what is the broader scale of getting people hired. So I'm going to go through the basic process and the improvements that we've made in it really fast, because I don't want to be the reason you have a shorter lunch.

[00:45:47] So you've seen the agenda here. We're going to just talk about the trends, the process, the pipeline, which I think has been a good news story, and some data on jobs, what we're hearing from perspective employees as well as new employees. So on the first slide here, again, this is our same type of chart that we've been showing. I just want to note that the net gain has starting to increase since 2022. And there are many factors. A big one is the hiring incentive bonus, but we also have

[00:46:20] better recruitment outreach efforts. We've had a big impact in terms of the pay change for certain classifications where we have done those benchmark studies that we've been talking about. So all those things come together to help us get to where we need to be. So this is the recruitment lifecycle. I'm going to go through it really quickly, but the big story here is this is a shared responsibility. It's not just a DHR central type of thing. It's something that's done with the agencies. The time to hire starts with them turning in a recruitment, not from when an employee applies for a job.

[00:47:00] So you've got a pre-process where we make sure they understand what they're trying to recruit for. We modernize the ad so we don't go out with something that looks stale and nobody really understands. We have it generally out there. The agency will put the requisition in.

[00:47:18] There's a lot of back and forth where we polish it up, put all the standards in it. It takes about a week. We generally have them posted for about two weeks. Then we have the screening process, which there are several, you know, we may get 100 people that apply for a job, which sounds like a lot.

[00:47:36] It's the quality of the candidates that matter, though. So the first screen, which is the big one, is who meets the minimum qualifications. Then we're going to refine it even more and say who has some of the preferreds. And then usually the agency will want to help screen to get to that final list of people that they're going to choose from to interview.

[00:47:57] sometimes dhr does it a lot of times the department wants to do it and that takes some time to go through resumes if you i know some of you've had to recently do that then there's the interview process

when that's planned in advance where the committee's set up that goes very smoothly and that can go very fast when you're short staffed it's hard to get a panel together when there's vacation time etc it can be hard to get a panel together then from that we want to quickly get to a job offer after we've done some reference checks and the background checks, come after

[00:48:33] we've made the offer, and then hopefully the hire. What we have seen as a trend is, especially for some of the entry-level positions, people just don't show up on the first day, or they will call at the last minute and say that their employer matched their offer. It's hard to be too mad at those other employers because we do the same thing. If somebody tells us they're leaving, we'll try and match the offer if it's feasible. The next slide is going to go through just showing you the days of that exact process that I just put together. So I just flew

[00:49:09] through that, but generally the selection part of the process can be done in 20 days if it's planned well. The higher level position, the more of a process it is though. So it's not, this is a general best case scenario. There are times it takes longer. And one of the biggest factors that increases the life cycle is when you get to the point where you're interviewing and you can't select anybody. Or you make an offer to someone, they turn you down, and you have to start all

[00:49:41] over again. That really adds to, and the time to hire keeps going. The criminal background check can sometimes be, depending on what the job is, a place where it takes a long time.

[00:49:57] If there's no hits, so to speak, on the person's record, we get the results back in a day, two days. If there is a record found, we can't receive that information electronically. The Virginia State Police has to physically mail us the report.

[00:50:13] And even then, sometimes there's some follow-up that needs to happen to understand what the actual ding is on the person's background check to see if it's a quote-unquote barrier crime for that particular position. So the time to hire, we are seeing it creep up.

[00:50:32] A big reason is because we're seeing more people having to start the process over again because when they get to the end, somebody will maybe even accept a job and then take the offer to come back, say decide that they don't want to come to Fairfax County. Also what drives up that time to hire numbers and these are coming straight from the system is when you have several positions that are vacant they're all the same type of positions we try to do multiple we try to fill multiple positions from one recruitment which generally means we're advertising it longer in a more

[00:51:11] continuous fashion so that we do save some time overall but it does drive up the time to hire numbers. I will say that, you know, in the private sector, the average that we've got from SHRM and also NeoGov, because a lot of, almost every local government uses NeoGov, it is 36 days in the private sector, but the average in the public sector is 119 days. So while not bragging about 78 days, it's still a lot better than what the average for government agencies and education is. It is something that we are trying to address and we are seeing

[00:51:47] more success in some areas and bringing those time to hire numbers down so these are the things i just went through some of them that impact the time to hire as you probably already looked at those i do want to talk about background checks because we think a lot about our regular office jobs but there are a good number of employees that are not public safety that require checks beyond just a reference check and the standard background check.

