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[00:00:08] Welcome, everyone, to our third and final day of budget public hearings, April 18th, 2024. And we have a speaker's list before us where we have 27 people who have signed up in advance to testify today.

[00:00:24] And I am going to call them in the order in which the speaker's list is before me. And I will announce at the beginning of this, we do have one, two, three, four people who have signed up in addition to the 27 speakers. And so I will announce at the beginning of this that at the end of our speakers list today, anyone who has not already testified who would like to testify before the board will have an opportunity at the end of our speakers list today to sign up to testify.

[00:00:53] And so if you are here and you are not already signed up, if you could see the clerk down here and make sure that you get signed up so that we have you on the list. Our first, I'm going to call our first couple speakers today. As I call your name, if you can be down here close to the podium so that when it's your time to testify, you are ready to go.

[00:01:12] That would be appreciated. Our first speaker today is Sheriff Stacy Kincaid, to be followed by Steve Monahan, Kevin Gere, and Corazon Sandoval Foley. Those are speakers one, two, three, and four. And speaker number one is Sheriff Stacy Kincaid.

[00:01:29] Welcome. Thank you. Good afternoon, Chairman McKay and members of the board. The Fairfax County Sheriff's Office is your public safety team, and we take great pride in the exceptional services we provide to the county.

[00:01:45] Each year for the past 10 years, I have come before the board asking for fair and equitable pay. We have proven time and time again that we are good stewards of the funds we are budgeted each year. I appreciate the county executives' proposed budget changes to our starting pay grade and longevity steps.

[00:02:08] Unfortunately, this funding is not enough to make our agency competitive in today's law enforcement professional job market. With a vacancy rate of 26%, I have made numerous cutbacks that affect not only my agency, but also the residents of Fairfax County.

[00:02:30] Since September of 2022, the following changes have been made. Mandatory overtime for staff during FY 2023 at a cost of $6.9 million. We anticipate the estimated cost of $8.3 million this year.

[00:02:49] To further illustrate, we average seven to nine deputies working overtime each shift to ensure the safety of the adult detention center. These overtime assignments are hours. These deputies should spend at home with their family.

[00:03:07] Captains and first lieutenants have been working overtime in operational positions that are designated for sergeant or private first class. I closed the alternative incarceration branch, which has left our judiciary without any sentencing alternatives, such as work release, home incarceration, and electric monitoring, and the fines option program.

[00:03:33] I suspended the community labor force. I modified operations at the prisoner intake area to accommodate staffing shortages, leading to longer wait times for officers and their arrestees. Currently, all divisions within the sheriff's office are below recommended staffing levels.

[00:03:54] These changes have had significant impacts on my staff. High levels of stress due to mandatory overtime are rising, and operating in this manner is unhealthy and unsustainable. Staff attrition has increased due to comparably low pay, mandatory overtime, and quite frankly, a general feeling of being unappreciated.

[00:04:19] Jail population has risen, in part due to the closure of jail alternatives previously provided by the Alternative Incarceration Branch. We are forecasted to reach a vacancy rate of 30% by the end of the calendar year, and further cutbacks, such as removing my staff from the Sharon Boulevard Center for Community Health and Code Compliance, are likely to occur.

[00:04:47] I need your help, and I am asking for $2.9 million to be added to our budget. This equates to a 3.5 pay increase for sworn staff. This amount pales in comparison to the $8.3 million we will spend on overtime this year.

[00:05:07] Increased pay for current and future sworn employees would have a tremendous effect on my agency's ability to return to full staffing and to continue to operate at the highest level, just as we always have. Increased pay would promote retention and also current employees by compensating them commensurate with the important work they perform.

[00:05:29] drastically support our recruiting and hiring efforts by making the sheriff's office more competitive send the message to my staff that the county appreciates them for what they do and all they sacrifice as the sheriff of fairfax county i can proudly say that your sheriff's office is the best in the

commonwealth of virginia the men and women of the sheriff's office have continued to work at the highest level possible and deserve to be much better compensated for the outstanding work they do each and every day thank you for your time thank you very much uh

[00:06:05] sheriff kincaid appreciate your testimony uh speaker number two is steve monahan to be followed by kevin gear corazon sandoval foley and rose risley if you all could be ready to testify steve welcome good morning or good afternoon um i want to just let you know that one of the speakers that signed up today laura shag shraigrew i believe she's the one that just signed up has yielded her time to me as well um okay okay okay okay all right okay welcome chairman mckay and

[00:06:42] members of the board as you all know my name is steve monahan and i'm the president of the fairfax county chapter of the southern states police benevolent association to start i want to let you know um that kevin garrett is the next speaker however he's on patrol and he will not be able to make it today um as i was preparing for my speech today i went and reviewed uh the last my last speech for the budget hearing last year, and it was incredible to see how far the county and the police department have progressed when it comes to employees' benefit and pay. Since this time last year, the SSPBA and the police department have worked together

[00:07:19] to develop the first ever collective bargaining agreement for FCPD. This agreement is going to help retention, increase recruitment, and increase the working conditions of our officer. Fulfillment by the board of this negotiated collective bargaining agreement is essential. I'm here to talk to you today on a few facts. One, the Fairfax County chapter of the SSPBA believes that the elimination of five of our 10 civilian SLT positions will negatively impact the department operations, increase patrol officers workload, and compromise officer safety. I also find it

[00:07:56] disappointing that this budget reduction will double the burden on the remaining SLTs who are already overworked and underpaid. We, along with the Fairfax Workers Coalition, believe the department should look into an alternate budget reductions or efficiencies. We have submitted a letter to you all describing our opposition to this in more detail. Two, fully funding the MRA will have a positive impact on our non-representative employees, and it's needed to help keep this important support positions in the police department filled and competitive. Three,

[00:08:31] we, the SSPDA, echo what Sheriff Kincaid just said, and we're asking you to please fully fund her request. And lastly, but certainly not least, which I will go into in detail, while this may seem unusual, I felt it was the utmost importance that you heard the words of our Vice President Siobhan Chase in our time slot on Tuesday. She was speaking as an APPO and also as the SSPBA, and our chapter stands behind every word that she and all the APPOs have said to you all over the last two days. While the proposed consolidation of Fairfax County Animal Sheltering Services

[00:09:07] promises efficiency, I caution this board. This one-size-fits-all approach will have a multiple of unintended consequences for the very animals and community members it aims to protect. Additionally, this will create an increased strain on our patrol officers, and we're already struggling to keep up with calls for service. This will damage the county's relationship with the SSPBA, and this will compromise the trust your police officers' employees have in this county.

[00:09:34] It's important to listen to what I'm saying today. There is an obvious difference between our stance and the position of the police department. The difference is we do not have an executive telling us

to say or what not to say. We don't need to worry about retaliation for speaking out against a pet project of upper management.

[00:09:53] The SSPBA, the APPOs, and other police department employees have been accused of providing misinformation on this proposal. This has been stated as a fact by your own county management without any evidence to support this accusation. What's not being discussed is what this misinformation allegedly is.

[00:10:14] Is this truly misinformation, or is it simply facts and questions that the county management does not want to hear or answer? Let's stick to the facts. By the county's own admission, this is not a financial decision. In the Lordentown Hall, the Deputy County Executive of Safety and Security said that this proposal was not actually about added services.

[00:10:36] And he's right. Our APPOs are already offering these services today. and we believe this proposal is about a want of one agency and not a need of our county. You have heard from multiple speakers on this proposal during these hearings.

[00:10:53] Many are against this proposal and have stated compelling reasons why. There is one common theme between the speakers on this topic, however, both for and against. It has been specifically noted that this county has animal protection police officers who are dedicated to their mission and provide exemplary service to this county and community is an undisputed fact.

[00:11:14] Instead of a consolidation, let's explore collaborative possibilities. The root of all these points is communication. The SSPBA has time and time again tried to strengthen the communication between the management and the bargaining unit employees who have the best interest in the county and the community at heart.

[00:11:34] As of recent, the SSPBA asked the Deputy County Executive of Safety and Security if he or Shelter Management would be a part of our APPO's Labor Management Committee. The reason for this request is to strengthen the communication and the relationship between the two entities.

[00:11:50] It was disheartening to hear that his answer was no. I will ask this board, what is it that you believe? Do you believe that the best ideas to improve public safety come from the patrol officer on the beat or from the command staff? Supervisor Walkinshaw, those were your words when you described your stance on collective bargaining in 2021.

[00:12:13] Do you still believe him? We were told during negotiations that this proposal was a done deal. We knew that wasn't true. We were told we shouldn't fight it and just accept the inevitable. We will fight for our employees, and we will stand up for what we believe is right.

[00:12:30] This is how the SSPBA conducts itself. That is why we're here before you today. That is why this decision is before the board today. We know that this board will make the right decision, and we look forward to future communication and collaboration. Thank you. Thank you, Steve.

[00:12:46] And you said Kevin is not here. He's working. Okay, thank you. Speaker number four is Corazon Sandoval Foley. Is Ms. Foley here, speaker number four? Ah, there she is.

[00:13:01] Okay. When I call your name, if you can come down, sit down here close. Rose Risley. Rose Risley is speaker number five to be followed by Michelle Menapace. Michelle Menapace to be followed by Paul Thomas. If I've called your name, please come down close so that you're ready to testify.

[00:13:21] Welcome, Ms. Foley. All right. My name is Corazon Sandoval Foley, founding chairman of the Foley Community Center Project, also known as the Burke-West Springfield Senior Center Without Wolves, founded in 2007 by me and my late husband, Vietnam veteran Michael Daniel Foley.

[00:13:40] I'm not asking for a budget increase today, so you can breathe easy for a few minutes. I'm here to raise three issues in the budget. First, open as soon as possible the temporary lease space at Huntsman Square that I negotiated some three years ago because the board reneged on the promised 2020 bond referendum.

[00:14:04] And many thanks to Chris Leonard, the best staff member of Fairfax County. The temporary space should be used more efficiently in compliance with the agreement that I negotiated in 2016 with the county led by Sharon Boulevard.

[00:14:23] We agreed that the project called for a community center, not just a senior center. Seniors need the space mainly from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and it should not be a wasted county resource because Springfield District taxpayers, youth, families, professionals could use it.

[00:14:47] Secondly, naming the community center starting with the least space in honor of American patriotism. I petitioned in 2022 to name the, quote, Vietnam veteran and son of the American Revolution, Michael Daniel Foley Community Center, to inspire our community, particularly the youth, to defend our American democracy.

[00:15:11] My late husband's family provided honorable military service, including in Vietnam, World War II, World War I, and at the 1777 Battle of Saratoga, and supported the founding of our American Republic and democracy.

[00:15:29] Since he was the co-founder, it is right to name the least space and then the permanent space in my late husband's memory, following on the president of the Mott Community Center organized by Sharon.

[00:15:44] I will work with the newly formed Veterans Committee on this petition to honor American patriotism and precedent with our one Fairfax policy honoring our veterans. Third, the county, NCS, asked me several times to help lead public outreach for the bond referendum originally for 2020, but delayed twice to 2024 and then 2026 referendum included in this budget.

[00:16:16] I plan to lead bigger public outreach with help from seniors and families who demonstrated in this boardroom with dances, not singing, and in front of the Fairfax County Government Center. I am petitioning for the permanent center to be co-located with the Burke Elementary School, sited on 10 acres of county property, in order to save county costs and promote mentoring by seniors.

[00:16:46] I contacted the Planning Commission with my petition. I look forward to finally completing the, quote, Vietnam veteran and son of the American Revolution, Michael Daniel Foley Community Center in our long-underserved Springfield District hometown.

[00:17:06] Thank you. Thank you. Speaker number five is Rose Risley. Is Rose here? Rose is here to be followed by Michelle Menapace, Paul Thomas, and Larry Zaragoza. Welcome, Ms. Risley. Good afternoon, Chairman McKay and members of the Board of Supervisors.

[00:17:27] My name is Rose Mario Risley, and I'm the chair of the Fairfax Area Coordinating Council for Aging and Adults with Disabilities, also known as the CCAAD. I'm here this afternoon representing the

council's 44 members and the budget positions they adopted.

[00:17:44] The council thanks the county executive for including funding for older adults and adults with disabilities in the advertised budget. For the fiscal year 2025 budget, the CCAAD asks the board to request that when considering equity and decision making, include age and those with disabilities, request increased funding for contracted services for deaf and hard of hearing persons in DFS's adult and aging disability rights and resources budget to at least what it was in fiscal year 2019, $295,371.

[00:18:21] before it was cut to 174,350. One in three people between the ages of 65 and 64 has a hearing loss, and nearly half of those older than 75 have difficulty hearing. In 2022, 13% of Fairfax County residents are reported to be 65 years or older, and it's estimated that at least 8% of that population has significant hearing loss.

[00:18:49] Support proposed funding increase for the TOPS transportation options programs and services. Support fully funding the WMATA operating subsidy for metro rail, bus, and metro access services to retain the current service level to ensure undue burden to marginalized communities.

[00:19:08] Support proposed funding for the new equity officer position within the Department of Housing and Community to support the countywide efforts to implement the One Fairfax initiative. Support the addition of seven new support coordinator positions within the Community Services Board.

[00:19:27] Support the addition of five new affordable housing positions within the Department of Housing and Community Development. Support proposed funding increase for the consolidated community funding pool. Support proposed funding increase for the health and human services contracts.

