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Fairfax County Budget Policy Committee Joint Meeting with School Board, Tuesday, February 24, 2026

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- Official meeting video (Fairfax County): <https://video.fairfaxcounty.gov/player/clip/4055>
- Official Board of Supervisors page (Fairfax County): <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/boardofsupervisors/>

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[00:00:03] folks could go ahead and take their seats. We are starting two or three minutes late, but I want to get us started. I know there are still people filing in, having conversations, but we have time until 4.30 today. I want to make sure we maximize that time to the extent possible.

[00:00:20] I'm going to kick off this meeting, February 24th, budget committee meeting, joint budget committee meeting with our school board, and just a few high-level things. We're going to let staff get through all their presentations, and then we're going to have a chance for everybody to ask a question. I'm going to encourage everybody, given the large number of people that are here, to ask questions. If you want to give some comments before your question, that's fine, but try to limit those and focus on questions at this session, because obviously we're going to get a presentation on the budget and want to make sure everyone in this room who's on the school

[00:00:57] board or county board has a chance to ask those questions. Before we get started, I do want to thank our colleagues from the school board for joining us. Thank our budget staff, county budget staff, and school budget staff. As you'll see in this presentation, they work on these budgets all year long. They collaborate all year long. And so while we're here for an hour and a half, they are constantly working on this. And I also want to point out that we're in a year that we know faces a lot of challenges. I appreciate that both our school system has put forward a budget

[00:01:32] that's within reason and that our county executive has put forward a budget that follows the board's guidance from last year and recognizes the somewhat unusual financial situation that we find ourselves in with so much happening at the federal level and so many other challenges that our families are facing, and keeping in mind their ability to pay and be able to afford to live in the county, I know was a driver in the work that was done to get us to this point on both budgets. Obviously, public education is our highest priority in the county, as you can see in

[00:02:07] the budget, clearly identified again this year. And I'll make some closing comments when we're finished, but I think another obvious thing to point out here is there is a small gap between what has been requested by the school system and what is in the county executive's proposed budget, and I'm going to speak for myself here, but I think I'm probably speaking for many, that we hope our friends in Richmond are aggressively filling that gap. We know that, you know, so much of our budget challenges when it comes to public education begin there, and we're seeing some promising signs in Richmond that there'll be some strides made and some gains

[00:02:46] made this year and adequately funding public education in the Commonwealth of Virginia so that that's not continually borne on the backs of real estate tax bills in Fairfax County and something that we're working on. And then finally, because this question came up before, as you'll see in the budget presentation, the total amount of the meals tax is already included in the budget.

[00:03:10] And as we heard, as the county executive presented his budget to us, without that meals tax, we would not be looking at a budget that has been proposed by the county executive that keeps the tax rate flat. And we know that a flat tax rate still equates to an increase in taxes for people based on assessment, but without that meals tax, we would be having a totally different conversation, but that is already baked into the numbers. And so I'm going to leave the rest for our county staff, but before I turn to them, I'm going to turn to my partner, the chair of the school board, Sandy Anderson, if you would like to offer some opening comments. I just wanted to say thank

[00:03:45] again for the opportunity for us all to come and speak with you. I think that it's important for us to have those moments where we share the questions and that we hear what everybody's thinking, so I am always grateful for the opportunity for us to come talk. Thank you very much, Ms. Anderson, for that, and look forward to that conversation, and to get us started, I'm going to turn over to, first, I'm going to ask our county executive if there's any comments he wants to make, and then we're going to turn to budget staff to give us our presentation. No, I'm just going to say welcome to everybody here today and turn it over to anything you want to say?

[00:04:22] To Christina. Christina Jackson. Christina Jackson, who is our Chief Financial Officer. Welcome. Good afternoon, everyone. Once again, I'm joined by my counterpart at the schools, Lee Burden, as well as the county's budget director, Phil Hagen, and the school's budget director, Alice Wigington.

[00:04:38] So the presentation that we have for you guys today is very brief. Certainly the full presentations that were provided by both the county and the schools are available online, so our intention this afternoon is to kind of hit the high points. So on the first slide, this is just an overview of the county's advertised budget. As the chairman mentioned, our proposed budget is based on the current real estate tax rate of \$1.12 and a quarter, which does equate to an increase for the average homeowner of about \$357, based on an almost 4% increase in residential assessments.

[00:05:12] It does recognize the full year impact of the food and beverage tax, which does include an increase in this year's budget of about \$68 million. It provides \$118 million in additional support for the schools. We have a little bit more information on that later regarding the breakout of what's operating, capital construction and debt service. It does partially fund the superintendent's request with a shortfall of about \$44 million. We've noted in here that when you combine this \$118 million increase in the transfers, as well as some of the flexibility

[00:05:43] provided in the former governor's budget, both in terms of increased revenue as well as a reduction in the Virginia retirement system employee contribution rate that equated to flexibility in the school's budget of over \$200 million. On the county side, we have funded our county's compensation program. You'll see a real focus in the county's budget on capital renewal. We know that's a need for the schools as well, and we've included funding for that. We have included about \$32.9 million in reductions. This is the fourth year that we've included reductions on the county side, and that includes 107 merit positions.

[00:06:18] As well, there's a balance of about \$23 million. That's about average of what we've had in balance over the past five years ago. It certainly has fluctuated, and we do have some funds identified separately in reserve, both for some potential loss in urban area security initiatives funding, as well as our reserve for economic uncertainty.

[00:06:40] When we move to the next slide, this is an overview of both the county and school's revenues. I'll cover the chart on the left really quickly. Real estate, you can see that we're estimating about \$133 million in additional revenue. We do have more detail on the real estate components on the next slide.

[00:06:56] We've got about a 3.1% increase in personal property. That's based on an increase both in the number of vehicles as well as the average value of those vehicles for the next year based on January values. We have a small increase in local sales tax, and then you can see that almost \$68 million for food and beverage tax.

[00:07:14] representing the second six months of the four-year impact. So in total, county revenues are projected to increase just under \$270 million. Good afternoon.

[00:07:30] Again, I'm Lee Burden, CFO for the schools. On the school's revenue side, this represents the superintendent's proposed budget. The county transfer request is \$138.45 million, and it's worth noting again that that's about half of our request at this same time last year.

[00:07:46] Sales tax and state aid, up \$71 million. That's largely due to the local composite index reduction, as well as re-benchmarking and assumption of a 2% comp increase. Federal revenue, of course, we're assuming that's flat. And the beginning balance and other revenue is changes to the beginning balance offset by Fairfax tuition for a total projected revenue increase of \$197 million.

[00:08:14] Our next slide includes our chart, which provides more detail on changes in our real estate tax base. We've included both a breakout for residential and non-residential values. And you can see that first-line residential equalization is projected to increase by 3.99%.

[00:08:29] So we've seen resilience in our residential market. Certainly that is a slight decrease over the appreciation that we saw last year. The value of a penny in FY27 is about \$35 million to the county in terms of revenue. The impact on the homeowner of that penny is about \$83, just kind of for information.