[00:52:19] So, for example, if I'm hiring a position, I don't have to worry about a CPS review. I don't have to worry about a CDL license review. I don't have to worry about a TB test. But there are many positions that do. And these are other outside entities beyond our control.

[00:52:36] And to be fair to some of these state agencies that have to do this, They're also getting a tremendous number of other jurisdictions that are asking them to do these checks. So we've seen a huge slowdown in being able to get some of these things accomplished. And especially in human services, they struggle with that because we don't want to bring somebody on until we actually get the results back from the required test for these positions.

[00:53:02] So we don't bring people on pending, you know, with a situation where we might have to let them go if we get back results that aren't great. Or put the county at risk by having someone here who's not supposed to be here.

[00:53:19] This is just a quick slide you can take a look at. These are reasons where candidates have told us as part of the survey why they are declining job offers. These are some of the things that we've done in improving the time to hire field print is, you know, I mentioned Virginia State Police, they do our background check.

[00:53:39] They do a fingerprint background check for us and check all the federal databases, etc. If we're hiring somebody from another state, though, it's really hard for them to get here to get their fingerprints done, and we can't do it until after they get an offer. So what we have done is contract with FieldPrint because they are a nationwide entity.

[00:53:58] So we can, it doesn't matter where you are, we can send you to a FieldPrint office somewhere else. It costs more. So we don't do it, you know, willy-nilly. But we have been able to use them very effectively. And, in fact, we've done over 1,800 fingerprints through them.

[00:54:17] It's particularly helpful for kids in college, and we're trying to do summer hires, so that they can go get that done and be ready to roll when we need them. VidCruiter is, just think of it as an asynchronous way of doing interviews. And DocuSign is our e-signature that we've been using in the county like 100 times more than any other agency, apparently.

[00:54:39] I guess we have a lot of things that need to be signed. One of the ways that we've increased the candidate pipeline, these are just a few of the ways, but these are very important ways. Of course, LinkedIn is a big way that we get people's attention and we've bought other tools through LinkedIn where we can actually do headhunting.

[00:54:58] So somebody who's not necessarily applying for a job, we can find people with the right qualifications and then contact them through LinkedIn to see if they'd be interested in applying to our job. We have gotten the diverse candidate demographics and we are able to put that designation on our ads.

[00:55:16] and we have seen a very positive trend toward getting more diverse, very qualified applicants that way, partnerships with the schools. We are Virginia Values Veterans, and you heard a little, I think somebody was talking about SkillBridge in the last presentation.

[00:55:33] So these are all great ways that we are bringing in people who can come, especially the interns, because they can come and have a full career here, which I have to say has been like a blessing for me to be able to come and have the career I've had here.

[00:55:53] So I would like everybody to be able to have that as well. The purpose of this slide is just to show you all the ways that we are trying to help candidates be successful in the application process. We want them to do the right things and put their best foot forward and be able to find those hidden gems and good people who can come here and be great.

[00:56:18] So we do have a lot on our website. There's hard links here. And if you contact us, we have YouTube videos. We have a lot of ways to help people be successful. And this isn't a new employee survey. It's a new employee survey.

[00:56:34] I realized when I was looking at it this morning that you could read it either way. But it is a survey we've been doing for a long time, but it's for new employees. We did recently shorten it to only 11 questions to increase the response rate.