[00:19:44] Request that the county explores the development and administration of a comprehensive community needs assessment, specifically targeting individuals with disabilities. Requests for future consideration, as this is an emerging issue, we suggest that in the next budget cycle, the county be prepared to address the critical need for more robust countywide training on the American with Disabilities Act, the ADA, especially regarding the requirements for effective communication, as well as ensuring an ADA coordinator is in all the agencies.

[00:20:17] The CCAAD is available as a resource to the board. we invite you to reach out to us at ccaad at fairfaxcounty.gov or by calling 703-246-8962. Thank you. Thank you very much, Rose.

[00:20:33] Figure number six is Michelle Menapace, to be followed by Paul Thomas, Larry Zaragoza, Gwen Whitaker. If I called your name, please be ready to testify. Welcome, Michelle. Thank you. I just want to clarify. My colleague will have our five minutes, and I'm doing three.

[00:20:49] Okay. And that's Mr. Thomas. Yes. got it i don't know if the timer is going to work but i'll go ahead and start um so paul will be reviewing the highlights of the uh human services council's recommendations uh for you this year and i'm just going to lay a little bit of a foundation for how we developed those recommendations for you um earlier this year for the first time since the pandemic the council held an in-person summit that we to which we invited community stakeholders as well as our

[00:21:25] partner boards authorities and commissions we also continued with an online survey for anyone who was unable to attend in person during that summit we did multiple we had multiple focuses one was to review the budget and to gather input from our colleagues in the community but we also

reviewed the star plan that talks about strategic allocation of resources, and we'll have recommendations on funding from that.

[00:21:57] We also spoke to them to begin a whole new process of in-person engagement with all of our community stakeholders, not just the BACs that are working and appointed to deal with health and human services.

[00:22:14] The ideas put forth during that summit will serve as a foundation not only for the budget, but also for the Council's development of various engagement efforts that we plan to solidify over the coming months once the budget issues are settled.

[00:22:30] And the suggestions that we heard may also generate some new projects to consider for the Council's Innovation Fund, which you've generously funded for us in the past. was a huge amount of energy from the community and many people were grateful for the opportunity to share with their colleagues both among the non-profits as well as the BACs. The key takeaways we had from our summit were innovation both by the county, the community, and by the Human Services Council will play a big role in addressing community health and human services needs,

[00:23:07] continuing to break down silos collaborate and innovate staffing challenges are not unique to the county you probably already know that our non-profit partners are really hurting in retaining and hiring staff and so the five percent increase in the funding pool is going to go a long way to help address those and we also found out that the council has a role to play in convening discussions creative solutions and collaborative environments among all of our stakeholders we

[00:23:42] stand ready and willing to embrace our new role but we can't do it with the current appointments and i implore you to fully staff the council we currently only have 13 out of 20 available slots and we desperately need those extra folks thank you thank you very much our next speaker is paul Thomas who is Vice Chair of the Human Services Council. Welcome. Thank you Chairman McKay and the rest of the board. My name is Paul Thomas. I am the Fairfax County Human Services Council Vice Chair and Budget Committee Chair.

[00:24:18] Thank you for your service and for this opportunity to speak about the budget that is proposed. I'm here to provide some background and amplification to accompany the budget recommendations letter the Human Services Council sent you earlier this week. As Michelle has mentioned earlier this year the HSC held an in-person summit and an online survey to connect with human services BACs, non-profits, and other community stakeholders. We made sure they were well informed about the budget process and they shared their insights, hopes, and concerns about the budget priorities.

[00:24:52] It's through these efforts that our budget recommendations are informed by the broader human services ecosystem. I'll start with some thanks for the items you have funded. Your plans to create and preserve affordable housing throughout the county will continue the county's progress towards your stated goal of 10,000 new affordable homes by 2034.

[00:25:13] Support and navigation for new, changing, and sometimes Byzantine systems was a big theme we heard from the PACs and non-profits. Thank you for funding the Healthy Minds Fairfax Youth Behavioral Health Services Navigation Program and the Developmental Disability Waiver Support Coordination positions. These positions will help residents connect to services and navigate systems so they can thrive in our community.

[00:25:39] Early childhood education funding will ensure that more of our youngest residents have access to programs to support their school readiness. And the HSC is also appreciative of the ongoing support for the Health and Human Services Innovation Fund, which helps create innovative solutions to community challenges.

[00:25:57] HHS contract rate and CCFP increases will also help address major staffing challenges that you've heard about across the county. We also urge you to consider funding these items found in the STAR plan during third quarter review or carryover.

[00:26:14] Expansion of opportunity neighborhoods to Central Springfield, an immunization specialist public health nurse, and a position for the unsheltered outreach and adverse weather programs. Now to move from specifics to the big picture.

[00:26:30] First, hold the line on the budget. Spending on human services now will prevent bigger spending on human services, education, public safety, and other county services down the road. Second, staffing. Our letter spells out support and advocacy for key specific programs, but the broad expenditures to improve compensation that will help county and partner nonprofits hire and retain high-quality staff are critical.

[00:26:57] Nonprofits and agencies continue to struggle to hire the staff for which they have been budgeted, and none of our programs can succeed without the staff to support them. And third, involve us early. You don't need to solve every problem yourselves. The HSC has a wealth of experience and expertise and can convene a wide range of human services stakeholders.

[00:27:18] I'll close by quoting some very wise people. These are visionaries who understand how important human services are to our economy and our community. First, without stable housing, nothing else in your life can be stable. Fundamentally, when it comes to building a middle class, it means building more accessible housing.

[00:27:38] Second, access to housing that is affordable and safe is a basic human right. Third, providing services and resources to assist the most financially vulnerable members of our community can change the trajectory of someone's life. And finally, investing in people is not only right morally, but also makes smart fiscal sense.

[00:27:59] The county must continue to play a major role in protecting the most vulnerable in our community. Thank you to Supervisors Lusk, Jimenez, Ann Behrman, and Chairman McKay for your sage words. Thank you for your time and attention. Thank you very much, Mr. Thomas, and thank you for your service as well.

[00:28:18] Speaker number eight is Larry Zaragoza, to be followed by Glenn Whitaker, Natalie Lapido-Cretoro, and Melanie Janis. If I called your name, please make sure you're down here close so you're ready to testify. Welcome, Mr. Zaragoza.

[00:28:34] Thank you very much, Chairman McKay, and thank you, members of the board, for this opportunity to speak to you on EQAC's recommendations on the budget. We also very much appreciate your dedication and support for the environment. First recommendation I'd like to highlight is we really share your view on the importance of climate change and funding CCAP.

[00:29:01] But one of the things that's kind of tough right now is having a good sense of exactly what we need to fund in order to meet our goals. Supervisor Alcorn, I think you said that the last time we met, and I love those words.

[00:29:18] I think we really need to have a clear sense of exactly what things we need to fund in order to meet our goals and to fund them. That is our ask. And I think it's important to really look at what things will have the greatest impact in terms of meeting our goals.

[00:29:38] EQUAC also wanted to express their concern for the reorganization of the animal shelter folks, the people that deal with wildlife services. Our experience has been that they have been outstanding in the work that they've done.

[00:29:59] Over the years, they come and brief us routinely. They talk to us about their work, their plans, and I will tell you that ever since Dr. Edwards showed up, she has come time and time again, talked about how she works with the police department.

[00:30:16] They have widespread support from folks from a variety of different entities at the state and regional level. There may be uncertainty about what things might look like in the future, But what I would say is that it appears as though things work well today with the police department.

[00:30:37] And so we very much want to see that things continue to work well as they have in the past. And we appreciate their work. The next couple recommendations relate more to trying to make sure that the budget is balanced and that we're able to pay for the things that we are undertaking.

[00:31:00] but one thing we want to highlight is our appreciation for your support of the parks. The parks are very important to us and I know that we could always ask for more, but I think everyone is grateful for what was provided this year. I also want to note that I see so many, we see so many different needs for stormwater. We need to stabilize our streams, we need to restore them we need to address flooding we need to maintain our infrastructure and all these things are quite expensive and it seems like there's more and more and more work to

[00:31:39] do every time i hear more about this subject and and so in the past we've asked for a quarter penny to be added to the budget in order to accomplish this it didn't happen this year i i really expect it's going to be a recommendation we have for next year and and probably into continuing years as well I don't think this is new for you, but I think it's important that you hear that there is support for that.

[00:32:06] Then there's the question of incremental funding for some programs. The idea here is that if people are receiving a county service and it's supposed to pay for itself, it should pay for itself in full. Two areas we're thinking about here are solid waste collection.

[00:32:22] The rate doesn't appear right now to meet the cost. And the other one is leaf pile collection. And so both of those we think should be self-sustaining in terms of the rate should meet the cost of the program.

[00:32:41] Those are our comments, and I thank you very much. I tried to keep them short because I know you've heard so much already. Thank you very much, Larry. Thank you for your service. Speaker number nine is Gwen Whitaker, to be followed by Natalie Lapido-Cretoro and Melanie Janis Daria Akers, in that order.

[00:33:02] If you're here, please come on down. Welcome, Ms. Whittaker. Thank you, Chairman McKay, Walter Elkhorn, and Jim Waukesha. It's a pleasure to be able to wake up every day in Fairfax County for 34 years now as a citizen.

[00:33:20] I'm currently CEO of three different companies, two nonprofits, and the Green Fair Organic Cafe, which, if you haven't been there before, is an environmentally focused, healthy place to eat. do a program to help reverse chronic illness and it's been a passion for nine years i sold a tech company after 10 years of helping to instill change in the intelligence community and that's been something that i continue to be impassioned about and work in that that space as well

[00:33:59] today i'm here to support the consolidation of the animal services and animal control within the animal shelter environment as a serial entrepreneur and ceo i'm also the president of sycamore ridge homeowners association the most well-paid job and appreciated job that i've done just kidding for those of you who've done that i've done that for 10 years in my companies i constantly increase efficiency optimize resources and delivered improved services

[00:34:34] to my clients i applaud the county for looking to do the same through the consolidation of animal services and animal control the current bifurcated structure of animal services of animal care divided between two departments with different missions and goals has not served our county well and i'll share a story from my perspective having a single department focused on providing excellent services to all animals is a model that is working well in neighboring jurisdiction jurisdictions and nationwide and there's no reason this model will not work here as well

[00:35:12] one of the issues that i encountered was around diversity equity and inclusion in my neighborhood several years ago when one of my neighbors german shepherd she's an asian lady who owns a german shepherd named Amber attacked another dog in the neighborhood. The police showed up and her and her husband were cowled that it was police knocking at their door. They gave their dog up and weeks of tearful calls to neighbors trying to get help ensued. It was the dog's first incident of aggression

[00:35:45] and after surrendering the dog, which she at the time thought it was scheduled for euthanasia, Reached out to me as the HOA president and known animal lover, and I gave her a lawyer that she ended up hiring at great expense, was able to regain possession of her dog after several weeks of fear that she had given up her dog too easily.

[00:36:09] This would have been prevented if animal control and sheltering had been a unified organization. Animal welfare has evolved to eliminate barriers to service. There's a growing body of research that an enforcement model disproportionately impacts marginalized communities, particularly communities of colors.

[00:36:29] One of our neighboring jurisdictions has a veterinarian embedded with the animal control team who has treated over 1,000 animals in the field, preventing the surrender of those animals to the shelter, and has resulted in a relationship of trust with those community members.

[00:36:45] That tends to be the current model where you're not holding your animal in jail, but you're providing a community service that people can access with community support most calls for service in Fairfax County your calls for assistance with injured ill or orphaned animals they don't need a police officer with a gun to respond to those calls under the consolidated proposal the county has made clear

they will continue to enforce all laws protecting animals and partner with the police on complex investigations.

[00:37:21] While I strongly support the Fairfax County Police Department for law enforcement and applaud their work, I believe that the consolidation of all animal-related services under the animal shelter director should occur for these reasons. I appreciate the opportunity to reach out today. Thank you.

[00:37:39] Thank you very much. Speaker number 10 is Natalie Lapido-Cretoro, to be followed by Melanie Janis, Daria Akers, and Ann Whipple. Welcome. Melanie is unable to achieve.

[00:37:55] She had called the clerk. Is it okay? She was going to cede her time to me. Will that be okay? That is okay, yes. Thank you. And she would have been speaker number 11, Melanie Janis. Okay. Welcome. Thank you. Dear Board of Supervisors, Chairman McKay, thank you for hearing me and listening to me today.

[00:38:14] after so many testimonies. My name is Natalie Curitoro, to make it simpler. Until February 2024, I was a volunteer at the shelter for almost nine years. I was a dog walker, a dishwasher, a mentor, a foster, and a lot more. And I was fully committed to my other job in a shelter that I love. I'm speaking today to oppose the Animal Services Consolidation proposal in this budget. From 2016 to 2022, I have witnessed the efficient operation of the shelter.

[00:38:51] Our animal protection police officers have collaborated with us to guarantee that all individuals in the county receive the services that they need and deserve. These officers are skilled professionals in their domain, and their role as police officers brings significant level of expertise and professionalism that enhances our county. They play a crucial role in ensuring and upholding accountability for animal welfare. This proposal before you has fundamental flaws as it closely resembles a pilot model that shelters in other benchmark jurisdictions have

[00:39:29] embraced. Unfortunately, many of these jurisdictions and shelters are currently struggling to succeed in their primary role of safeguarding both animal and people in their community. The Humane Communities Framework mentioned in the proposal, which incorporates one health, one welfare concept, is necessary and valued and matches our own One Fairfax mission.