[00:08:49] We were happy to see, therefore, non-residential equalization that we were positive at 0.92%. That's the first time in three years that we've been positive in non-residential equalization. And we also saw the office vacancy rate decrease for the first time since 2019. And so we're hopeful that maybe we've turned a corner with commercial values.

[00:09:08] Certainly, we're going to be keeping an eye on that. But certainly, we've seen obsolete office space be demolished. there's no speculative office construction right now. The small amount of office construction that is occurring has all been leased and is expected to be fully occupied. So we're hopeful that those factors are going to contribute to continued positive trends on the commercial side. Both in total, our real estate tax base is projected to increase by 3.77% for next year. This next slide is kind of where we'll probably spend the most time. These are just the numbers kind of behind

[00:09:44] our respective budget proposals. We have split out the school's information a little bit differently this year just because there was a lot going on and we wanted to make sure that we were clear in what was included in the proposed budget. Those first couple of lines include the increased county revenues, so that \$270 million kind of as it's kind of divided up both on the county side and the school side. I will note that you see that there's a reduction of about \$6.5 million off to the right, which is related to our increase in the transient occupancy tax last year that's

[00:10:19] being redirected to visit Fairfax. So last year we brought it in and held it in balance. This year we're going to be directly posting it to our contributory fund. So it's kind of taken out of the general fund, but it's net zero for purposes of this discussion. We have included the school operating transfer of 94.6%. That's kind of the pure operating transfer increase. In addition, we've included about \$4.6 million in operating transfer increase related to programs that we are proposing get shifted over to schools. We've included \$11.4 million for school debt service.

[00:10:54] That's related really to two things. One is an increase in interest rates and also the fact that we are selling more in bonds now than we were 20 years ago. And so the debt that's falling off from 20 years ago was certainly a nod at the \$230 million that we're selling for schools now on an annual basis. And then we've included \$7.5 million for the school's construction fund. This is in line with the \$2.5 million that we proposed a number of years ago following the joint CIP school county CIP committee, where we had recommended getting to a full penny on the

[00:11:33] real estate tax base in combination of the increased debt service related to our increased bond sales and in additional capital renewal funding, so PAGO funding in both the county and schools. So this \$7.5 million for schools is matched on the county side. So now we have achieved the \$10 million in the base for both the county and schools. And I will note that we are also now over the one penny on the real estate tax rates. We actually have fulfilled all of the recommendations that came from that committee back in 2021. And then I'll quickly go down the county requirements. Again, I noted the compensation, the pay and benefits number for the county. It's

[00:12:11] about \$102 million. That does fully fund all of the county's collective bargaining agreements, as well as commensurate increases for our non-represented employees, as well as some increases for health insurance and retirement. Our \$7.42 million is related to the county's debt service increases. Then you can see we have 12 and a half again for capital renewal.

[00:12:33] Certainly we know this is again a challenge for both the county and the schools, but you'll see that we have some significant investments on the county side for capital renewal. And we also propose

some changes in our bond program as well as it relates to some of our facilities. You can see that \$4.59 million decrease on the county side. And again, the positive on the school side is we're proposing to transfer programs to schools. That's primarily related to the middle school after school program. Then some of those other priorities, that 61.45 is related to inflationary adjustments, IT spending. We did have some increased dollars to help our most vulnerable

[00:13:09] residents in terms of rental assistance and food assistance. So that's baked into that 61 million dollars. And then we did have reductions of almost 33 million dollars and that's 107 positions that I mentioned earlier and all of those reductions are detailed in our budget package. And so now I'll turn it over to Lee to cover kind of the school's side of the equation.

[00:13:33] Yeah. Again, the revenue piece just represents what the county's executive's advertised budget proposes, which is \$94.6 million for the schools in increased county transfer. The additional school's revenue is all other funding sources, the federal, the beginning balance, and other, and state combined.

[00:13:53] And as far as our requirements go, the compensation pay and benefits honors our collective bargaining agreements, as well as includes a reduction for the pension plan that BRS initiated and increases in health care costs.

[00:14:10] The other priorities are some very slight multi-year investments, contractual increases and baseline adjustments. And the 35.71 reduction for school enrollment is a reduction of 260 FTEs based on the rerun of the enrollment.

[00:14:32] So that at least for the school operating fund, we're looking at a \$43.8 million gap, assuming that the programs transferred to school operating and the school construction are allocated for the purposes that the county executive budget assumes.

[00:14:53] The next slide we've included really just for information, because we've typically included this chart in this presentation. These are the pay adjustments for both the county and the schools over the past three years. Some of the categories have changed from our traditional presentation. That's really just, you know, and jointly talking with the school staff, you know, with collective bargaining, some of those groupings have changed a little bit. So the history doesn't go back quite as far as we would normally share, but that's only because it's kind of more difficult since kind of those groupings are a little bit different. So we've provided the last three years and we've noted on this chart where the collective bargaining went into effect. So for example, for

[00:15:30] the county's public safety, it's the full three-year period where for the school's principals and administrators, it's just FY27. So again, this is just informational. We weren't planning on spending a lot of time on this chart. The next slide, again, is informational. This is our budget timeline. I think that, you know, the key dates coming up are the school board adopting their advertised budget just in a couple of days, and our board of supervisors taking action to advertise FY27 tax rates on March 17th, but we have all of our information here related to our public hearings and our budget adoption dates. Did you have anything that you wanted to share?

[00:16:09] And so then our last slide, Philly, is looking ahead kind of for the remainder of this fiscal year as well as when we look ahead to FY2028. You know, certainly we're going to continue to monitor our revenues, particularly the food and beverage tax.

[00:16:25] The first deadline for that was just last week. We're anticipating on an average month that we would receive a little bit over \$11 million. What we've received so far is a little bit over \$9 million. Certainly some of that could be seasonality. That could be impacted by the storm. We also know that there are some businesses that are continuing to come online, and so we're going to be continuing to monitor that to see if we need to make any adjustments to our food and beverage tax revenue projections.

[00:16:51] We do have two upcoming budget committees over the next few weeks, on March 10th and 24th. And then as we look ahead to FY28, you know, I know sometimes it feels like a little bit like we're a broken record that we say every year is going to be a difficult budget year. But as we look ahead to 28, we're seeing a softening in the residential market and some of our surrounding jurisdictions.

[00:17:09] so certainly that's something that we will be monitoring closely. Again, as I noted earlier, we are optimistic about the commercial market, so we're hopeful that that continues to trend in a positive direction. On the county side, we will be renegotiating our two public safety collective bargaining agreements coming up actually in the next few weeks, and those will be impacting the FY28 budget.

[00:17:31] We do anticipate increasing retirement and health contributions for next year, Particularly on the retirement side, which impacts both the county and the schools, we are performing a five-year experience study, and so we anticipate that that's going to have upward pressure on our employer contribution rates for all three of our retirement systems.