[00:56:50] So even though the response rate now is 35, it's definitely trending up because there is a certain point where people are tired of answering questions. So 11 seems to be the sweet spot. But one thing I'm going to point out on this slide, the bottom bullet there, well, it's a little triangle thing, but the top three reasons people tell us they wanted to come work for the county is money.

[00:57:14] They want a career in public service. They believe in the mission. They are here for a work life and family balance. And as Supervisor Herity pointed out, I am total proponent of the great reevaluation. We want people to want to be here because those are our best, you know, employees.

[00:57:31] And the stability, which we are definitely capitalizing on now, because whether it's true or not, there's a perception that things are maybe in certain sectors not as strong as they used to be. And so people want to come here, make a difference, have that balance, and be in a place where they know they could stay and retire if they want to.

[00:57:54] So the next steps, basically, there's always room for improvement, and we're always looking for ways to do that, partnering with our agencies. Big thing that we are doing on a very, very regular, frequent basis is looking at the impact of the hiring incentive bonus on vacancy rates, checking in with the agency, not only getting anecdotal data, but for the employees that are taking the bonuses, checking in, seeing they are staying, generally, and how well they're doing.

[00:58:27] Social media and some of the tools like I talked about in LinkedIn have made a huge difference. We are so fortunate to be here in Fairfax. We've got great, you know, just fantastic school systems, a major university in our backyard, plus lots of other colleges, you know, that we have those networks with and be able to get, you know, like nurses is a good example, being able to partner with programs at Mason to be able to create that talent pipeline.

[00:59:00] There's great trade schools. We have military service programs that we participate with, and we've gotten great people that way. So we just want to make sure that we have found all the ways and the data that matters to people on why our great employees come, they want to come, they want to stay, and then eventually why they're leaving, understanding what all that is and how it's changing over time.

[00:59:25] That's it. Okay. Thank you, Kathy. Thank you for drilling down. We really appreciate the depth that you've done here. A couple of questions. For one, I was surprised that less than 1% of our new employees identify as a veteran because this is something that we've really been focused on.

[00:59:46] I know at the regional commission for our community military partnership that I chair, We're constantly working with the military bases and trying to make sure that people who are assigned here and are leaving the military here stay here because they're already here.

[01:00:08] And so with less than 1% identified as veteran, it could be the job. It could be whatever the particular job is because it's very difficult sometimes for people who have had a career or even just a shorter time in the military, when they civilianize their resume, they don't recognize themselves.

[01:00:26] And so it's hard sometimes to translate that military experience into a civilian position. We've done some of that here in Fairfax County pretty successfully, but it is still a challenge, I think.

[01:00:44] And even in Virginia, the V3 program, I'm really quite surprised that we have such a low percentage of new employees. Is it because maybe we're just sort of starting in that direction? Well, I will tell you, I pulled my own agency, and there are people that I know are veterans that did not select that they had a veteran status, and that happens.

[01:01:05] So it's partly, you know, it's a self-reported type of thing, and not everybody wants to report that they're a veteran either. Or they miss the question or they decline the answer, in which case it shows up as not. As not. So they may have some background, but that's background.

[01:01:21] Yeah, it's not a required question to answer. Okay. All right. Thank you. And the vid recruiter, you said it's an asynchronous option. That is a virtual interview. Is that right? Yeah. It's especially good for entry-level positions.

[01:01:38] But basically, the interviewers record themselves asking a question. the person logs on like over a three-day period when they have time they listen to somebody ask them a question they have three minutes to respond usually there's a chance for them to do a do-over because if you've ever done it's kind of awkward um and then they save it and then when the panel has time they don't have to all come together at the same time when they have time they'll go back and watch videos so it's a little it's more efficient especially for those entry-level positions a little bit like an exam and you don't yeah you don't really have the the the feedback

[01:02:14] right away right but it's not ai no and it's a no it's not and it's a it's a great way for especially entry-level positions where you're hordes of people you're trying to interview and it's hard to get a panel together at the same time okay and i mentioned ai certainly recently in the news has been if you're looking for a job you may you know end up um being interviewed by AI, an AI robot. And I'm thinking, please, let's never go there. Never go there for Fairfax County.