[00:39:56] But this proposal will not achieve these goals. An organization known as the Humane Animal Support Services, HASS, has introduced and actively endorsed a model and playbook for animal welfare. HASS emphasizes community-centric approaches and resources equities for all as key objectives.

[00:40:17] However, achieving these goals under these models has proven to be very challenging. The HASS regressive model primarily focuses on reducing shelter intake and assigning the responsibility of managing stray animals and finding new homes for unwanted animals to the communities. By examining the HASS playbook, which is accessible online, one can observe the striking resemblances in this consolidation proposal. The HASS model is not only viewed as

[00:40:50] controversial and ineffective by many, but it is also considered a risk to public safety and animal welfare. The county's proposal mentions some benchmark jurisdictions as exceptional success stories. Two examples are Charlotte-Mecklenburg Animal Care and Control in Fulton County in Georgia. Both have faced challenges concerning conditions in their shelters and overcrowding.

[00:41:17] Notably, Fulton County has just recently ceased providing animal control services to the City of Atlanta, and consequently, these animal services calls are being redirected to the Atlanta Police Department. Many jurisdictions that have aligned with HASS or a comparable community-based model and have embraced their strategies are now seeing similar patterns emerge. Minimal oversight, enhanced community engagement, reduction in animal sheltering and animal care, and a visible decline in dedicated volunteers

[00:41:53] and employees along the journey. Up to now, the sole consistent measurable outcome Among these benchmark jurisdictions has been overcrowded shelters and increased euthanasia. Unfortunately, our organization is experiencing parallel trends.

[00:42:13] Volunteer morale is currently at its lowest point. Volunteers are either resigning or just not showing up. Employee turnover is significant, and the vital support that we, the volunteers, used to offer to our overwhelmed caretakers has significantly diminished.

[00:42:29] You are no longer gaining the advantages of about 10 full-time employee-equivalent volunteer hours right now. This consolidation proposal lacks essential components.

[00:42:47] A clear mission, substantiated data, a comprehensive five-year budget plan as a minimum, and a system for accountability. We ask that you please reject this proposal. Just ask for a better plan.

[00:43:02] I urge you to listen to me as a resident of this county, not just as a disgruntled volunteer, as I've been called. This proposal could have adverse effects on your hardworking staff and volunteers.

[00:43:17] And there is a danger of turning Fairfax County into another testing ground for a model that has already proven unsuccessful in so many jurisdictions across the U.S. I thank you. Thank you very much. Speaker number 12 is Daria Akers, to be followed by Ann Whipple, Tati Karnes, and Tommy Tippett, if all of you can be ready.

[00:43:47] Welcome, Ms. Akers. Thank you. Good afternoon, Chairman McKay and members of the board. I'm Daria Akers, an at-large representative of the Fairfax Falls Church Community Services Board. The CSB provides services to over 22,000 people in our community.

[00:44:06] who face challenges related to mental health, substance use, and developmental disabilities. We can provide this level of service to the most vulnerable in our community because of your ongoing support. I'm here with my board colleague to offer our thoughts on the fiscal year 2025 advertised budget.

[00:44:28] The CSB requests your support for the new support coordinator positions. The $2.1 million for 14 new support coordinators is one step in managing new developmental disability, DD, waiver slots.

[00:44:46] In fiscal year 2023, RCSB staff provided support coordination services to 5,210 individuals with developmental disabilities, including 1,792 with Medicaid waivers.

[00:45:05] While the state budget will not be finalized until at least mid-May, the county may receive an unprecedented number of new Medicaid waivers in fiscal year 25 and 26, as the governor and the general assembly have become aligned on efforts to eliminate the priority one wait list.

[00:45:29] State funding to clear the backlog would mark a significant and much-needed investment, addressing urgent support needs of individuals and offering long-awaited relief to their families. The urgency of this situation cannot be overstated.

[00:45:49] New waiver slots are essential and have been a county legislative priority each year as waiver slots consistently lag behind our ever-growing wait list. Nearly 1,200 individuals are on the Fairfax Falls Church CSB's Priority 1 wait list, with over 500 individuals waiting for over five years.

[00:46:12] An influx of new waivers requires additional positions to manage the caseload and ensure CSB's compliance with service requirements. New support coordinators, supervisors, and business operations staff will be needed.

[00:46:29] Approximately 70 new support coordinator positions will be required to help CSB meet the requirements of mandated support coordination services for individuals receiving the new waivers. CSB is committed to ensuring services are well-coordinated so that all individuals with developmental disabilities receive the support they need to thrive in our communities.

[00:46:59] With a significant number of Virginia's Priority 1 individuals in Fairfax, CSB is coordinating closely with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Services, DHDBS. DBHDS must carefully manage the allocation process for slots to allow our CSB and service providers in the community to manage the expected increase in demand.

[00:47:27] The state must also provide adequate reimbursement rates that support quality community-based DD services as we work to eliminate the Priority 1 wait list. Currently, there is a limited number of service providers with the capacity to meet the service needs of individuals with intensive behavioral health needs.

[00:47:51] A significant increase in waiver slots would be a step forward in providing necessary services to families. As you are aware, CSB has initiated a comprehensive communication plan to ensure families and community members know how the state will distribute waivers and when they can expect waiver services to begin.

[00:48:17] Stakeholders received the first newsletter last month. We will have several in-person and virtual sessions with community members moving forward. The first is a Zoom meeting that will take place on April 24th. We will continue to keep you apprised of these efforts.

[00:48:36] Thank you for your support and your continued partnership. Thank you very much. Appreciate your testimony. Speaker number 13 is Ann Whipple. Oh, you're here. I thought I was going to be an answer. Ann is here to be followed by Tati Kearns, Tommy Tippett, and Patty Kline.

[00:48:59] Welcome, Ms. Whipple. You are here. Thank you. Yes, I'm Ann Whipple. I'm the Drainesville District Representative of the Fairfax Falls Church Community Services Board. Thank you for the chance to address the importance of critical funding for employee compensation and contract rate increases for community-based providers.

[00:49:20] Additionally, I'll share updates on our ongoing efforts to enhance youth and adult crisis services. Please support the increase in employee compensation and contract provider funding. The CSB has a long-term priority of addressing the behavioral health workforce crisis.

[00:49:38] As health care employers in the region compete for a limited pool of skilled professionals, we must offer competitive salaries to attract and retain adequate numbers of top talent within Fairfax County. This is particularly true for staffing youth facilities.

[00:49:54] With your support, the CSB is expanding youth services, adding 18 new youth positions to help meet increasing demand. CSB is quickly filling these positions, demonstrating our commitment to youth behavioral health. While no new funding accompanies the expansion of youth outpatient services, CSB is working to absorb the impact by improving business practices, increasing billing revenue, and realigning workforce.

[00:50:21] Our focus remains on bolstering the crisis continuum as the opioid epidemic continues to loom large. Establishing crisis receiving and stabilization centers is integral to our mission. Efforts to build youth and adult centers continue, and CSB is currently evaluating potential structures for these purposes.

[00:50:44] Progress is also underway for Connections Health Services to assume operations at the Chantilly Crisis Unit soon. The increase in youth fatal and non-fatal overdoses in the region has highlighted the need for more robust treatment services to allow for immediate support for youth in crisis.

[00:51:04] Last year, 511 children and youth received short-term treatment from the CSB, a 30% increase over the prior year. Youth overdoses, particularly the use of fentanyl, remain a significant concern, with our hospitals reporting a continued rise in emergency room visits.

[00:51:23] The county is leveraging grant dollars to add residential services for adolescents with opioid use disorder diagnoses. With youth behavioral health a critical priority, we urge your support for another link in this chain, the advertised budget's investments in Healthy Minds Fairfax for behavioral health service navigation.

[00:51:44] This $446,000 in funding is critical for reducing barriers and expediting access to services for children, youth, and their families. We all know young people are our future, and the CSB remains committed to supporting them in every way we can.

[00:52:00] Thank you again for allowing the CSB to bring these items to your attention. Thank you very much. Speaker number 14 is Toddy Carnes to be followed by Tommy Tippett, Patty Klein, and Jay Spiegel in that order.

[00:52:14] Welcome Ms. Carnes. Thank you. Mr. Chairman, supervisors of the board. I'm Toddy Carnes, the president of the Friends of Historic Huntley. Historic Huntley is a Fairfax County Park Authority property, which we strive to support. First, thank you. Thank you for your willingness over the past two budget cycles to end the year after year cuts to park authority allocation of general funds. Thank you indeed for adding to that allocation desperately needed funds and for the budget guidance you gave last spring, encouraging various government stakeholders to converse with one another in a bid to find ways to meet our

[00:52:52] parks funding needs. Most certainly these discussions led to sparing the Park Authority from any cuts in the FY 2025 advertised budget and to the proposed addition of Park Authority funds in that budget. We support the advertised budget and we ask that you please, please see continued the internal conversations you launched last spring with your budget guidance. In light of your positive response to park advocate funding requests, the proposed funding increase in this year's advertised budget, and the many other budget requests presented before you. It's not easy to stand here

[00:53:29] saying that even more will be needed for parks in succeeding budget cycles. However, the many years of park authority growth, accompanied by concurrent, continuing, and compounding under funding, demand nothing less. Prior to the past two budget cycles, the park's funding went unincreased for

years, even as the Park Authority acquired more land, more facilities, and with them more expenses and a need for more staff.

[00:53:58] Historic Huntley is but one example of the latter. The site opened to the public in 2012 and has never had an historian or other full-time employee assigned to it. Part-time personnel support for it was taken from the neighboring Huntley Meadows Park.

[00:54:15] The underfunding of our parks is well documented. The Park Authority's 2016 Needs Assessment stated that, quote, funding for natural resource management is far below that of best practices. As one example of this, the assessment considered actively managed acreage.

[00:54:35] Then, as now, about 4,700 acres of the Park Authority's property was actively managed. The assessment noted that best practice expenses for actively managed lands were between $3,000 and $6,000 per acre. The Park Authority, however, was only expending $148 per acre.

[00:54:57] With your support these last two years, the Park Authority now expends $351 per managed acre. Funding that, although improved, is still far below that of best practices. The Park Authority's 2016 needs assessment also noted that annual cultural resource management funding was about $500,000 below that of best practices.

[00:55:20] The Friends of Historic Huntley felt the impact of this underfunding when, several years ago, it purchased an historic document of importance to Historic Huntley. While it might seem natural that as a Park Friends group, we would turn the document over to the Park Authority's Collections Branch for curation, another institution stepped forward expressing a desire to house the document in its archives.

[00:55:44] Current unmet needs of the Park Authority's collection branch were chief among the reasons why we chose to have the document curated at the other institution. This was a stunning development, given that our group is dedicated to partnering with the Park Authority in furthering the interests of Historic Huntley.

[00:56:05] With all the recent attention to benchmarking state school funding, we note that comparing Fairfax County to similar and surrounding jurisdictions funding for parks indicates that Fairfax County's operational funding of $799 per acre for all of its 24,000 acres is woefully less than the others, the lowest of which was $1,341 per acre.

[00:56:29] And I filed with the clerk a copy of my comments with park slides showing those benchmarkings. As if these funding metrics were not sufficiently negative, we also have the earlier testimony in this hearing of the Park Authority Board Chair, Mr. Kyle Stone. Mr. Stone stated that the Park Authority has over $100 million in deferred maintenance expenses that continue to grow with time.

[00:56:52] Not only is it more money that will be needed, but because big money is needed, more conversation will be needed among government stakeholders and between officials and the public. topics might include whether a new funding model for parks is needed whether residents might approve a meals tax if it were dedicated to the support of parks whether the park foundation might also be staffed by employees of the office of economic development and whether rec center should be spun off to the private commercial sector if these subjects portend a potential sea change it's because the current state of park funding requires one thank you thank you very much

[00:57:31] Speaker number 15 is Tommy Tippett, to be followed by Patty Klein, Jay Spiegel, and William Hill. Welcome, Mr. Tippett. Chairman McKay and Madam Vice-Chair, members of the Board of Supervisors, Executive Hill, Fairfax County residents.

[00:57:47] For those who don't know me, my name is Tommy Tippett. I'm the Secretary-Treasurer of Fairfax County Professional Firefighters and Paramedics, IFF Local 2068, representing the 1,868 retired and active firefighters, paramedics, 911 communicators, apparatus mechanics who serve the residents and visitors of fairfax county daily i come before you today because we are deeply concerned about the proposed budget reductions to fire and rescue services we believe the proposed cuts will reduce our operational efficiency threatening the safety of the residents and visitors we serve as well as our members while we while we do not envy the position you are put in because the decisions passed down from richmond the proposed reductions totaling 2.9 million dollars target critical areas of our operations which in turn have a direct

[00:58:27] impact on community well-being operational efficiency and firefighter safety the reductions imposed include cross staffing tankers reducing staffing for our hazmat team reducing full-time safety officers positions and civilianizing multiple battalion chief roles let us first address the proposal to cross staff tankers the proposal calls for cross staffing three tankers one firefighter from the engine house with the tanker will move from the engine to drive the tanker when the tanker receives a call for service by reducing staffing on initial engine companies crucial tasks required to address incidents in non-hydrogen areas will be delayed, leading to increased fire loss for our citizens. Studies which our department took part in show us that

[00:59:03] four-person crews completed the same number of fire ground tasks on average 5.1 minutes or nearly 25% faster than three-person crews and there was a 6% increase in water on fire time between the three- and four-person crew. These studies also found that three-member crews took almost 12 minutes longer than crews of four to complete 14 critical tasks undertaken when potential risks of building occupants and firefighters are greatest. With today's fire growing eight times faster and producing 200 times more smoke due to modern plastics and lightweight construction, reducing staffing in areas where every set of hands counts, decrease the survival rate of civilians in our rural areas, and increase the

[00:59:41] risk of injury to our members. The proposed reduction in safety officers is equally alarming. The safety officer provides the incident commander and firefighters on scene with an objective set eyes and ears to monitor changing conditions while others concentrate on firefighting or mitigating the emergency.