[00:17:51] We anticipate increased debt service based on some anticipated bond sales, particularly EDA bond sales, continued operating growth, and then certainly on the transportation side, although we're hopeful that the state is going to come forward with some additional transportation funding, We'll also be keeping an eye on that to see how that might impact our FY28 budget.

[00:18:09] That's it again. We need to go through it quickly and make sure that you guys have plenty of time for your questions. We appreciate that. Thank you all for that presentation. And we're going to go around and ask questions. If we have time for a second round, we'll certainly take advantage of that.

[00:18:28] But let me start with Ms. Anderson to see if she has any questions, and then we'll make our way around the table in this order. And if we have time for a second round, we'll do that. I don't have any questions. I've been spending a lot of time rolling around in numbers for the last couple weeks.

[00:18:45] But what I will say is that I want us all to remember, or that I firmly remember, that when we're talking about the delta between what we need and what we're talking about getting, I fully and completely understand that that number is in addition to the \$3 billion that the county is dedicated to our schools.

[00:19:05] So I just want to make sure that we're level setting that conversation, that when we're talking about the Delta, it's a tiny little percentage of where we need to go. And what I've been saying all along is we are at the tipping point moment where we need help from the state.

[00:19:23] We no longer can sustain the education level in this county purely with taxpayer money, like from property taxes. It's just not going to work. And so I am hopeful, but as my husband likes to tell me, hope is not a method. So we need to continue with our counterparts in Richmond and be loud about the fact that we need help.

[00:19:45] And so I hope that we are able to do that this year. I'm hoping that it's not going to get easier for anybody from here to make these hard decisions. And so I'm really hoping that our governor and our

newly installed legislators down there can go ahead and do what needs to be done here to start writing the position that we're in.

[00:20:06] So thank you, and I look forward to the conversation. Well said. Thank you. Ms. Dixit? Thank you, everyone. I'm speaking as a budget chair this year, and this position came to me after the size of Heiser got elected.

[00:20:22] It just came. I just forgot it. So I'm really thankful for this opportunity for all of us to be in the same room to discuss a very important topic. And FCPS cannot, you know, collect its own funds. We don't have taxing authority.

[00:20:39] We do not have our own methods of, you know, making an income. So we depend on others. So one of our funders, our county supervisors, are very thankful for that. Today, we just want to make one point that we thank you for the funds you have given us, but we still have a \$43 million gap, and that gap is going to affect somewhere in our staff, in our student population by giving the quality of education could suffer because we are a very heavy, you know, like a labor-intensive, you know, industry.

[00:21:16] So we do have to provide a lot of salaries to like 90% of our budget goes to the salaries of our different staff we have. We had a tough last year. We had to wait until the last minute to, you know, make the cuts.

[00:21:32] So we are hoping we'll get some answers from the state soon, and then we can make some decisions for our schools, and hopefully we'll get this \$43 million from somewhere. Thank you so much. Thank you, Ms. Dixon. All right, very good.

[00:21:48] Supervisor Herity. Yeah, I'm going to go a little different direction this year, and for those that watched the board meeting where the budget was introduced last year, I spent a lot of time talking about renovation versus new capital facilities. Just looking at the school population, kind of hit a high in 2022 of \$188,799.

[00:22:11] In 2025, it kind of rebounded up to \$181,700. But in 2027, it's projected to drop 176,133, which is – and it's projected to continue to drop, as I understand.

[00:22:28] Somebody can correct me if I'm wrong on that. There's a clear decline in kindergarten, and this is a national trend. This isn't necessarily unique to Fairfax County. But our neighbors in Prince William and Loudoun have stepped back from their capital improvement program and are pausing new school construction.

[00:22:49] but we're proposing to build two new schools and we bought a third so I so I'm kind of wondering why we're increasing capacity when we've got a declining population and our neighbors are not so I don't need that answer now but that would be good to get back and whether the increase in operating costs as a result the West well first of all what are the increase in operating costs as a result of the new Western high school I assume there's going to be a new principal a new set of administration new facilities folks and that sort of thing so that's those are the two questions kind of generally and

[00:23:28] I'm asking these questions on the county side so I'm not picking on schools just to be clear the second one is I continue to be frustrated by the lack of communication and steps to get the zoning violation at Centerville high school fixed so I just would like to hear back in writing in an answer to a

budget question what is the plan to fix the zoning violation at Centerville high school and that's my two questions and I'll leave it at that okay

[00:24:01] supervisor thank you I guess my my question would be just to make sure we all get updates on transit funding in Richmond right now there are two versions. There's a House version of the budget bill and there's a Senate version. One includes capital funding but not operating. The other includes operating but not capital. And this is specific to WMATA where we do have an interstate obligation to that system. So that could put us

[00:24:36] in a real pickle depending upon how that turns out. So because we're basically depending upon in the state coming up. They did last, two years ago, one time about \$150 million for WMATA. And, you know, Fairfax County portion, a portion of that is about half. So anyway, I would just ask that we all be kept up to date on that. Thank you. Thank you, Supervisor Alcorn. And this is something we're going to continue to track. We track at legislative committee meetings, but as

[00:25:12] you mentioned there's also you know there's solutions to the problem this year and then there's solutions to the problem that can put this off and not have this come up every single year to your point earlier and so we've all we have advocated as a board for the permanent solution so that we don't have to fight this battle every year but at a minimum we hope to get through this year with enough funding to fund this year's obligations if they're not going to put the permanent fix in so that we can work on that for next year. And so we're going to continue to monitor that, but without that puts a giant hole in our budget, without a doubt. And the larger

[00:25:49] piece, if we're able to get the larger piece, the hope is this funds far more than just Metro, but a lot of other transit operations within the county, which frees up general fund dollars for other obligations, which is really important. Supervisor Stork. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you all very much for being here and appreciate the work that's gone into the budget presentations on all sides.

[00:26:09] And I know the challenge we truly have. The challenge we truly have, in my mind, is in Richmond. Not only the JLARC study, which demonstrated that, documented that, \$600 million at a minimum, we could argue, really should be coming our way.

[00:26:27] And on the county side, just broadly, 50-50, we send a dollar to Richmond, we get 50 cents back. We ought to all be talking about that constantly with our state legislative people because it's real money that doesn't go into the school's pockets or other people's pockets and definitely is coming out of our own residence pockets, and we need to do what we can to address that.

[00:26:49] So we have the UVA study that we did to further document that, and if anybody you speak with says, oh, it's not really 50 cents because we do all these other things, no, the Weldon Cooper study did identify all the direct and indirect services that we get from the state, and clearly documented that we get about 50 cents back on the dollar.

[00:27:11] So if somebody argues that or says otherwise to you, just ask them if they could please have the state legislature do a study like JLARC, and we'd be happy to monitor and work at that and work with them and see what that would turn out to be. But I think we all know that answer, and that's the answer that I've gotten when I've spoken with some of our state legislative leaders about it.