[01:02:45] I'm going to open it up for questions and comments, Mr. Chairman, and then I'm going to go to Supervisor Smith. Just a quick question. Thank you for the update. On the new employee survey, the response rate is about 35 percent, which sounds low. I mean, I would think for new employees are a lot more interested in being involved in something like that maybe than when employees are leaving. I just think, you know, what incentives can we put out there for our employees to fill out these surveys when they onboard? And then also, I know we had this

[01:03:21] discussion, you know, we equally want to know what the reasons are people are leaving because we're trying to deal with, you know, all manner of recruitments from the last presentation. So is Is there anything that you think we could do to improve that response rate, both for new employee surveys and for exit surveys?

[01:03:39] We've tried a few different things, including, you know, like little gift cards or other tchotchke kind of stuff. But what's worked the best is shortening the survey. So the rate is definitely trending up. 35% is over a bigger period of time, but it's definitely improving.

[01:03:57] Yeah, I mean, any additional improvements we can make to that? I mean, I think we've all been surveyed by different companies and people, and you get to about the fourth question, and you hang up or you click onto something else. And so I think brevity is important to get right to the point of the questions we need to know the answers most to.

[01:04:14] But to continue to incentivize this, because we need to hear from our employees on these issues, but then we also need to hear from them why they might be leaving the county. And I think it's just really important for the board to know that because we like to stress different benefits about, you know, working in the county and why this is a great place to come and why public service is so important.

[01:04:36] But if you're seeing threads in here that we can be emphasizing, because a lot of us are communicating to the general population in the county through newsletters and other things. If there's things we can emphasize that you're seeing in these trends, we can get people interested in working for the county as well if we know what those talking points are.

[01:04:54] And I think we can gather a lot of those from what we're seeing in the surveys. Supervisor Smith. Thank you for the presentation. You know, it's a lot of information. You know, I think under it all, we all want it to go faster.

[01:05:10] I would imagine that this is your overall timeline of process. It's probably different in different agencies. And so do you do specific work with different agencies to help them shorten their timeline?

[01:05:27] Yes. So, at their request, do you analyze what's happening, and then you go in and make suggestions? How does that work? We have really revamped our metrics, and we are definitely following up with agencies where we see there might be room to improve.

[01:05:47] Okay. This data was about hires in general. Is it a different timeline or a process, whether it's a position that's internal, where somebody's getting a position internally than when external candidates come in.

[01:06:06] Yeah, I would say that for promotions, it's generally the basics of the same process, but it can go faster. And depending on the position, you're still going to do a background check each time? Correct. And some of those other...

[01:06:22] Even if it's a promotion, because someone may be sitting, and we've seen that, you know, some very public examples in other public entities, where somebody worked somewhere for a long time and things happened. In the meantime, and until you do that background check for the new job, you're just not going to know.

[01:06:40] And so then my question is, when you talked about the criminal background check, that they can't send you the information electronically. They have to mail it. Correct. Is there something legislatively we can do to change that so you could get the information electronically?

[01:06:58] I'm not sure we can check. I think that would be good to know. There may be a security piece to it. It's easy to circulate an email to the wrong people. It's a little harder when you've got it actually on paper to some person.

[01:07:16] It would be good to know if there's anything that could be done about that. You know, I think it's something I appreciate the presentation and the board getting the information because, you know, from the position I'm in, I don't know how it's going, right?

[01:07:33] And then you see the vacancies, you see the length of time, And so always looking for process improvements. I didn't realize with the vid recruiter that that is so virtual. And so it raises the question in my mind about that human interaction piece.

[01:07:51] I know when you're talking to somebody, you're connecting, you're having cues. I will say it's been human services is a big user of it. But also any place where you're trying to do, it's a good first cut at a whole bunch of people, especially when you're trying to hire a bunch of summer hires or you're trying to hire, you know, you've got like 100 people you're going through and you're maybe trying to fill 10 positions.