[00:59:57] Considering recent tragic events across the country, including the devastating explosion in nearby Loudoun County and the eight-line of duty deaths in neighboring Maryland over the last two years, the importance of the safety officer cannot be overstated. The delayed arrival of the safety officer taxes the Incident Commander during the high-stress of operation and hampers cancer reduction efforts designed to improve the long-term health of our members.

[01:00:16] There is also a proposal for you to reduce staffing for the Hazardous Materials Unit Hazards and Materials Support Unit. We believe the proposal to be flawed due to the catastrophic consequences that the results of the delayed identification or mitigation of hazards without the timely arrival of the technical expertise the full staffed HAZMAT Unit and HAZMAT Support Unit provide the risk of serious injury or death for the public and firefighters is elevated to an unacceptable level. We'd also like to voice

our concern over the proposals civilianizing selected battalion chief roles in critical areas such as communications, community risk reduction and apparatus. These cuts undermine the operational knowledge and expertise essential for effective leadership. The expertise gained over the

[01:00:55] course of a fire department career gives uniformed personnel serving in the roles a unique perspective and body of experience that ensures these critical areas best serve the community and the fire department. We recognize the unique challenges and responsibilities that come with serving the expanded community of Fairfax County. Our department's commitment to safety and excellence has distinguished us as a leader in the region and beyond. However, Local 2068 believes the proposed cuts are a dangerous gamble we cannot afford to take and will erode our position as a leader in the region we the firefighters and other members of local 2068 serving the community see the sad results of assuming increased risk every day history has demonstrated once increased risk is assumed the march of calamity speeds up as stewards of public

[01:01:32] safety it is our duty to prioritize the well-being of the residents we serve and our members above all else the proposed budget cuts threaten to eat away the progress we have made in ensuring the the safety and security of Fairfax County. On behalf of the 1,868 retired and active members of Local 2068 represents, I urge you to reconsider these reductions and maintain the safety of our community as a top priority. Our organization has always been willing to engage with you, the Board of Supervisors, to work towards solutions that best serve the residents and visitors we are sworn to serve, while protecting the lives, health, and safety of our members.

[01:02:04] This year has been no different. Using the list of potential reductions senior staff presented to county staff. We've engaged fire department senior leadership, county staff, and all of you to come up with $2.6 million in common sense alternative reductions that meet the board's goal of operational efficiencies while maintaining the highest level of service to Fairfax County residents, visitors, and our members. I ask you to reflect on the value of maintaining a sustained commitment to safeguarding the lives and property and safety of county residents, visitors, and our members. Let us continue to uphold the standards of excellence that define Fairfax County and ensure a safer future for all. Thank you for your consideration. Thank you very much, Tommy.

[01:02:39] Appreciate your testimony. Speaker number 16 is Patty Klein to be followed by Jay Spiegel, William Hill, and Ken Reed. Welcome, Ms. Klein. Thank you. Chairman McKay and members of the Board of Supervisors, thank you for the opportunity to comment on the advertised fiscal year 2025 budget. I'm Patty Klein, Executive Director of Rebuilding Together Arlington Fairfax Falls Church.

[01:03:13] We are extremely grateful that last year the Board of Supervisors voted to increase funding for home repairs and accessibility modifications, recognizing that helping low-income homeowners remain in their homes is a vital and cost-effective affordable housing strategy. To provide predictable multi-year funding, the board's fiscal year 2024 budget amendment shifted responsibility to the Department of Housing and Community Development, no longer making it an eligible activity of the

[01:03:46] consolidated community funding pool starting in fiscal year 25-26. We are eagerly awaiting the RFP to be advertised, which has been delayed over 10 months due to staffing capacity within HCD.

[01:04:02] we urge the county to move this process forward now to prevent any gaps in funding and we want the board to ensure that the funding continues into fiscal year 25 and beyond and in fact this same situation is happening to the people in the manufacturer housing and they're not getting the help and i've

never seen something so desperate in my life um so i fully support that as well We value the work of HCD and recognize the daunting responsibilities they face in expanding and maintaining affordable housing in our community.

[01:04:43] And no, they cannot accomplish the work without adequate staffing. We wholeheartedly support five new HCD staffing positions in the advertised budget. I'm here today to also keep this often, very much often, overlooked and cost-effective affordable housing strategy on the radar and to be the voice of the homeowners who are living with hazards that are affecting their safety, health, and emotional well-being.

[01:05:12] There are very few resources available through the county and nonprofits, such as Rebuilding Together, to provide critical home repairs and accessibility modifications for homeowners living on tight budgets, particularly those who are older adults, persons with disabilities, and vulnerable families with children.

[01:05:32] Rebuilding together along with dedicated providers stand as a lifeline for these individuals and families, ensuring they can live safely, comfortably, and with dignity in their own homes. But without continued funding, these services will be very scarce.

[01:05:50] The data supports the need in the community and is reflected in the county's initiatives for Shape the Future of Aging. But to really understand the need, let me tell you about people we've served. A wheelchair user in his late 80s who has been cited by the county for code violations.

[01:06:09] Our volunteers have already started and begun to correct the violations and dozens of deferred maintenance issues and accessibility modifications. A young widow with a six-year-old child whose home was not safe to live in, we dedicated over 500 hours of volunteer labor, hired contractors, partnered with Community Housing Partners weatherization program, allowing the family to return home almost after two years.

[01:06:37] A disabled woman living in manufactured housing with an income less than $15,000 who could not safely leave her home unless in one day our volunteers built her ramp. Individuals that due to disabilities are unable to get upstairs to take a bath or sleep in their own beds rely on rebuilding together to install stair lifts.

[01:06:59] And hundreds of older adults who simply need few modifications like grab bars, double railings, comfort height toilets, and better lighting to help prevent falls that could lead to injuries, visits to the emergency room. But there are hundreds of others each year waiting to receive help.

[01:07:16] These are not nice to have repairs and modifications, but repairs that are needed to make homes safer and healthier for the occupants. I've been doing this for over two decades and have never seen the need so great. Every day we get more and more calls from people needing assistance.

[01:07:32] Most feel uncomfortable in asking for the help, and you could literally hear the desperation in their voice and the stress and anxiety that they are feeling because there's no other option. Please make sure the funding is available today and for years to come.

[01:07:49] For a modest investment, together we can help older adults safely age in place, make homes accessible for those with disabilities, protect individuals and families from health and safety hazards in their homes, while helping to maintain and preserve affordable housing for future generations.

[01:08:06] Thank you. Thank you. Speaker number 17 is Jay Spiegel, to be followed by William Hill, Ken Reed, and Claire Thorpe. Mr. Spiegel, welcome. Mr. Chairman and members of the board, I'm often reminded that Supervisor Stork explained to me that once the board transfers money to the school board, it loses control over how the money is spent.

[01:08:32] As such, the time for the board to responsibly consider how much money to transfer to the school board is now, not later. Senator Surveld and Supervisor Stork, among others, have explained their justification for supporting the budgetary requests of the school board, which includes a significant increase over last year.

[01:08:48] Quoting Supervisor Stork, quote, Virginia school divisions receive almost $2,000 less K-12 funding per student compared to the 50-state average, regional averages, and comes in 48th out of 50 states. This chronic state underfunding of our schools cannot be ignored any longer, unquote.

[01:09:06] This statistic is irrelevant. In a country encompassing 50 states and the District of Columbia in which the cost of living varies widely between jurisdictions, Virginia's level of funding compared to a nationwide average is irrelevant. What is relevant is whether our students are receiving a quality education and whether we could economize and still provide an excellent education. According to the 2024 analysis by the World Population Review, Virginia public schools rank fourth out of 50 states for the quality of education. Quoting them, quote, Virginia has the fourth best public schools overall in the United States, ranking fourth for quality and third for

[01:09:44] safety. Virginia public schools were found to have the fourth highest math test scores in the country. Virginia schools also have the fourth lowest bullying incidence rate and have no significant shortcomings when assessed for safety from violence, bullying, harassment, and substance use, unquote. This is a record of which we can be proud. In case the board were to believe that this finding is an outlier, similar results were found in a 2023 Wallet Hub report, which ranked Virginia public schools fifth in the country. They also had ranked Virginia public schools fourth in 2022. Based upon these reports and the fact that there are 7,000 fewer students

[01:10:20] in our public schools this year than in 2020, it is apparent that the school board transfer could be reduced and our public schools would still remain highly ranked nationally. As such, I recommend that the board agree to transfer to the school board 75% of its request and concurrently order a full audit of the school board expenditures based upon the concept of zero-based budgeting with the audit to be required to be completed within six months with a full report to the board.

[01:10:45] With that audit completed, the board can then decide within the following two months how much more money, if any, should be transferred to the school board. This is the way responsible government works, and I request that you take this suggestion seriously. With my remaining time, I wish to mention that after local community leader Jeff Todd passed away almost 13 years ago, a road between Richmond Highway and Telegraph Road was named in his honor.

[01:11:08] You were there at the dedication of this road, Mr. Chairman, and it was so long ago that you were the lead district supervisor at the time. That district is no longer the lead district. I led the effort to place a tasteful monument along the roadway to honor Jeff, and everything is arranged to complete the job, place the monument, and hold the dedication ceremony, except that VDOT is requiring a $10,000 bond.

[01:11:28] Out of the billions of dollars in our county budget, I request that the board appropriate $10,000 to pay that bond so that we can properly honor Jeff Todd with the monument that everyone has approved. I note that the monument would be in your district, Supervisor Lusk, and I hope you'll support this proposal.

[01:11:44] Thank you very much for your attention. Thank you, Jay. If I could ask you one question, I just want to make sure. The bond that you mentioned here, has VDOP been asked to waive the bond requirement for this, or have any of our state legislators submitted a budget request in Richmond to pay the bond?

[01:12:00] I've heard of no efforts on those behalves, and I don't know if the Board of Supervisors is able or authorized to do that or to waive the bond, but I'd love to have a dedication of some money this year for that. We've got a beautiful place for it, and it would be a great monument to one of our greatest community leaders.

[01:12:17] Absolutely agree. Thank you, Jay. Thank you very much. Appreciate that. Our next speaker is William Hill, to be followed by Ken Reed, Claire Thorpe, and Hal Mai. In that order, Mr. Hill, welcome. Hi.

[01:12:32] My name is William Hill. I'm a resident of West Springfield, Virginia. I want to thank the board for allowing me to speak today. I'm a long-time resident of Fairfax County. I've lived here for 62 years. Everybody's been given their bio, and I'll give you mine.

[01:12:50] I'm a former Army Auditor. I was a program manager with the Defense Inspector General's Office, looking at major acquisition programs. I also worked for the Defense Contract Management Agency as the Director of Contract Cost and Pricing, also looking at the major weapon programs for cost and schedule.

[01:13:11] My last assignment was working at the Depends Acquisition Regulatory Council. I was a member of that council, which is responsible for putting out federal acquisition regulations concerning contract procurements and contract administrations. So I have a little history about auditing and defense contracts.

[01:13:29] That's who I am. Today I want to talk about the proposed increased taxes on the county residents. I'm a retired person that worked at the Department of Defense, and now I'm just like everybody else, a taxpayer.

[01:13:46] In my view, Fairbanks kind of needs to make critical reforms to address spending. Specifically, it needs to prioritize essential areas during contract, budget, and formulation. Programs deemed non-essential should be eliminated. Also, there should be continued audit oversight of programs to ensure no wasted spending or inefficiencies.

[01:14:06] Particular attention should be given to county school spending, especially administrative overhead costs. Due to the increased taxes and the cost of living in the county, I'm considering moving to Fulton County, Georgia, where it's affordable to live. Fulton County does not have a personal property tax, the car tax, and offers all homeowners various homestead exemptions on their property tax.

[01:14:29] For example, to reduce their property tax, the homeowners age 65 and older, regardless of income, can take a $60,000 exemption on their home's property assessment. The property assessment is based on 40% of the property's fair market value.

[01:14:46] I calculated my annual property tax would be approximately $730 less if Fairfax County had the homeowners exemption program, if they had a program like Fulton County. The bottom line, without taking action to prioritize programs, initiating austerity measures and audits to keep spending in a check and implementing a tax relief program such as a homestead exemption, residents will continue to leave Fairfax County for more tax-friendly and affordable designations.

[01:15:19] In fact, several of my friends and neighbors have already done so. Thank you for your time, Mr. Chairman. Thank you very much, Mr. Hill. Speaker number 19 is Ken Reed, to be followed by Claire Thorpe, How am I? And I believe Deborah Tissler is canceled. Curtis Clinton. In that order, Mr. Reed, welcome.

[01:15:37] Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you all for your service to Fairfax County. Before I begin, I just want to wish my supervisor, Ms. Palachuk, a very happy Passover next week, and happy Passover to anybody else who's having a Seder, as I will be having.

[01:15:53] I am here to discuss a budget. I want to basically request the board to add funds to the budget to essentially hire either a modeling company or some big data company, unless you can do it in-house, to examine the impact of the horrible congestion on the 495 Beltway, which is backing up where I live in Tyson's Corner, all the way down to Route 50.