[00:27:33] So we ought to stay focused on the revenue side. On the expense side, we do have to look at how do we reduce our costs where we can, particularly in areas that we know aren't directly in the

classroom or directly in the services that we offer and provide to our residents.

[00:27:49] I strongly urge you to do something that our county executive has done now. I think this is the fourth year, sir. And, yes, it's, you know, in a huge multibillion-dollar budget, you know, you can look at \$35 million and say, well, it's not a whole lot, But if you add up 35 and 35 and 35, you get to a real significant impact, as well as I think you get to a confidence building, as well as you get to a statement to our constituents, our residents, as well as to our employees that we're committed to operating in a very effective, highly efficient organization.

[00:28:24] It's tough to make that same argument on the school side. I need, and I'm asking this as a question, I need evidence that I can point to that says schools have done something similar. When our enrollments have declined some, I know our administrative staff, our assistant principals, and a lot of those others, the number of leaders in the schools seems like it's higher than I've observed in the past, at least in my experiences.

[00:28:49] So I welcome evidence to the contrary, but I most importantly want the board here to look at those as opportunities to really dig in and make a difference in the school budget and in turn point to residents about how you're making sure you're closing the gaps that are out there, 30, 40, whatever that gap might be with efficiencies and evidence that the schools can operate more effectively but still keep those dollars in the classroom.

[00:29:18] So thank you all very much. Supervisor Sizemore Izer. Thank you. And first my apologies my former colleague Ms. Dixit for putting you in the hot seat this year But you know having most recently sat over there in this meeting in the fall and now sitting over here I appreciate the chance to talk and I think the common theme that I'm hearing I think there's a lot of room for collaboration across both boards is that advocacy to the state And it's a really common theme because we've seen from the J. Lark study the underfunding of schools We've seen also, I'm going to say, the uncertainty of this year's budget, both on education funding and on transportation funding.

[00:29:55] It's hard to plan if we don't know if that permanent transportation, that's going to be a permanent transportation bucket of funds or if it's going to be a one-year. If it's in the budget, we don't know if it's going to be in the budget again after two years of the biennium. So I think that makes it more difficult for us to address really looking at our strategic priorities from a more stable way of knowing what our budget is going to be, funding is going to be. So I think there's an opportunity there to advocate. And I think part of the message we've got to jointly send to Richmond is I think we all recognize that having a strong transit system, having strong public safety, and having strong schools

[00:30:31] is an economic driver of Northern Virginia. It just is, right? And that means that we, if we are strong economically, the state is strong economically. And that's a message we need to get across to tell the state the reason you need to fund JLARC the way it is, the reason we need to have certainty around our transportation funds so we can plan longer-term projects is so we can maintain our economic competitiveness so that we're not choosing, we're not cutting, we're funding services. So I think that's a message that we need to really hone to our communities. I'm just going to say, you know, together we can say to our constituents about

[00:31:08] helping our constituents understand why are we in this austere times in the budget, What are the economic signs we're seeing already in Northern Virginia? We talked about this, that we're coming out

of this. But how are we hamstrung by the state in not just our longer-term planning, but continue to come out of this economic stage if the state doesn't understand the importance of funding Northern Virginia?

[00:31:29] So I think that's a big picture that we can look at from the budget from a communications standpoint. So I'll stop there. Thank you. Supervisor Palczyk. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to our excellent budget staff and the work you do year-round. I'm excited to have a colleague here.

[00:31:46] Sorry, Seema. We love her. And, you know, I think to me it's the conversation we're having here, and I appreciate the tone that's been set, right? We are one Fairfax. We have the same constituents. Our state partners share the same constituents as we do here.

[00:32:02] And so, you know, things have changed since I moved here in 1990, a little bit after Mr. Moon, not too long. And, you know, some of the challenges that we have now are different. The cost of living is definitely something that was not there for our families three decades ago.

[00:32:21] And so more than ever, we have to look at that and the investments we make. So I think in order to continue this conversation, my ask would be I appreciate the data that's been shared over the past five years for residential and for the changing population of our students.

[00:32:40] I would ask, because I think it's important for us to see, but also our constituents, I guess it's a formal ask, is if we could show sort of the line items. Can we break down both the past five years in our projections for residential, what we mean, the different types of residential, put it all in one place, the different types of non-residential, where we've come the last five years?

[00:33:01] Because as we hopefully all know watching this, we do not have a local income tax. So real estate is the majority of that local option. But then also for our student, our student population we know has many challenges, and so while the total population may be seeing a decline, a projected decline, it would be helpful to see, because we know that it's there, that the needs of our free and reduced student meals, students on FRM, of our students receiving ESOL services, and our students with disabilities, because we know that the targeted supports there have to differ.

[00:33:40] And then, you know, I was having a conversation with one of our state colleagues last week about, he said, well, Daryl from CSBI, I hope he realizes what he's stepping into in Richmond because most, I don't think any other locality is supporting community services boards the way Fairfax County has been doing that.

[00:33:58] And that supports all of our kids, all of our families, everyone. So let's focus on the things we do well together and the investment that Fairfax makes out of our own residents' pockets, out of our local funding. And I just hope we can show more of that data of what we are doing as a locality, whether it's going directly to schools or staying in general county services, and why more than ever, we absolutely have to have that partnership.

[00:34:27] And finally, we were told for many years, do the meals tax. I was on the school board when we were told, work on it. And we did. Many of us volunteered many hours. And now we have. And I think we need to be very clear. We stepped up to the bat. We know it's not popular, but we knew we needed to diversify our tax base.

[00:34:46] And that's pretty much the only diversification tool we have at this point. So I think we need to continue to share that message. And also the fact that, you know, we are all rolling up our sleeves and

doing not just on the revenue side and the spending cut side, but on the revenue side, economic development, what do we control, housing costs and priorities, what do we control?

[00:35:09] And it is a delta, but I appreciate that we're looking at our shared delta, and we'll keep working together. So I appreciate the shared tenor and the tone. I think that's what our community expects of us. So I appreciate that from our colleagues on the school board. Thank you, Supervisor Palchek, and I'll add on the first part of yours on the real estate piece.

[00:35:29] I'm hopeful that all school board members have scheduled a briefing with their counterparts on the Board of Supervisors with our real estate folks so that you can see what's happening on assessments both on commercial and residential in your districts. There are some districts in this county that are performing very well when it comes to commercial growth, And then there are other districts that have no commercial growth.

[00:35:54] And so I think it's important for us to see that and to see where that economic development is happening and, frankly, challenge ourselves as to how we can do better countywide in some of those metrics. And so if you do not have one of those scheduled, please reach out to my office.

[00:36:10] We'd be happy to set up a second one. I know with the at-large folks, we're going to work on getting those scheduled. But if those are not happening, let me know, because I think it's important context for all of us to know where the revenue is coming from, what's happening with valuations in our communities, who's paying those.