[01:08:19] So it's a lot of interviews. It makes it go a little faster. So if you go through that process, at some point, if you get through that particular video process, then you're going to be interacting with people rather than with the camera.

[01:08:38] Exactly. Yeah. I mean, interviewing is a very interesting process because some of us interview better than other people. And it's not necessarily the person who has the best interview that's the best match for the job. That's a good point. And I will also say for people coming out of college in particular, they're so used to it, they like it better because then they can have three days to whenever they get around to it, go in, and when they're in the mood to go answer, like, three to four questions on

[01:09:13] VidRecruiter. It just really helps them get to the best people that they can spend the panel time interviewing. So I appreciate the information. I think that it's something maybe yearly that the board needs an update on. Yeah. It's helpful to know this because it has come up a number of times, but we need to stay on top of it.

[01:09:35] Absolutely, thank you. Supervisor Palczyk. Thank you, Supervisor Gross. Thank you for the presentation. And I'm sitting here and I think not surprised by seeing that the top reason is a career in public service. And so I'm wondering, and I know when I first began my careers, you know, nonprofits, idealist kind of jobs, some have gone toward federal government jobs, federal policy, especially in this area.

[01:10:00] So I think I'm wondering as we continue to look additional tools. If we also have research on where you have here people who decline or leave the county, what are our biggest competitors? Do we have information of where people are choosing above the county? There's not a monolith out there, so it really depends on the profession.

[01:10:28] So engineers might turn down jobs differently for why someone doesn't want to work in the Park authority or etc etc for human resources or finance or whatever so we are constantly monitoring that but I do think we lean very heavily into the mission piece of it especially you know as we're looking at the great evaluation as people want to have meaning meaningful work and that has been a great recruiting tool yeah and I think you you touched on the point is you're so large right and I think it is a little complicated, complex system of how our HR works by agency, by area,

[01:11:08] what role you're able to play in supporting that, and then what the agencies do and how we look at that belonging in each kind of job categories. I don't know if we're kind of diving in and can maybe,

for us as a board, understand better in the future kind of where we're seeing some of those trends in some areas for opportunity there.

[01:11:29] Yeah, absolutely. Those are all great points. Tony Garcia here is the Employment Division Director, which some of you know. They are constantly working with agencies, because they're also getting real-time feedback, too, because they're talking to these final candidates, and we're taking all that information and applying it.

[01:11:48] And when we find a theme that's working really well in certain sectors, we lean right into that one, too. You know, if there are some areas where IT is a good example, people want more flexibility, for example. We do have lots of great programs, job shares. We have different work week options.

[01:12:05] We do have a four-day work week option, but it's 10 days, four days a week, not 10 hours. I mean, sorry, 10 hours, four days a week, so it's still 40 hours. But, you know, just other options as well. And some work better in different professions.

[01:12:23] Some people want more of a training, help with training because licensures or whatever are expensive in their particular career. It really depends, but we, like I said before, we're tuning what we're doing and what we're using to entice people can be very different across agencies, but it's all the same tools.

[01:12:50] And I think hearing if we're able to in the future, and I guess I'll look at Tony, for us to be able to see what some of that tuning is what what are we seeing across agencies and trends and compared to to other similar agencies i think would be really helpful okay thank you great anybody else um thank you for the presentation i think what we're learning here is that the county has navigated the pandemic and the changes in jobs and what people

[01:13:23] want. We've navigated it pretty well, better than some other jurisdictions across the country, as we should. We're Fairfax County. We should. But at the basic piece, you know, we want employees to come here for a job, but also for a career. And it always, and we want to make sure that people have the opportunity once they are hired to be promoted from within. That's always been a big deal but we also know that we need to go outside and find people bring new blood in

[01:14:02] new ideas but we're doing that pretty well and we've done that pretty well for a long time so Kathy thank you very much for your service to Fairfax County all these years I think we ought to give you a round of applause and we're only five minutes late in getting adjourned, so we have almost an hour for lunch.

[01:14:30] This meeting is adjourned.