[01:16:20] And I'm talking about some kind of a study that, using maybe data from this firm, Enrix, which I just heard about. And I'm not here to get a contract. I'm not a modeler. I'm not doing anything like that. I'm just strictly here as a citizen, okay?

[01:16:37] And to basically look at the impact on the streets because of this congestion, not just the streets in Great Falls, McLean, Tyson's, but I think this is going to be having a big impact potentially in Reston, could be having a big impact in Vienna, And it could be having a big impact on the other end of the beltway for the Wilson Bridge.

[01:16:56] And here's why. If you were to do a GPS search, let's say to go from maybe Reston to Baltimore. I go to Baltimore, and I go to Montgomery County. There's a lot of great Orthodox – I become an Orthodox Jew, if you didn't know. And there's a lot of great Orthodox stuff up there that we don't have in Virginia.

[01:17:15] And if you're going to do a GPS search, you'll see that it would take you an hour to three hours to go up Route 7 to the Leesburg Bypass to the Point of Rocks Bridge, and about the same time to take the superhighway, if we want to call it that, 495 to 95 up to Baltimore.

[01:17:35] And I see that you have, so the reason why I bring that up is because I'm sure there's a lot of motorists who are doing this, and they're going to probably be pouring out onto neighborhood streets to access these other roads. But without data, I don't know how you can make a case to get not just Virginia off the dime, but Virginia's hands are kind of tied, as we learned at a VDOT hearing in Langley High School last week that Supervisor Beerman was at and spoke very eloquently, I might add, is that Maryland has to get off the dime, and they're not.

[01:18:12] And at that meeting, I discovered that neither the governor or Secretary Miller even talked to incoming Governor Westmore about this project when he came into office a year ago and then put the kibosh on it because he thought it wasn't equitable that they were using all this toll revenue to build it.

[01:18:30] So now the key bridge has collapsed, and they're focusing all their attention on that, which carries 34,000 cars a day versus 230,000 for the Legion Bridge. And Baltimore has the alternatives with the two tunnels.

[01:18:48] Hazardous materials trucks and heavy trucks are no more than 15% of that traffic can go around the other side of the beltway, and they can do that. So put some money to get some data, and then let's push this with the state, but also talk to your colleagues across the river through the COG committees and so forth.

[01:19:06] The data is one way, and I think this may cost $100,000, $150,000, but it's something you should definitely be doing because I don't know if VDOT is going to do anything, and I don't know if Maryland even has that data either. Thank you very much for your time. Thank you, Ken. Appreciate your testimony.

[01:19:22] I'll send copies of this with some information to all of you by email. thank you thank you is speaker number 20 claire thorpe here you are okay uh welcome come on down following claire will be how am i speaker number 21 is how am i here uh speaker number 22 is canceled deborah tisler i will call her just to verify that and curtis clinton uh welcome um welcome miss thorpe thank you and um i just wanted to confirm that lisa or linda welcome very kindly given up her three minutes so i'm afraid you got me for eight um and thank you for the opportunity to speak. My name is Claire Thorpe and despite my rather odd accent I'm

[01:20:01] actually a resident of Fairfax County. I'm an American citizen and I've actually lived here for 20 years. I also hold a doctorate in animal science and I taught animal behaviour and welfare at a top tier university. So my first point is that wildlife welfare is not the same as pet welfare and to suggest that wildlife euthanasia rates should somehow be reduced or that firearms aren't necessary shows ignorance of this. I'm also a class 2A wildlife rehabilitator licensed with the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources and today I am speaking on

[01:20:36] behalf of Rewild Nova to oppose the proposal to consolidate animal services under the sheltering authority and any budget that will support this. Rewild Nova is a 501c3 charitable organization that supports and connects wildlife rehabilitators, caregivers, apprentices and transporters across several counties in Virginia, including Fairfax County.

[01:20:58] And the bulk of our wildlife intake actually comes from Animal Protection Police Officers, or APPO, and members of the public. To be clear, wildlife rehabilitation is not conducted by organisations. It is conducted by independent, licensed rehabilitators.

[01:21:15] There is no rehabilitation organisation that is set up to represent the voice of wildlife rehabbers. For example, I receive a few wildlife animals from the Wildlife Rescue League through their call centre, and I oppose the consolidated proposal.

[01:21:32] So when considering the various letters you have received, please note that more rehabilitators in Fairfax County and beyond oppose this proposal than support it, that shelter volunteers also oppose it, and so do individuals who volunteer or work with organisations such as the Audubon Society, Nature Forward and the Master Naturalists who oppose it for reasons to do with wildlife, our parks and natural resources.

[01:21:56] So I would like to address the proposal itself and some of the more recent letters of support you've received and then speak to the value of what we have here in Fairfax County. The budget in this

proposal has nothing in it for wildlife. Yes, we have been given verbal promises of what could be done for wildlife, but there are no guarantees that any of this will actually happen and in fact some are monumentally difficult to implement and we know this because we've tried.

[01:22:20] For example a wildlife room or triage in the Loudoun Shelter was refused planning permission. Presumably some of the easier things to achieve for wildlife which have been promised could have been actioned already if there was been a strong interest in doing so such as wildlife representation on the existing Animal Sheltering Advisory Committee because according to the Deputy Chief Executive this proposal has been under discussion for two years now.

[01:22:44] That we are only hearing these things now suggests that there never was an intent to actually deal with wildlife and that the mission of animal sheltering will override the mission for wildlife. Yet at least 20% of the animals the APPO work with are orphaned and injured wildlife, including endangered species and keystone species that live in our county.

[01:23:05] You are therefore being asked to support a budget for a significant change in both structure and organisation of the services that we currently have without concrete information on how it will work for a budget which the Deputy Chief Executive has described as having nothing to do with finance or cost savings. Why are we doing this? With respect to the recent letters of support you have received, I had a long conversation with Ed Clark of the Virginia Wildlife Centre about the proposal. He thinks our APPO are actually people police who might work with wildlife sometimes.

[01:23:38] From the conversation, it was very clear he does not realise that they are also animal control officers trained to work with pets, their owners, and wildlife, and that he doesn't realize that many APPO have actually voluntarily completed the online courses provided by the wildlife centers in Virginia on top of their ACO training. This confusion over what our APPO are and do is understandable because animal control officer is the more common term, not animal protection police. And to illustrate this fact, the Wildlife Center recently posted an event that they had with Albemarle County about wildlife on social media

[01:24:13] praising the work of the Albemarle Animal Control Officers. And like most counties in Virginia, these animal control officers are sworn officers of the law and work for the Albemarle Police Department. In Fairfax, they would be called APPO. To address the letter from the Wildlife Rescue League and to clarify some data, which incidentally comes from a data analyst, statistician, and mathematical modeler, Fairfax County deals with more wildlife than any other county in Virginia.

[01:24:43] This is from VDACS. They rank first, while Arlington ranks fourth, and Loudoun ranks seventh. The higher wildlife rehabilitation rates in Loudoun and Arlington, cited by the Wildlife Rescue Lead, could be a reflection of closer proximity to a wildlife hospital, or whether they deal primarily with smaller animals, which are easy to find rehabbers for. But either way, this is not a good metric. Fairfax County has, on the other hand, higher wildlife reunification and release rates.

[01:25:10] This does matter. Baby animals are better off not going to a rehabber. They should be reunited with their parents if at all possible and the APPO coach members of the public on how to do this. Oftentimes, and I know this from personal experience, injured adult animals will recover better in the wild than if they have to go through the stress and shock of being brought to a rehabilitation centre, or in this case actually an individual rehabber. But for those that can be helped, then the APPO already work

with vets and rehabbers to save them. And if we really have to go there, the euthanasia rates are actually higher in Loudoun and Prince William than in

[01:25:45] Fairfax, according to VDAX. It is the reunification and release rates that are an important metric for wildlife work. They are the ultimate objective for every rehabber. Fairfax County Animal Protection police officers deliver on this metric better than any other county. I am also not surprised that the Animal Welfare League of Arlington, who I also work with, supports the proposal because they have civilian ACO, and it works well for them. However, they do not provide the range of services that we have for wildlife in Fairfax County. For example, Arlington are struggling to establish a deer management plan, and the Animal Welfare League of Arlington

[01:26:21] publicly supports deer sterilisation, which costs between $1,000 and $2,000 per doe. In addition, their ACO, because they are civilians, cannot carry firearms. There's a Virginia statute that is relevant to that. And so they cannot do on-the-spot euthanasia of larger injured animals such as deer who have been hit by a car or for rabbit animals. Whereas our APPO can euthanise these animals on the spot and reduce the time they have to suffer, while Arlington ACO must call the police and wait. This also takes police officers away from their roles as people police and dissipates Arlington County's police resources.

[01:27:00] 40% of wildlife euthanasia in Fairfax County is carried out by firearm. The rest is carried out using chemical euthanasia and both are done on the spot in Fairfax County, which is a very important consideration for wildlife welfare. By comparison, in Arlington, injured animals must make the journey to their office to be euthanised chemically.

[01:27:20] And this doesn't work when the offices are closed. Last Friday, I was given a baby squirrel battling massive infected wounds from a member of the public. She had septicemia. and started to have seizures. There was no hope. She was going to die slowly and in pain. I couldn't get a vet. However, an APPO who's actually heading home after a long shift turned her van around and came back to euthanise this little suffering animal for me. Modelling what another county does and trying to apply it to what we have, removes some of the valuable abilities and services our APPO provides and sends us backwards, not forwards. And finally, I'd like

[01:27:56] to end with the APPO themselves. They are people, not widgets to be used or tossed as needed, and highly skilled. Through this entire process, I have not heard anyone say anything bad about them. In fact, the opposite. They've been consistently praised for the quality of their work, their experience, and their expertise by the chief of police, by rehabbers, by the public, including pet owners, and by the caretakers who volunteer at the shelter. They worked well and consistently well with Dr. Diveny, the longest-serving shelter director. So they have a history of good collaboration, and she supports the bifurcated system and the APPO. Actually, she helped create it. Michelle Welsh, head of the Animal Law Office under the Attorney General, holds the APPO in high

[01:28:36] regard and supports their retention. They have received national and international praise for the work that they do. This positive feedback on the Animal Protection Police and their work is in stark contrast to the opening statements of the proposal, and this calls into question the rationale underlying the changes being proposed. So Rewild Nova and its multiple independent rehabbers, caregivers, transporters and apprentices who signed onto our letters oppose this proposal so too do many important conservation organizations we support the current

[01:29:10] bifurcated system as it protects the integrity and accountability of the different missions for wildlife and pets and we believe that Fairfax County in having created the APPO has created the perfect hybrid officer capable of working safely in dangerous or criminal situations while also serving our community their pets our livestock and our wildlife so we request that this part of the budget and the proposal it supports be withdrawn from consideration thank you thank you miss thorpe and i just want to make sure i can verify uh you also said that speaker number 30 linda wilkerson yielded her time to you right yes she did excellent thank you very much

[01:29:50] speaker number 21 is how am i have we collected we are connected um how can you hear me yes can you hear me yes we can welcome the floor is yours uh thank you at first i would like to thank you the board, everybody from the board for your services and allow me to testify today.

[01:30:19] I live in Springfield, Virginia for more than 13 years and today I would like to ask to have to stop the increase of the past. I'm sorry that I don't speak English very well And I'm sorry if you don't understand me.

[01:30:46] I don't have a lot of money, and I would like to ask you to stop the tax increase. If not, then would you have a program that exames the people that have low income like me?

[01:31:06] And thank you again, and you all have a nice day. Bye-bye. Thank you very much, Howe, and we understood you very clearly. Thank you for calling in. Speaker number 22, I believe, is canceled, but let me verify Deborah Tisler. Okay.

[01:31:27] Speaker number 23, Curtis Clinton. Is Mr. Clinton here? Okay. If you could come on down to be followed by Roxanna Henriquez, Adrian White, who I also believe is canceled, and Jerry Peters. If you all could be ready, come on down close and be ready to testify.

[01:31:47] for us, please. This is Speaker number 23, Curtis Clinton. Welcome. Thank you, Chairman. Thank you,

[01:32:22] Board. I do have this to help with my time. In addition to that, I have some handouts that I'd like to present to the center, the right, and left field, if somebody would be kind enough to

[01:32:34] share. Good afternoon. Nearly eight years ago, I spoke before this body on ad hoc police

[01:33:09] practice his review. And at the time, I weighed in with some advice at 365 pounds. Today, I am with slimmer counsel weighing in at 243 pounds. I had a bump in the road in December, surgery, which got me from 190 to 243. I understand that you have many bumps in the road. I ask that you look at speed tables. I will speak to three different things today, only because they do reflect most of us. So I speak to the spirit and vitality of Fairfax County. I think we may be in

[01:33:46] midlife or nearing retirement, and accordingly, we need to plan for that. We do need to maintain everything that we have within the county. For instance, we need to survive. So one, we don't take vacations. We hold our cars for 10 years. We take vacations in our backyard, which is a certified wildlife habitat and a Roroban sanctuary. Speaking to that in a few minutes, Dealing with the proposed tax rate, a real estate tax rate, I'd like you to consider the fact that the assessment process is an avatar for that very thing.

[01:34:21] So for the last couple of years, we've had a rate of 1.11, presently possibly being proposed at 1.14. Our real estate taxes go up $300 to $400 every year. We manage, but we manage with some difficulty.