[00:36:28] I know I always look every year at the assessment increases disproportionately on the lowest value properties, which is a different question than if they're on the highest value properties in terms of who can afford to pay the increases. So I think those are important things for us all to be looking at.

[00:36:44] Supervisor Lusk. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My comments are just going to be directed at slide four. When I look at the comparison between 2026 and 2027 on each of these measures, it's pretty clear they're pretty much all in the negative with the exception of non-residential equalization and then total non-residential.

[00:37:08] So we are obviously in a really difficult place, and this is just an indication of how clear that problem is, and looking for additional ways to fund schools and county and being able to work with our state partners to help us do that is more critical than ever before.

[00:37:35] These numbers tell the story distinctly and clearly, so we'll have to do some work here obviously, and hopefully we'll have partners in Richmond who will be supportive, but clearly this is a problem that we, as local government, can't necessarily fix. The numbers are moving in a direction that is not supportive of us being able to manage this solely on our own. So I just want to articulate that point and note that I will do my part to continue to advocate for more funding

[00:38:14] for us from our partners in Richmond, but I think all of us clearly have that as our calling here because this is not sustainable. And with that, I'll conclude my remarks. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

[00:38:30] Supervisor Jimenez. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And, you know, last year, you know, we talked a lot about, or the last couple of years, about the importance of partnering, but also making sure that our colleagues in Richmond know what the gap is and where they kind of need to fill in.

[00:38:52] We've given examples. We've looked at studies. We've talked about studies. We continue to talk about studies. Almost every single colleague that I can look at down the row on the Board of Supervisors I've either seen in Richmond this year or I know have been in Richmond this year.

[00:39:09] I know one of my top priorities, one of my top talking points when I go and meet with our colleagues is obviously K through 12 funding, among others. I'd love to hear from the school board. Obviously, you know what we do. We go to Richmond. We've been to Richmond. We just had a reception in Richmond. We meet every Friday to talk about how we can continue to push our colleagues in Richmond to better funding K through 12. What have you all been doing on the school board to help push this? Are you going to Richmond? Are you talking with your colleagues? Do you have weekly meetings. How are you enforcing, how are you backing up the talk that Richmond needs to

[00:39:47] give us, the state needs to give us more money for education, or is it just we come in once a year, we talk about the importance of partnership and how we need to go to Richmond and talk to our colleagues at Richmond, but we're not actually doing that. So I'd love to hear examples, specific concrete examples of what you have done this year. Supervisor Behrman.

[00:40:09] thank you mr chairman on page five of the oh actually do you want to hear him now go ahead i thought i'd get a response but i heard crickets i'm happy to respond if that's okay yeah yeah let's hold on a second um let's let's let's get let's go around first uh because we're we're doing pretty good on time and then i think we need to have a a more broad conversation uh than just that and and hear from uh our colleagues on the school board and there's several uh that haven't spoken yet, and certainly as a part of their comments, they can address that as well. Supervisor

[00:40:46] Bierman. Candidly, Mr. Chairman, I have some specific questions as well. Are you okay with me asking the questions and asking for answers? I think if the questions are directed to staff at this point, yes. I just want to be careful about directing questions to our colleagues. If you have questions for staff, then yes. I do have some questions for staff. So page five of the Fairfax County Public Schools slide deck, which isn't up there, so you don't have it.

[00:41:13] I'm maybe speaking out of turn, but I went and looked at the slide deck when you presented the budget, and it refers to efforts towards greater efficiency at FCPS, and it refers to the Baldrige performance excellence ongoing work. And this is, I think, the third year I've seen a slide deck that has referenced Baldrige efficiency reviews. Can you explain some of the efficiencies or either operational changes at the school level or changes you've made to central office staff

[00:41:44] based on your Baldrige reviews in order to save money? Sure. I want to remind the Board of Supervisors and our board that we have maintained an \$88.6 million reduction since last year, And a number of those reductions, in particular the central office, 7.5 million, 3% cuts, were due in part to the work that we've been engaged with, with the Baldrige funding.

[00:42:14] We also, in looking at future, FY28 as well, we're looking at different ways to structure departments that will be more efficient, that will realize more savings. But that work is a journey work.

[00:42:31] It's not a cliff. It's not a drive-by, one-and-done cut, but it has enabled us to support our current \$88.6 million reductions. So I've seen that chart as well. Are you counting \$33 million in reductions off of the requested budget last year?

[00:42:51] Correct. We reopened that bargaining agreement, so it would be \$55 million if we didn't count the reopened bargaining and lost wages that we had previously bargained with FEU. Okay. So I don't count that. There was a 7% increase in the transfer request. It became a 6% increase in the transfer request. The original transfer request was up \$268 million over the prior years, 10.4%. I don't think anybody here thought that, at least, sorry, on my side of the table, thought that was reasonable for a single year increase.

[00:43:24] so I just want to be clear about that if you're factoring that in. I also noticed that you factored in \$15 million for deferred social studies curriculum. I'll note that, for instance, in our fiscal year 2025 budget, our advertised budget came out with, I believe it was between \$5 and \$10 million in IT recommendations, investments. We ended up deferring that. We didn't call that a reduction when we passed the final budget. So those are just two distinctions, I think, in how we're talking about trying to find savings here. And I think, look, I understand that there's a gap

[00:44:00] and we need to close it and we will find ways to close it. There are also opportunities at the state level to close it. But I just think that there continues to be a difference in how we are doing things on our side of the table and at least the information that you're providing to us.

[00:44:17] So, for instance, we have an agency reductions document, and I just want to go over three particular instances that I think show the challenges that we have on our side of the table. One, you'll notice Agency 71, the Health Department, you'll notice a proposed reduction of a million dollars related to eliminating the speech and hearing program.

[00:44:39] I don't know whether we're going to take that yet, but if you look at the reduction, it says that the county's program is no longer necessary due to significant private sector capacity, Medicaid coverage, and legislative requirements for similar services in schools.

[00:44:54] I have no doubt that people who use that program will be disappointed to hear about that cut. No doubt. But we proposed it this year because we did an analysis as to whether it was really necessary or it was a nice to have based on the fiscal reality.

[00:45:13] That's one example. Another example is if you look at Fund 40,000 County Transit Systems, we have proposed 7.2 million in cuts to our bus services, which will impact approximately 600 passengers per day.

[00:45:29] Now, every one of those passengers is going to be annoyed by those potential cuts. But we looked at our county transit services, and we decided what bus routes were underutilized, what bus routes did we think there was an opportunity to backfill on. and we put out an agency reduction at least as something that we would all consider.

[00:45:49] Are we going to take every bit of those \$7 million? We'll see. But again, nice to have versus need to have. The last one I'll point out is in fund for 40,040 Fairfax Falls Church Community Services Board. This one I think is important. We are proposing to eliminate a vacant division director position. This is something that people obviously get very exercised about, which are the people on both sides of our budget who frankly make a lot of money for public servants. And a vacant

[00:46:23] division director makes a lot of money. That's a potential cut right there of \$292,000 by taking a high-level administrator that we have had in the past but is now vacant and taking it out of our budget. Now, every one of these choices is difficult, but we keep putting these out here and trying our best and probably failing at times. I mean, I don't like any of these. I don't like a lot of these cuts, but that's what we

want to see as we go through this process. And I don't think that is what we always feel on our side of the table with respect to the approach. I think that

[00:47:00] candidly, for me at least, when I see the first number and I hear \$43.8 million gap, but I also know that last year the school transfer went up by \$124 million, and this year the request was to go up by \$138 million. Take \$14 million out of that \$43 million gap. I don't think anybody thought that we were going to end up having more money this year to go to the school transfer. And then on top of that, we also know that good thing, very good thing right now, by the way, the prior governor's budget added about, I think it's 53 million into the baseline, but also had changed

[00:47:39] to VRS, which is going to benefit schools to the tune of about 52 million. So that's pretty good, right? And that's before we even see the new governor's budget that just came out and will be fought over. We won't know exactly. So I actually think we're a lot closer than we think.

[00:47:55] There's also, it's still, by the way, 22 million in extra reserves on our side of the table. So I think we should be very honest about where we are right now and about our approach moving forward. And I had intended to ask more questions than speechify, but I get in the room with all of us politicians and I just screw up.

[00:48:14] So thank you. I'm done. Thank you. Well, as the educator in the room, the lifetime educator in the room, I don't find myself to be a politician. And I came to this meeting understanding that we were in this same boat, that we got to work together.

[00:48:32] we've been working together. And I have no interest in pointing fingers at anybody. I lived through freezes where our salaries became abysmal compared to surrounding communities. It's too bad I ran for office because I can't tell you that I would probably be making an equitable wage if I'd stayed, but I've been frozen. And just like on your side, it took you time to catch up in salaries.

[00:49:01] The majority of our budget is salaries. Now we're talking about cutting things to hurt kids. I just talked to a PE teacher this morning who has three classes over 40 kids. Three classes over 40. How do you teach health? Had to request 12 extra desks to cram into a room. Like, we were trying to put back in the budget the formula we took away last year. We were only going to put a 0.5 back. We really want to put 0.1 back. I mean, a 1.0 back. You know, I don't want to say, the Weldon Cooper study is fantastic. We all know the state is falling short. So I don't want to point fingers

[00:49:38] at one another, I want to point fingers at the state. And I think that's the collective objective here, okay? And yes, we've been down in the state. We, two years in a row, have given a fantastic presentation on the JLARC study to our VSBA cohorts who don't understand. Well, again, here's the thing. We talked to all of our folks in Richmond, all of our representatives. They understand our need. It's the rest of the state that doesn't seem to care. So do we now need to think about who we know in this entire state. I know someone who lives in Virginia Beach. Maybe I need to call

[00:50:14] the person in Virginia Beach and get them to talk to their person. Maybe I need to call people I know that live in the Blacksburg-Christiansburg area. Because until other delegates, until other school systems understand at the depth that we do, that the state is not giving them their due, they're not going to listen until other constituencies ask for the same thing.

[00:50:34] The way it's presented is all votes rise. That's what JLARC does. It's not that any system is going to benefit more than another system. And in terms of decreases, I just emailed William Solomon from HR,

but perhaps, Lee, you can answer this question or Dr. Reed. It's my understanding that we moved about 400 administrators and teachers in the past month. Is that accurate? Yes, ma'am. It's very close to that. We did not fill from outside positions, I want to say 400, to try to be more

[00:51:10] efficient. So to be clear, I just did 80,000 times 400. It's 32 million. It should be much more if you count benefits. And I'm getting annihilated by my constituency because I've had teachers that were revered and administrators revered who were moved. But they were moved because other places had enrollment increases and some of my schools had enrollment decreases. That's how you are fiscally and fiscally responsible. So I just want people to understand, you know, the state needs

[00:51:48] tax reform. As my colleague said at the beginning, the school system has no ability to tax. We are dependent on everyone else to do the work we do. But in the chair that I'm sitting in now as an educator, it pains me because I'm like, okay, I asked in our budget hearing this past week of Dr.

[00:52:09] Reid, please bring a budget that is at what we're projected to have if the state doesn't come forward with any more money. I think our constituency needs to know what's going to get cut, you know, because it's not going to be pretty. And we need to do it now if we think they're going to have time to go to Richmond before the session ends. But typically what happens is you cut, we cut, you get yelled at, we get yelled at. And it's not productive on either side because we're handcuffed by what the state's not doing. So, you know, you know, it's, it's an impassioned plea to

[00:52:45] the public to pay attention and understand, you know, I just got my real estate assessment, you know, okay. Yeah. I mean, it's unreal that I've, you know, the increase in since 2020 of \$8,500 a year, I don't have that kind of money. And we figured out how to make it work, but I understand how the real estate is painting our entire community. It's a problem and we can't keep, you know, go into that same source to find money. Um, it's not fair, but, but until people out there

[00:53:19] who not just us, others need to go, uh, I dream of buses, charter buses showing up in Richmond and just people filing out and demanding it's time. Right. So we'll see. But I just, I appreciate my colleagues on the board of supervisors. I appreciate the fact that five of you are former school board members and you absolutely understand our situation. And I do believe that, you know, we're not fat, okay? We're not fat and we're getting too thin. But it's not a result of the board of supervisors. It's a result of our state. Thank you.

[00:53:53] And Ms. Lady, I just want to, you know, as we move on to the next folks who want to speak, I do want to perspective build a little bit off of what you just said, because we're very close here compared to years we've had in the past. We're going to have some hard decisions to make, But I think we also have to be realistic that the gap that we have is a number that is extraordinarily doable by our partners in Richmond.

[00:54:15] It's not like we've set them up for something that is not doable. This is very doable. And when you look at what the county executive has included in the transfer request, it is highly consistent with the amounts that we have been transferring over the last five years.

[00:54:31] And each of those last five years, we have transferred over \$100 million more per year to the school system. That comes from predominantly that real estate tax conundrum that you just spoke about. And so while the state is talking a lot about affordability, a big piece of affordability in Fairfax County, as

you well stated, is what people have to pay in real estate taxes, especially since housing is the most expensive thing for just about every family in this county.

[00:55:00] And so these are real hard conversations that we need to be having. What you just illustrated in terms of what was done is exactly the type of thing we need to be thinking about because when we leave here, the big takeaway message for me is while none of this stuff is easy and this is a tough budget year, we have to look at this as an opportunity to rethink how we're doing things and come up with savings like the ones you just mentioned that may not be comfortable.

[00:55:25] And, of course, there's going to be people who complain to us. But that's why we're in these positions. We have to make the hard calls, call the balls and strikes. And in a difficult time, we have to balance people's ability to pay, which right now is very hamstrung. No matter where we go in this community, you're talking to people who are struggling financially.