[01:34:37] Having been a military veteran, disabled, and a senior, we still manage, but others cannot. So I ask that you consider those realms of possibilities that would reduce our budget constraints, our expenditures.

[01:34:54] I'd like to speak to another situation. Each Fairfax agency department entity needs to address their recapture of funds exercised for legal and poor performance. Failed internal audit of administrative shortfall acknowledgments and avoidance and not giving proper eye to performance.

[01:35:15] One indication of this was years ago when the Fairfax County School Board authorized changes in textbooks. One principal in Reston stood up to say that these textbooks would dumb down the education then being provided to all the grades, including GT.

[01:35:31] Recently, we've had a situation with the national merit issue, which cost us $9.2 million. I hope that the school system, Fairfax County school system, can recapture that money instead of imposing it upon the burdens of all of us. Getting to this recent article about APPOs, the shelters and wildlife habitat, I've been with Rescue, Wildlife Rescue League, Great Dane Rescue.

[01:35:58] I've been a rehabilitator. I have tried for the last 12 years with Diane Waller and Francis in the gaming department to, I'm sorry, I guess I missed. My timer here. I have tried to initiate a cadre recruitment system to alleviate that which will fall upon the APPOs and ultimately the shelters.

[01:36:21] This is something that's not being considered. Let me help in this regard. I've been a rehabilitator. The people that I've worked with have passed on or have come down with Lyme disease and it can be of no major impact. I am short of certification. I need a three and a four. Please help me to have some or pave the road with Richmond Gaming Department so as to alleviate this other problem that we're now speaking of.

[01:36:45] Thank you for your time. Appreciate your effort. Good holidays to all. Thank you, Mr. Clinton. Appreciate that. Speaker number 24, Roxana Henriquez, to be followed by Adrian White, Jerry Peters, Jessica McElmore. If I called your name, please be down close so that we're ready to receive your testimony.

[01:37:06] And we are now on speaker number 24, Roxana Henriquez. Welcome. Thank you. Hello, my name is Roxana. I'm a leader with the new majority of Virginia. I have lived in Herrington for 20 years.

[01:37:23] Today, I represent the working class families that spend more than 70% of their income on paying rent. We stop buying food and medicine in order to provide a shelter for ourselves and not be displaced.

[01:37:42] Rent is increased. The rent increase is uncontrollable. The minimum wage are not raising. We are a working class community, and we are here to advocate to increase the housing budget for the creation of units for families that earn less than 40% of the area median income without having any restriction of immigration status.

[01:38:19] We need $10 million in the budget for housing vouchers program that will go to the working class families. We want to stay in our homes and not to be displaced.

[01:38:37] And this program will be accessible to everyone regarding their immigration status or race or urgent. We ask for a commitment to create a task force for tenants from the community and the housing

department so that together we can build a program requirement and promote the best fair housing policies and practices and educate ourselves about our fair housing rights.

[01:39:12] since they asked for too many requirements in the working-class community that earn a minimum wage cannot meet. Thank you.

[01:39:27] Thank you very much for your testimony. Let me ask you, Speaker, I'm going to call Speaker 25, Adrienne White. I know she called to cancel, but I just want to verify. Speaker number 26, Jerry Peters, is here. Welcome. While Jerry is coming down, we have Speaker 27, Jessica McElmore, to be followed by Samantha Duvall and Sinclair Stewart.

[01:39:51] If you are here, please be ready to testify. Mr. Peters, welcome. Thank you, Chairman McKay, District Supervisors, and County Executive Hill for the opportunity to comment on the budget proposal that would consolidate animal control and animal sheltering within the Department of Animal Sheltering.

[01:40:07] My name is Jerry Peters. I am the founding director of Green Fire. That's two words, and there's an I in fire, not an A. Green Fire is a 501c3 nonprofit corporation that I organized in Fairfax County in 2011.

[01:40:25] Our mission is to restore wildlife habitat. Our slogan is healthy forests, healthy wildlife, healthy people. The theme of what I'm going to say today is, here we go again. Until 1999, animal control officers and the animal shelter were together.

[01:40:43] in an independent agency. That did not work well, it seems. I wasn't there, but it was changed. So the both were reorganized into the police department. That did not work well either, apparently. So in 2016, after a thorough analysis, the animal shelter was reorganized as an independent agency, and animal control officers were made animal protection police officers in accordance with a new state law at the time, and they remained in the police department. I note that the 2016 analysis described the differences between animal shelter management and animal

[01:41:21] control was a cultural gap, cultural divide, or philosophical differences. I'm going to give it a new name, but in a minute. Now it is proposed to return to 1999 with animal control officers and animal shelter recombined in an independent agency. It's been, what, 25 years ago. We're back to it. I was not paying full attention myself during the 1999 or 2016 reorganizations, but I

[01:41:58] suspect that a key reason for them was what I call conflict of ethics. What I mean by that is that pets and farm animals are treated differently than wild animals based on different philosophies.

[01:42:15] And this is just that it works that way. We do have different approaches to how we deal domestic and wild animals. Animal rights concerns are appropriate for pets and farm animals. The treatment of these domestic animals is governed by state law under the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. There is scant or no attention to domestic animals' impacts on biodiversity or on our ecosystems within those laws and regulations. I don't oppose that. However,

[01:42:50] wildlife conservation is governed by state law, excuse me, and regulated by the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, a totally different agency. The philosophical basis for those laws is protection of threatening the nature of species, managing populations of game animals and fur bearers, controlling pest species, and to me most important, protection of ecosystems that all wild animals depend on. Two different philosophies. My concern with the proposed consolidation

[01:43:23] is that neither the advertised budget request, published answers to questions asked by the public, nor the public statements of proponents of the consolidation showed any interest in wildlife conservation principles or practices. It just weren't mentioned. Yet the 33 animal protection police officers deal on a daily basis with wildlife concerns. I don't know why wildlife was not even discussed in the consolidation proposal. By approving the animal services consolidation

[01:44:02] as proposed, the board supervisor will be preserving the conflict of ethics that has roiled these public functions for more than two decades. It goes on. I request that you table the consolidation until this conflict of ethics is addressed and resolved thoroughly and with public input. Leaving it all, leaving all these issues to be considered in caps by animal rights

[01:44:37] proponents after you've approved the consolidation is not responsive to many concerned citizens like myself who advocate for a healthy urban forest and for biodiversity in our county. I suggest that we, if we must consolidate animal services now, one that we do it right and that we take whatever time is needed to resolve the conflict of interest, or we'll be doing it again in a few years.

[01:45:09] Thank you for your time. Thank you, Jerry. Speaker number 27 is Jessica McElmore. Is speaker number 27 here, Jessica McElmore? See Jessica McElmore. Ah, she's a call in. Do we have her on the line? Ah, okay. Ms. McElmore, can you hear me? Yes, sir. Okay, welcome. The floor is yours. Thank you, sir. Hello, my name is Jessica McElmore. I have been an animal protection police officer with Fairfax County for over 17 years. I'm speaking as an individual and not on behalf of the police department. I apologize I'm not there to attend today's meeting in person due to being out on

[01:45:47] maternity leave. I'm speaking today to oppose the proposal to consolidate animal services. For as long as I can remember I have loved all types of animals. I grew up with dogs and cats of course but I also remember helping various animals including wildlife throughout my childhood so it came natural that I would make a career out of what I loved most helping animals. I attended college and began my career as a certified veterinary assistant. I worked in a hospital with both domestic and exotic pets for six years. I learned firsthand how to identify various illnesses, common treatment methods, proper handling techniques, emergency care, and more.

[01:46:24] But working at the hospital, I enjoyed it, but I knew I wanted to do more. I watched a television show on Animal Planet called Animal Precinct. This show follows agents of the New York City ASPCA, who were solely dedicated to investigating crimes against animals. I was immediately intrigued and knew I'd found my calling. Shortly thereafter, I applied and was hired as a humane law enforcement officer by the Washington Humane Society in Washington, D.C., now known as the Humane Rescue Alliance. I was a civilian. I wore a polo shirt and BDU pants. I was given a can of pepper spray and a cell phone. I did not receive any formal training. I did not attend a single class or

[01:47:03] receive any type of certification. I was never taught about applicable laws, arrest procedures, report writing, courtroom testimony, self-defense, and more. I simply rode around with another officer for a few shifts before I began driving my 1980-something Astrovan with plastic airline crates in the back by myself. I quickly learned that we relied heavily on local law enforcement and animal calls were not their priority. One case I worked required local law enforcement to execute a search warrant, something I did not have the authority to do as a civilian.

[01:47:33] After waiting several hours for their assistance, I again realized I wanted to do more. That's when I found Fairfax County, the only local jurisdiction where I could have the best of both worlds. A

passion for helping animals and the legal authority to be able to do it. I was hired and completed the police academy where I received all the proper training to be able to do my job and do it right.

[01:47:54] Today, 17 years later, I routinely obtain arrest warrants, including felony warrants. I routinely write and execute search warrants. I successfully prepared cases and testify in court, and so much more. Sadly, Animal Precinct stopped airing in 2008, and interestingly enough, in 2014, the ASPCA turned over their investigations to the New York City Police Department after seeing the need for fully sworn law enforcement.

[01:48:17] Accepting the current proposal would mean we are taking several steps back, becoming civilians again. We have fought so hard over recent years to be the best as law enforcement officers. We are the gold standard because of the incredible training that we received to be able to do our job to the absolute best of our ability.

[01:48:32] Thank you for your time and consideration. Thank you very much. We are now on speaker number 28, Samantha Duvall, to be followed by Sinclair Stewart, to be followed by, I hope I'm reading this right, Dino Sayos.

[01:48:54] Welcome, Ms. Duvall. Hi. Good afternoon. My name is Samantha Duvall, and I have been an administrative assistant for the Animal Protection Police for the last four and a half years and i'm here today speaking as an individual for the last eight months i have sat in many meetings both public and employee specific regarding the proposal consolidation model i have heard a panel of people who can praise the good work of our app in the same breath that say that they say need to be civilianized because they just don't care enough and their model is enforcement based this same panel has not taken the time to even learn what it is that these officers do when they are out in the community. One panel

[01:49:31] member admitted in a town hall that he has never even spoken to an animal protection police officer, yet they are the only voices that the public has heard up until now. As a civilian employee who spends my entire workday with these great officers, who sees and reads their great work every day, I am both saddened and appalled by these public statements. I am disappointed in those who speak in favor of the consolidation to the board and to the community but have never actually spoken to these officers gone on a ride-along or looked beyond their

[01:50:06] preconceived notions based on one-sided information and yet despite all of this our APP come in every day and serve their community to the fullest extent ensuring the safety of both the animals and people of Fairfax County I don't come today with only four years of experience here with these officers but a total of over 20 years of animal related work experience. Almost half of that was spent working in customer service as a customer service rep in 24-hour emergency hospitals, veterinary hospitals in neighboring jurisdictions. Jurisdictions that the consolidation proposal says Fairfax

[01:50:43] should try to emulate. Jurisdictions where they do not dispatch their ACOs for a stray dog because they just don't have an officer in the area. Jurisdictions where an injured and suffering deer who's been hit by a car must wait for up to three hours to be humanely euthanized because this is a task left to patrol officers due to the acos being unarmed and let's face it that's not a priority call for a patrol officer when speaking to friends and former colleagues who work in fairfax county and many of these neighboring jurisdictions it has always been the collective

[01:51:17] belief the fairfax county app are the most active and proactive officers that northern virginia has to offer. These neighboring ACOs have been applied, the neighboring ACOs have even applied to work in Fairfax as APPs. But when told in the hiring process recently that they might be civilianized and dropped back down to ACOs, they chose not to join the ranks of APP. How it can be said in the consolidation proposal that civilianizing RAR officers would bring more people who would rather be ACOs is clearly shown to not be true by this. One last important item to add

[01:51:54] before wrapping it up. Despite the shelter's intake being still less, I'm almost done, still less than the 2019 intake and with a brand new beautiful secondary shelter, there is still a two to four week wait time for an owner surrender. While the shelter does say they do make exceptions, ABP regularly responds for owner surrenders in the field because someone was denied the ability to bring their pets to the shelter. These cases often involved aggressive animals, sick and injured animals and even community members who are terminally ill and can no longer take care of

[01:52:30] them. These APPs are able to provide this service to the community because they operate outside of shelter policy and follow the FCPD policy to maintain safety and welfare of the community and of Fairfax County. I know you all have received a lot of information over the last several months so I will not repeat the numerous ways in which APP are more valuable with their academy training sworn status and the fcpd required continued education for both procedure and safety thank you mr vall i need i need to get you to wrap up i gotta be fair to everyone very quickly please very quickly so to end i will end with this statements of the gold standard and

[01:53:07] industry best practices have been key phrases repeated by both sides since this proposal became public it is my hope that the board will continue to do as they have always done pushing Fairfax County not to match industry best practices, but to set them. I believe this is done through the bifurcated model, so both sides are finally given the tools that they need and were recommended in the 2016 decision to work together to provide top-notch safety while protecting the welfare of people and animals within the community to the highest of standards.

[01:53:36] Thank you very much. Speaker number 29 is Sinclair Stewart. And Mr. Stewart will be followed by Dino Sayos, Larry Ferguson, Joanne Walton. Welcome, Mr. Stewart.

[01:53:55] My wife and I are retired and have been for many, many years. We have a home in Fairfax, which we'll be celebrating having been in for nearly 50 years and two years from now. As you know, property values on homes have gone up and continue to go up, which is nice.

[01:54:17] It's nice if you're going to sell your home, but if you want to continue to live in your home like we want to, it's bad. Why? Because property taxes go up. Every time the value of the property goes up, it goes up. But if you increase the property rate as well as the property assessments, then it's going to be double whammy for us who are on fixed incomes or have limited incomes.

[01:54:43] Luckily, we're probably better off than many because we spend a lot of money every year trying to keep our place nice which has double whammies also because it means that the property value of the property is increased because the property is kept nice my wife spends a lot of time in the house decorating and in the yard planting flowers especially this time of year we love sitting out on the patio and looking at all the flowers you get to see at this time of year we love our home we love our neighbors we love everything now in our subdivision within walking

[01:55:19] distance, there are three former neighbors of ours. Actually, they're still neighbors of ours whose husbands have died in the last year or two. Their wives are still living there. I hope that the board likes senior citizens. I hope that there's no one on this board who wants to get rid of all the senior citizens. As already has been mentioned, it's so much cheaper to move other places. We have been encouraged to sell our home and move other places. We like our home.

[01:55:49] we like our neighbors we like our friends now if all your senior citizens move all your people with children are not going to get free babysitters anymore so that is going to be something that's going to be an extra burden on their shoulders and we like babysitting our children and taking care of their dogs and other things so i'm hoping that you will look at some sort of situation where you can control the increases in property taxes for people who are senior citizens

[01:56:21] So seniors can continue to live in this community and continue to live in their homes and not be forced to sell. And by having raising not only, we can't stop the property values going up, but you can stop increasing the cost of the rate at which properties is assessed.

[01:56:45] So that's my comment, and I hope you'll look into it. Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Stewart. Our next speaker is Dino Sios. I think I'm reading the handwriting correctly. Correct me if I'm wrong, though. Close.

[01:57:02] It's a Greek, Dino. All right, excellent. My name is Dino Sios. My full name is Constantinos. It's a Greek Roman name, the first name. I'm living here in Fairfax close to 30 years.

[01:57:20] I'm living primarily in a restaurant at Tysons. I used to live in Tysons because I used to have a condo. I turned to a rental. Presently, I live in Ruston. My Fairfax representative, Mr. Walker, came into my house.

[01:57:43] Thank you very much. I appreciate all your time because we have some issues with the drainage, you know. But I don't come in to talk with the drainage. I come in to talk with some other things, you know. I'm a registered professional engineer.

[01:57:59] Presently, I'm working by myself. I have a small company. I retired for 35 years for the Department of Defense. And also, I used to work for Lucky Martin. I know Lucky Martin, he participated and he promised a lot of support on the affordable housing down in Tysons.

[01:58:23] And I'm very much impressed. The other thing that I was talking about is about the Tysons and Affordable Care and a special project. I call this a special project.

[01:58:41] But by the way, on the arresting, primarily I was concerned about the county, it's not the county, it's actually the Fairfax Community Center.

[01:58:58] I'm 72 years old and I like to exercise and I like to go to the community center and right now the restaurant association they say if you like to use the swimming pools it's free I like to suggest let's see senior citizens to have a free utilize the human pulse. We pay a special

[01:59:35] assessment, you know. For this I think that's very reasonable. Now, about in Tyson's we pay a special assessment is for the roads. We thought that it was about five years to get off the special assessment.

[01:59:54] I think that by now it's five years and I suggest let's, because many like Borough, they spend a lot of money and they are going to put a pharmacy, they are going to put a rest home down there in this

front of my unit, you know, in Greensboro.

[02:00:14] From this reason, I think it's enough. Let's take care about these special assessments. Now, the other thing that I was talking about, it's about the that I'm right now, actually, enough time and I came to work many non-salary jobs.

[02:00:44] For example, I work with a restaurant at the Rotunda Association and I work in facility committees. We have a lot of enhancements. I participate in facility committees. I try to save money. Now, I like to do this also in the restaurant.

[02:01:02] Right now that we have a special project, we move the library to one place to the other place. And I have a request to be a member. This way I'm a professional engineer.

[02:01:20] I'm an electrical, computer, systems and structures. From this reason it's a free, it's a free labor. Therefore, I like Tharis to agree that the affordable housing is needed.

[02:01:41] And I know that you suggest to have enticements. Also, enticements, there's going to be some other structures like the thing that you are going to gamble.

[02:02:04] And we are going to have a Fort Morehouse in here and the other organizations that are going to be in front of this. I hope that they are not going to approve this as a part of the gambling place.

[02:02:30] And very far is the Spring Elementary School. Thank you very much, Dino. You know, I need to have you wrap up. Your time expired a while ago, but... By the way, the point that I try to make, sir, is this, that I'm a person that I like to work with the county and to save money.

[02:02:50] Now, as a part of the affordable housing, I feel very skeptical because if you are going to put affordable housing down in Tysons, I think that you are going to increase as a part of a lot of the...

[02:03:10] As a part of the transportation, and we are going to have a lot of transportation problems. Thank you. Thank you very much. I know that you are going to have another affordable housing down in Lee. Right. Thank you for your testimony. I think that's better to think about it, Nino, about this.

[02:03:27] Thank you for your testimony. Our next speaker is Larry Ferguson, to be followed by Joanne Walton. Welcome, Mr. Ferguson. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Board of Supervisors.

[02:03:45] I'm here to represent the St. Vincent de Paul Society and all the people that we help in Fairfax County. For those who don't know us, the St. Vincent de Paul Society is an international organization. It's Catholic-associated, and it also has a major national office in St. Louis, and there are 4,000 individual conferences around the country.

[02:04:07] Fairfax County has four conferences. I'm the president of the council, the council level, which is one level above the conference level for the Diocese of Arlington, which has 11 conferences around all of Northern Virginia. As I mentioned, four are in Fairfax County, Vienna, Route 1 Corridor, Chantilly, and Annandale.

[02:04:34] So we're covering a fair amount of area in Fairfax County. And the main thing that we do is provide direct rent, utility, and food assistance to the poor. The whole mission of the St. Vincent Paul Society is services to the poor. So the main topic of my talk today is all about eviction, prevention, and homelessness prevention, because that's what we're involved in quite a bit.

[02:05:00] Each of these conferences has a helpline. People call the helpline on a regular basis, asking for help with their rent. Typically, I think somewhere around 70% to 80% of the requests we get are for rent assistance. We do a lot of coordination with Coordinated Services Planning in the county.

[02:05:24] They call us. They refer people to us all the time from their cases. We're on their list of people who can contribute to the cases, the amount of money they're trying to raise. And we refer people to them, but only when we get a case that is too big for us to handle by ourselves.

[02:05:40] Every conference has a limit. Typically, it's $500 or $600 per household per year. So when someone comes in asking for $2,500 to pay their rent or back rent, we get a hold of Coordinated Services, Ask them to call Coordinated Services and tell them that we'll pledge our peace if they can come up with the rest.

[02:05:59] One of the reasons I'm here today, though, is Coordinated Services, some of our friends or neighbors, we call them, they call them clients, have called Coordinated Services and are getting the response that they don't have any money. And then they refer them to organizations like ours and others.

[02:06:16] By the way, we collaborate not just with each other to twin, as we call it, to raise more money among the conferences, but also with local other charity organizations like the, you know, my area, which is Route 1 Corridor, Aldersgate Methodist Church, other Catholic churches that don't have St. Vincent de Paul's associated with them to come up with enough without having to go to Coordinated Services.

[02:06:39] But I have come to understand just recently that Coordinated Services is making this statement, or the county is making this statement, that they have enough money to handle all eviction prevention cases that come to them that qualify under the ERA program. Now, I've looked very carefully at those qualifications, and almost everybody we help would qualify for those.

[02:07:00] So our issue, I guess, is we would conserve our funds, which, by the way, in the last 12 months, we've provided $450,000 in direct rent assistance to landlords, $500 approximately average per household.

[02:07:20] So that's about 900 different households. But did we really need to do that is the question. Does coordinated services, does the county have what they say they have? So as I'm going through the requirements on your website, it actually also makes the statement, we have all the money we need to handle all the cases we believe we're going to have.

[02:07:42] So if we just said, we're not going to give you anything, Fairfax County has it all, then we can use our money to handle cases that don't meet your requirements. For instance, we had somebody call our conference the other day, just moved here from Texas. Hispanic immigrants. The husband has already been detained. Three children living in somebody's basement needed $1,500 because that's what he's, they're being charged for rent. Normally we wouldn't help that kind of a person because we want to know that there's some idea they're going to be okay the following month and we're getting them over a

[02:08:20] crisis this month. She had no idea where she was going the next several months, but we can make exceptions all the time because we run our own world. So we gave them $600. So it's really kind of a budget execution question from that standpoint. Can we just refer them and use our money for things they don't handle, which is a lot. And then we'd have more money for that kind of thing. The other thing I just wanted to say in general, if the ERA is going to expire or get

[02:08:56] reduced because it's all tied to the COVID crisis. I'm encouraging you as a board to maintain a level that's high enough to handle what you believe really are all the cases in Fairfax County to prevent eviction and homelessness because we run into it all the time and the bulk of our money goes into that purpose. So please maintain that and intervene, if you would, with coordinated services or the housing office to make sure that they're not turning anybody away. One thing they get from us is very rapid action somebody comes to us and we're going to help them three or four

[02:09:34] days after they've made the call to our health plan their landlord has the money thank you for your time thank you uh very much for your testimony mr ferguson and and you have some things we'll be following up on so i appreciate your time thank you uh finally i have uh joanne walton joanne is here and is there anyone else present who has not already spoken that wishes to testify okay I need anyone else who has not spoken who wishes to testify to come down here and sign in with the clerk for me welcome miss Walton good afternoon

[02:10:09] chairman McKay board members and staff my name is Joanne Walton I'm here today speaking as an individual I am an FCPS special education teacher as well as the parent of an FCPS student I was lobbying at the General Assembly in February for increased school funding at the state level because as we all know the state has been seriously underfunding us since 2008. So I actually got a chance to meet with Vivian Watts and she told me that she had championed the changing of the meals tax law which I had somehow missed and now it's

[02:10:46] not necessary for us to vote on it any longer and that you the board are able to implement it directly i'm sure there's obviously multiple steps but so i'm here today to implore you to please institute the meals tax to help fund the six percent raise for our school staff i've lived here for 27 years and the refrain over and over from the board has been that the state limits the ways that we can raise our tax revenues so now we have this opportunity right to diversify our tax revenue by implementing the meals tax. And from what I can remember from the last time this was

[02:11:26] brought up, I believe it was about 40% of the meals tax revenue that would come from non-Fairfax County residents, from people that come from other counties or other states or wherever, and actually eat here. I don't have to tell you what conditions are like in our schools.

[02:11:43] It's pretty well known statewide, nationwide, and definitely here in Fairfax, not just special ed teachers we're hemorrhaging all school staff bus drivers general ed teachers every position it's already an impossible job but trying to do it without enough staff is actually literally against the law so i was really shocked and alarmed recently to see the chart showing how we rank and our teacher pay compared to the surrounding counties and to see us really close to the bottom almost to the bottom is frankly quite alarming quite concerning many surrounding counties have

[02:12:20] a meals tax and people are still dining out there and my apologies I wasn't able to do my homework ahead of time to like look into it I did start googling around and there definitely are several counties I was actually told Richmond's meals tax is you might be aware 13 percent which I was like well I don't want that much four percent that's fine that's just fine okay so we're not asking for the moon but I'm just here to ask that you enact the meals tax so that we can pay our school staff a living wage um thank you very much and you're done i guess right so thank you so much for your

[02:12:56] time no i'm not the last one oh no sorry i thought it was the last one thank you thank you very much um i next have up say is it sarah roldez okay what roblas okay welcome good evening chairman

mckay and supervisors my name is sarah roblas and i'm both a teacher and homeowner in fairfax County. I've lived in this county my entire life. I attended FCPS schools as a child and now have proudly served as a teacher for the past 11 years. I'm speaking to you all tonight to urge you to fully fund our schools. I was disheartened to hear that members of this board are considering

[02:13:36] not supporting our schools by refusing to fully fund the budget which Dr. Reed presented. I was particularly disappointed in this by my own district supervisor, Mr. Stork, as he has for many years supported previous budgets. Fairfax County has had the reputation of being one of the best school districts in the state of Virginia.

[02:13:56] In order to maintain that reputation, we need to continue to maintain a highly qualified workforce, maintain our facilities, and have the funds to provide students with a world-class education. All of these things take money. We're in the middle of a teacher shortage.

[02:14:14] Schools cannot fill positions and have to hire long-term substitutes or even move staff members from other positions to fill essential roles. Schools cannot be built fast enough for our growing student population. My own school has two full grade levels out in trailers.

[02:14:32] I'm most likely going to be moved to a trailer next year and have for the past two years been told that I'm going to be in a trailer. So we'll see what next year brings. This is not providing a world-class education for our students, having them live in what is called temporary classrooms they're not temporary some of these trailers are 15 years or older like they're not going away anytime soon and the the the schedule for um renovation is decades long decades um so how do we do this um we fund our funding mainly

[02:15:11] comes from taxes right property taxes um the proposed budget has our property taxes going in an increase sure um to i believe it was one dollar and thirteen and a half cents per 100 dollars of assessed value um while that is an increase from last year it is not the highest it has been in this county um back in 2021 we were at one dollar and fourteen cents per 100 of assessed value also in 2020 it was as high as a dollar and 15 cents per 100 dollars of assessed

[02:15:47] value so this isn't really a huge jump it's more of a return to where we were before finally i'd like to talk about salary as the previous speaker spoke to the proposed budget for the fairfax county schools includes a six percent raise for staff just last year this board increased their own salaries by, as the Washington Post reported, by about 30%.