[00:55:43] And we have to make sure that we're making the decisions that replicate the challenges that they're facing while still maintaining an excellent school system. But we are very close here. And I think there's a gratefulness, at least that I have, that we have a school system that's come forward with a transfer that's doable, that has left an amount to the state that is doable, which, by the way, is our money, our constituents' money we're just asking for back.

[00:56:06] And the county executive has put together a budget that understands that we cannot increase the tax rate when times like this are very difficult. And so we are positioned here in a good spot, even though we have some hard decisions to make. But we have to take advantage of this opportunity to make those hard decisions and make those changes because, as we just heard, next year is going to be difficult as well.

[00:56:28] So we have to be thinking more than just one budget year with the types of things that we're doing. So I appreciate everything that you just said and support that. And I think I just want to level set that with everyone about, you know, where we are at this moment. Ms. St. John Cunningham. Thank you.

[00:56:45] I kind of want to shift a little bit, and just as my colleague, I've also spent 26 years in the schools as a family liaison, someone that worked with a lot of our economically disadvantaged students or multilingual students or special education students. And as one of our board of supervisors accurately pointed out, even though there's a decrease in number of students, there's an increase of student needs, and that costs more money. And we're seeing the results of those extra supports for those students. And the society is valued by how we support those that are in most

[00:57:23] need. You have your typically developed kids that are okay, but how do we support the economically challenged families? How do we support our special education kids, our twice exceptional kids, our multilingual kids? They deserve the same as anybody else so that there is that equal playing field. Again, I was going to say, and Chairman McKay took the words out of my mouth, I was hearing everybody saying challenge, challenge, challenge, and we've got to start looking at it as an opportunity.

[00:57:56] What are the opportunities that we have to continue doing what we do? And you have heard me say this over and over again because I have been in the school system, and I have seen the cuts that we had last year, we did not attempt to restore. We cut monitors.

[00:58:12] We cut some tutoring. What's happening now is we have some classrooms. I now have some classrooms in my district that are at capacity. One more student, and they're over. again, 30 kids in a sixth

grade class. We have some caseloads for special education teachers that are at capacity because we have not restored what was cut. And all I have to say is the people, we're talking about dollars, I'm talking about people, and I'm talking about children.

[00:58:41] The people that are in our classrooms are incredibly talented and dedicated, and we consistently ask them to do more with less, and they do it. And they do it spectacularly. and I want us all to remember that. I did not come as prepared as I could for this because I just came here from Lewis High School. Our leadership program is one of the strongest programs that we have in this county. I sat from nine to two with these kids that were talking

[00:59:15] about civic engagement and how they could improve their community. They had a special guest today that has done that for her whole lifetime, and she talked to them about organizing and the importance of civic engagement. It was our civil rights leader, Dolores Huerta, was there today.

[00:59:35] She was working with the founders of the AI platform, the free one. Yeah, anyway, she was working with them, and they got a commission of people together to say, how should we regulate?

[00:59:50] How should we move forward? They had day-long conferences. Last night, she told me, we had some of the sharpest people in the world there. Some of these people were getting offered a million sign-up bonuses to be stolen from other people. She sat there and said to them, I'm going to ask you one question. How many of you here know who your state senator is, your local state senator?

[01:00:19] No one raised their hand. Yet we have a program in our county that is teaching kids to be civically engaged. She said this is the best program she has seen, and she has traveled throughout the world and throughout the United States. So investing in our children is investing in our future.

[01:00:49] And I have said this over and over and over again, an educated public preserves our democracy. And that's where we're at right now. We're at a critical juncture. So let's look for opportunities on how we can continue to invest in our children and invest in the staff that supports them, because it is critical. It is the very foundation of our democracy.

[01:01:14] Thank you, Ms. Cunning, and I will say for those watching at home, I am impressed by the fact that both of the budgets that we have here have absolutely prioritized personnel, and that is very clear in what the school board has before us and what our county board has before us in terms of adequately funding and compensating the most important asset we have on either the county end or the school end, which is our people.

[01:01:42] And, you know, for folks who haven't dug into the budget yet, somebody said it earlier, so much of our budget's tied up in personnel, and it absolutely is. And those pressure points on making sure that we stay within market and adequately fund our folks and adhere to collective bargaining agreements and other things are clearly the priority in the county executive's proposed budget and in yours.

[01:02:04] And I appreciate that. Ms. Marin. Yes, I do have some questions for the county executive, actually. So we've been trying to obtain some data points to help us better budget. One of these data points is the cost to run the school-age child care program, our SAC program, and since the MOU was last devised in the 1980s and transfers a million dollars to the school division to run all sorts of activities, we're trying to understand what the cost of the program actually is today, which involves a mix of county funds and school

[01:02:39] funds so that, is there a question or shall I finish? So that we can adequately analyze how to most efficiently pay for this program. So how are we able to get that data? Okay, you said you've been trying to obtain this. Who did you ask? I, that's not my department. Chris, could you either take this or write down the notes so we can do a budget Q&A? Sure, we'd be happy to provide that information. Thank you. And maybe I'm mistaken. It was my understanding. But I do hope we can, if we could get an MOU for SAC and get really clear on how much it costs and on whose budget

[01:03:17] side, that would certainly help us. And it is clearly in our budget. And so you can see in our budget where it's clearly delineated what those costs are associated with SAC in the county budget. Is that what you're looking for? No, I believe there's more to it than that.

[01:03:34] even how much it costs per kid, so that we can understand what the costs are. Is the cost being shared appropriately, proportionately? It's kind of in a trend of the schools being compensated for the wear and tear, in some cases.

[01:03:53] You know, utilities and running. And that actually leads into my next question, which is really more about facilities, if I may. Before we get to that, let me ask the county executive who wants to respond. Ms. Marion, if you could submit a budget Q&A of exactly what you're seeking, we will make sure you get that in that budget Q&A.

[01:04:12] Great. Thank you. I didn't know that was an option, so thank you. So in the bigger picture, though, with the facilities, you know, we all have aging facilities, failing mechanical systems and buildings. So it's important to have the data about the physical occupancy load, and that is how many people per hour per day.

[01:04:28] So we've been trying to get our data together so we know, again, the wear and tear on our buildings, So we could try to plan for when that HVAC is going to fail or when that parking lot needs to be repaved. So one of the things is analyzing all of our county assets together. Simply the value of the county facilities, because we are often saying we have \$9 billion in public facility assets.

[01:04:50] And that's helped us greatly to measure usage and investment. We're trying to figure out, again, our facilities are used for the instructional week, nighttimes, weekends. They're used at different rates. So if we can't pay for utilities past 9 o'clock at night, where perhaps could those programmings go?

[01:05:09] But until we have that full picture of data about all of the county-funded buildings, we're not going to be able to make those decisions, and then we end up with HVACs failing and people not being able to use quartz when they want. So what I'm asking is looking at all of the county data facility assets together, and then the final piece is, are there any available county-owned parking space where we can put some of our school buses?