[02:16:16] We're asking for a 6% raise for teachers and staff. I don't think that's unreasonable when your own salaries were increased by five times that percentage. So please show our families, our students, our staff that you care about our schools.

[02:16:34] Please vote yes to fully fund the budget that Dr. Reed proposed. Thank you. Thank you very much. Is there anyone else present who would like to testify? Anyone else present? Let me ask the clerk if we have any callers on the line.

[02:16:50] We do. We have four callers on the line. The first one will be Darcy Maland speaking as an individual. Darcy Maland. Okay. Can you hear me, Darcy? Welcome. Yes. Can you hear me? We do. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and the board, for the opportunity to speak to you today.

[02:17:08] I appreciate your dedication to public service and promoting civil engagement. I'm calling in as an FCPS mom who is so proud to live in Fairfax County. Just given today's media environment, which encourages politics over transparency and search algorithms over access to information, I can only share my perspectives based on my own observations and intuition.

[02:17:32] Echoing Mr. Stewart's comments, I see my real estate taxes only increasing, but there's no transparency of which programs worked and which ones were canceled. I think there's a missed opportunity that the board should explore. Start evaluating programs for ROI and share the lessons learned with the entire community.

[02:17:53] I think that is true growth in building trust. Number two, education is a huge budget expense. County spend went from $3.27 billion in 2021 to $3.46 billion in 2023. How rigorous is your oversight and accountability of the school board?

[02:18:10] Did you know the school board used a contractor to create their 2030 strategic plan? Don't you think they could have done that in-house? Are you aware that a third-party contractors are collecting data on our kids through social-emotional learning surveys throughout the year?

[02:18:26] Not all kids require SEL services. Let's save money and have the opt-in, not opt-out program. Have you dug deeper into Dr. Reed's request for $15 million for equitable access literacy plan?

[02:18:43] which is justice-centered and identity-affirming. What does that even mean? How do you measure ROI on something like that? Did you know the county spent money on graphic novels for kids instead of using real books to teach reading comprehension?

[02:18:59] Is that progress? Is that the best use of county educational spend? I'm just simply asking. And then finally, number three, let's give teachers more pay. I totally agree with the previous caller or speaker.

[02:19:15] Let's focus on paying our teachers more money, but then let's reevaluate the county's strategic climate plan. Do we really need electric buses for $1.7 million or $3.2 million for joint environmental passports?

[02:19:31] What are they doing? What's the ROI? I just simply want you to invite the community to weigh in on the zero emission energy strategy. Let's set realistic emission targets. Let's prioritize the energy contacting spend.

[02:19:47] Invite diversity of thought to ensure energy planning is truly inclusive. And just in summary, as a Fairfax voter, I want the FCPS budget transparency. I want rigorous evaluation of all the school board programs and figure out which ones we need to prioritize so we can pay our teachers.

[02:20:08] And finally, I just want accountability. a program doesn't work that's fine just trust your constituency we will support you just be honest and just admit when programs are just not working let's divert the money to something else anyway thank you for the opportunity to speak thank you very much uh and we have did you say two more callers oh we have two more maybe three more our next caller is diane burns speaking as an individual Diane Burns, can you hear me okay?

[02:20:40] I can hear you clearly. Can you hear me? We can. Welcome. Thank you very much, Chairman McCain and members of the Board of Supervisors. As mentioned, my name is Diane Burns, and I'm a citizen who lives in Fairfax County and Fairfax Station in particular.

[02:20:57] And I wanted to talk with you just briefly about the plans to increase the fees at the senior centers from $48 to $75. I'd like you to cancel those fees, that fee increase would only generate $174,000, but it would impact so many seniors who have paid taxes all of their lives and longer than others in the county.

[02:21:24] So the rationale about the fact that it hasn't been increased ever doesn't really link well to a need to increase those fees. So I request that those fees be frozen. You know, Medicaid pays for some of the fees for those who are below the poverty line or below $39,000 in terms of their income.

[02:21:46] But there are others in the centers who make more than that. And I would say that $40,000 a year, Fairfax County, is still not that much money. It's so important to avoid or lessen, you know, cognitive decline, which really cost the community far more than $174,000.

[02:22:07] And as I understand it, the county has a budget surplus, and I request that you seek that funding from the budget surplus as opposed to from increasing the fees. NIH's National Institute on Aging says that interaction, much interaction, games, and so forth, and exercise are so vital to lowering possibilities for cognitive impairment.

[02:22:36] And so I just ask that you please freeze these fees. 13.4% of Fairfax County residents are equal to or over 65 years of age. It doesn't sound like much playing games and the interaction amongst each other, but it's so vital to the people live in fairfax county it makes fairfax county a great place to live and will allow for more people to age in place and live a successful life uh thank you very much thank you very much uh for

[02:23:12] your testimony and we have another caller yes we have uh kathleen brown who is speaking on behalf of the ravenwood citizens association kathleen brown can you hear me okay kathleen yes i can welcome the floor is yours thank you so much good afternoon chairman mckay and members of the board And I speak today not only as president of the Ravenwood Citizens Association in the Seven Corners area, but as a member of the task force to keep vacuum leaf collections, to urge you to reconsider the staff proposal to permanently discontinue the vacuum leaf service after this upcoming season.

[02:23:46] Instead, I encourage you to both continue and reform this valued nearly 60-year service to residents in more than 25,000 homes in Mason, Drainsville, Mount Vernon, Providence, and Franconia. So, Mr. Chairman, let's get this conversation started.

[02:24:03] And keep in mind, residents are at the very top of your county's org chart. While the Department of Public Works has had problems managing the service, it's noteworthy that Arlington County, the Town of Vienna, Fairfax City, the City of Falls Church, and the City of Alexandria all provide this service, and none are proposing to end it.

[02:24:25] Among many other jurisdictions offering vacuum leaf services are Richmond, Petersburg, Winchester, Williamsburg, and Fredericksburg. DPWES cited examples of their failure to provide service on a timely basis and then suggested those as reasons to simply end the program instead of connecting, correcting the management and operation of it.

[02:24:46] Composting leaves, while manageable for properties with less tree canopy, is not a viable option for many households with mature and massive tree canopy, generating too many leaves to wholly compost on site. Ending, as I refer to it, a centralized composting program shifts the burden of reducing greenhouse gas emissions on the backs of us, your residents, who will be forced to bring in myriad private

contractors whose trucks will block traffic, come on alternate days, and pollute the atmosphere more than does the targeted centralized system provided for the last 60 years.

[02:25:23] This flies in the face of Fairfax County's adopted sustainability policies to reduce waste and greenhouse gases emissions as leaf recycling appears to be one of the few programs to already meet CCAP implementation plan for zero waste by 2040.

[02:25:40] Moreover, EQAC in their 2021 report advised even more consistency in collection services across the county could reduce air pollution emissions and reduce traffic by allowing for a single collector to service a specific area, whereas proposals to eliminate county leaf recycling and shift it to private contractors contradicts this.

[02:26:04] Leaves left uncollected elevate threats to our storm drains and waterways, exacerbating increased flooding due to dramatic rainfall and our El Nino climate impacts. Numerous studies have shown that leaf fall into water bodies is natural, yet excessive leaf matter increases nutrient loading, which threatens fish, aquatic life, encourage weed and algae growth, and impair swimming, boating, and fishing.

[02:26:33] Remember, storm drains connect streets to creeks. Lake Akatink comes to mind here. Our mature trees are our climate heroes, deserving of protection and value for their ability to both scrub the atmosphere of dangerous carbon emissions and absorb stormwater to prevent flooding.

[02:26:52] County services for leaf collections should reflect the environmental value which trees bring to our well-being, health, and safety, let alone their aesthetic significance. So in closing, I respectfully suggest that this nearly 60-year commitment of Fairfax County to provide centralized composting be reformed and not ended.

[02:27:14] Should taxpayers in these districts being served need to pay more for this valued service, then that's a conversation worth having. Another component of the reform of the county service might be to provide two seasonal pickups of leaves, like Arlington County does, not three, as current policies state.

[02:27:32] We've also found that Arlington County's cost per customer is significantly lower than ours as they use trucks with more manpower efficiency and use forestry data to help determine best times to initiate pickup and also helps keep streets and stormwater inlets free of leaves.

[02:27:50] A DPWEF effort to educate residents in best practices for mulching and composting some of their leaf litter on residential properties could be mutually beneficial and will reduce what is raked to the curb for county collection.

[02:28:05] In your own words, Chairman McKay, the county prides itself on providing outstanding services, and this program, for a variety of reasons, has come up short on that goal in the past few years. it's important to be transparent and work with the community on what makes the most sense for them and the county moving forward and i submit this centralized composting program is just that a sensible and environmentally sound program benefiting residents and addressing county goals for environmental protection and stewardship let's have that conversation and work together to

[02:28:39] reform and approve this valued service thank you so much thank you very much uh and our next caller is? Our next caller is Robert Henson speaking as an individual. Mr. Henson, can you hear me okay? Yes, I can. Can you hear me? We can. Welcome. All right. Thank you. Good afternoon. I'm Robert

Henson. I'm a retired veteran. I've lived over 25 years in the Mount Vernon district, so I know Supervisor Stork pretty well. My comments are focused on the Fairfax County

[02:29:13] public school portion of their proposed budget. I want to share three facts and ask one question. The facts are only 70% of Fairfax County residents do not have children in Fairfax County public schools.

[02:29:32] Additionally, SAT scores for the last several years have continued to decline, and that trend is not changing. And then also over the last five years of budgets since 2020, Fairfax County school budgets have survived on 50% of their funds coming from county transfers.

[02:29:55] But now for the 2025 budget, they're asking for 70% of their budget to be fulfilled by county revenue. So my question is, why should Fairfax County taxpayers like myself bear the increased taxes to cover a 70% increase in the amount of money that the Fairfax County public school budget is requesting?

[02:30:20] Thank you. Thank you. And I know we have another caller. I'm sorry, can you repeat, Roger Faclum? Roger, can you hear me okay? Yes, Roger Faclum.

[02:30:37] Welcome. The floor is yours. Hello. Thank you for hearing me today. my wife is uh retired my son lives with us still and everyone out of the house but um my property taxes are now going to be about 12 000 a year which is a thousand a month so my uh after tax unemployment barely covers my property tax and nothing else that's one thing um do you have any idea how many uh illegal aliens are in fairfax county and what percentage of the

[02:31:13] budget goes toward them this is for us to hear your testimony this is not a back and forth so if you can finish your testimony it's for us to hear you okay all right well I would like to try to make up the shortfalls I've been hearing about today by stopping funding for illegal aliens thank you thank you very much and do we have any other callers who have called in we don't have additional callers we do not have any additional callers okay and I asked already once but let me just

[02:31:49] verify is there anyone else present who would like to testify okay this will be our last speaker because at some point we have to end if you can come down please sign in with the clerk here on

[02:31:59] your way down and come to the podium and you will be our last speaker if you could just remind us

[02:32:38] your name and address and welcome okay i'm shirley lee i'm at 1509 stewart row in reston and thank you for fitting me in. First, let me start by saying I support the lady who spoke previously as an educator, and she's asking for better pay for teachers, and I do support that. However, she also said previously the tax rate for property tax was higher than what is being proposed as an

[02:33:12] increase now well the property tax that the taxpayer has to pay is not just the rate it's also the property value that is assigned to the property and property value goes up and down and it sure looks good on paper that your property is now increase in value but like that gentleman who spoke earlier we don't want to sell we like living in fairfax county we want to stay there now

[02:33:45] I could have retired a year ago, but I decided I couldn't afford to because every year I'm paying a lot more money now in the previous couple of years for property tax in addition to everything else.

[02:34:01] To fix your property costs a lot more, your utility bill, your gas, whatever, everything is going up. And so, as much as I, you know, agree with her as far as paying better for the educators, I do not think

the solution is to increase the rate.

[02:34:28] You know, we managed somehow, but I'm struggling. I have to make sacrifices, delaying my retirement. I was hoping maybe I could retire this year, you know, at the end of the year.

[02:34:44] But no, I think I've got to go another year. So, but how long can I keep doing that? As much as I love my home, I also think I work long enough and I deserve my retirement. And I like to be able to do that sometime soon.

[02:35:03] So please do not increase the rate for myself and for other citizens who love to live in Fairfax County. And we like to stay and please give us the incentive say here thank you very much thank you very much for testifying and that brings us to the end of our public hearing three days of public hearing at this point in time i move that the board close this public hearing while leaving the record open for written testimony until april 30th 2024

[02:35:41] that will permit persons who wish to testify on this matter to do so continue to do so over the next several days by providing written testimony after the close of the public hearings it's been moved i'll second that that motion any discussion on the motion seeing and hearing none all those in favor of the motion please say aye aye anyone opposed that motion passes uh thank you madam chair and i i do want to uh close by thanking all the folks who have come forward uh to testify and in a very civil responsible way which is what we always expect in fairfax county and all of our

[02:36:17] speakers held us all to that standard and I appreciate that as chairman of this board we have tough work ahead of us but all this input that we've given been given over the budget will be helpful as we deliberate towards the final budget and with that our meeting of three-day meeting ending on April 18th of 2024 is adjourned