[01:05:34] Because right now we're paying to lease parking spaces. And if we could understand if there's available space, we would love to make some of those savings. Thank you. Thank you, Ms. Marin. If you could, again, put that, we're writing everything down.

[01:05:52] We want to make sure we capture everything that you've asked. The one question I would ask you is, what facilities are you leasing to go with this? Because we're going to need locations to see if there's proximity concerns as well. Sure. I think there's a general need.

[01:06:08] But we most recently did just approve a contract at the end of last year. And just to the question of Richmond, I'm glad to have the opportunity to talk about that now. I didn't get to you in November. Absolutely, we are doing work. We are going to go down to Richmond.

[01:06:24] It got snowed out. We, too, have colleagues over on those bodies. Look, we alone cannot bring all the JLUC recommendations to fruition, which I believe was sort of just suggested. It's amazing that the state even gave money last year for some of the JLARC recommendations, and that came because of this board's leadership in the state.

[01:06:47] We talk to our counterparts all the time, and as a part-time board, I think we do a darn good job of it. So we're going to continue to keep doing it and would really appreciate a real partnership of respecting the work that we do because we're doing it. Thank you. Dr. Anderson.

[01:07:08] Yes, good afternoon all. Just a few things, but I'm going to pick up on the question of Richmond. Obviously, we are just one board out of 133. So one of the things that's really important for us to do is to connect more with the other school boards in order to have some collective advocacy on all of the J-LARC matters because it doesn't just benefit Fairfax County. And we've been doing that since the very beginning. As soon as that J-LARC study came out, I also want to give kudos to Ms. Marin. She came up with documents like one-pagers to

[01:07:45] really synthesize the data so we can have more informed conversations. And I am the state liaison on our board and she serves, I'm sorry, I'm the federal liaisons and she's a state liaison, but we've kind of partnered to, when we are with our colleagues through VSBA events, we've just split the room making sure that everybody understands if we're pushing these j-log recommendations with the people that we can impact we all benefit for it and that's just a long time occurrence and of course the regular conversations we have with our counterparts here and just trying to find ways to

[01:08:22] speak to the other people that we don't have general access to you know i can call senator marzen at any time and have a conversation about our needs but i don't know who the virginia beach representatives are. And so connecting with those school board members so that they can speak to those individuals or connecting us if those conversations, you know, are not happening have been ongoing. And, you know, we've had some successes. Would we want more? Absolutely.

[01:08:49] I don't think there's a single school board in Virginia that doesn't want more from the JLOC studies. So that work is happening. I appreciate the question. I did hear quite a bit from at least two to three people regarding how do we represent savings or efficiencies. And I have to say, Mr. Beerman, I was looking at this agency reductions piece. I think what this offers is a little bit more clarity in terms of how you all are addressing efficiencies.

[01:09:22] And I wonder, I do wonder, and Dr. Reed knows this because I asked about this in our last meeting, How can we perhaps provide something that is just as clear so that there could be no nebulousness in terms of what are the cuts that the schools are engaging?

[01:09:42] Because I do also have had similar questions about, well, we refer to the budget report. How do we bring that work into a piece of paper where we can all take a look? So that's going to be another wondering moving forward, like could we kind of copy this model a little bit just for clarity? The third piece that I had, this is just a question for staff because I also asked it of our staff, and of course they do not

know. This year there are some provisions that were stated outside of the, I'm sorry, within the transfer instead of outside of

[01:10:21] the transfer. And I'm just wondering what led to that approach. You know, certainly we had conversations with the boards last year about an out-of-state middle school after school as an example, right? That, you know, there were expenses on both the school side and the county side.

[01:10:43] And the proposal was, well, let's shift that over to the schools. Really, the only mechanism that we have to give money to the schools is through that transfer. So that we tried to be clear in terms of how we delineated it in our budget documents to show that that really was, again, kind of outside our base operating increase, but again, that's our mechanism to give money to the schools is through the operating transfer, so really, it's just kind of the, that's our mechanism. Okay, I appreciate that. It's just a little bit different from what has been done in the past, and I just had that one. We don't historically transfer programs over to the schools, so we, I mean, I

[01:11:19] can't remember doing that in a number of years, so I think that's why it's unusual, but that's really, that's just, that's the mechanism. Oh, okay. Okay, maybe I misunderstood something. So the middle school after school programs is being transferred to the schools altogether. So it's no longer going to have any connections to the county? Is that what I'm hearing? So the way it works right now is that the budget for that program sits in our neighborhood and community services budget. Schools actually expends the money, but then they essentially get an expenditure credit from the county. So the budget sitting on the county side, even though the expenditures are

[01:11:58] actually being spent by school staff. So we've taken that funding out of the NCS, or Neighborhood and Community Services budget. So that's being reduced. And instead, it's moving over to the schools. It's really just to kind of to simplify things. Again, schools are going to be going through the same process to spend the money. It's just how the dollars are actually now going to be all together on the school side. I will note we've also, and this happened in collaboration between county and school staff, you know, there was some discussion about a potential fee.

[01:12:30] We have actually transferred over all of the funding from the county to the schools, and we have budgeted potential revenue on the county side. So the risk will actually be borne by the county for any fees that are implemented in the 27 budget. And then we would do some kind of a reconciliation as part of the 28 budget. I'm not sure if I'm following. Fees for which program? For the afterschool? For middle school, afterschool. Okay, and that will be borne by the county? So we've assumed a revenue increase of about a million dollars, a little bit over, on the county side. So essentially for FY27, the schools are held harmless. We know that there was

[01:13:07] discussion and collaboration again between the county and schools of the intent to implement a but we've included that revenue estimate on the county side so that the schools will be held harmless and again the risk will be on the county for 27. So how does that show up in the transfer that one million dollars that you've just so so instead of for middle school after so for middle school after school instead of us netting down that revenue and transferring three and a half million dollars we're transferring over four and a half million dollars so the full program. Mr.

[01:13:42] We can put together a budget Q&A because I definitely have more questions. I'm a little unclear in terms of how that's working because some of it is new for me here. But I do look forward to getting greater clarity on this issue. Thank you. Mr. Chairman, if we can just...

[01:13:58] Hold on a second. Before we move, I want to let Mr. Hill have an opportunity maybe to clarify that. Yes, and school board member Anderson, if you could, as I stated to Ms. Marin, provide us in writing what you're looking for, we can answer that question because it is a question that we want to make sure that it's on the record and then we can move it forward for you, okay?

[01:14:22] Sure, I'll absolutely do that. I think I was just led a little bit more to more questions since new information came to light, but I will do that. Thank you. Yeah, and I would encourage, because we're not going to have time to do a second round here, I would encourage folks, like we always do, if you have questions, submit those.

[01:14:39] Because the benefit of submitting a question in writing is not only does staff have time to give you the complete answer to it, but everyone on both of our boards get an opportunity to read those budget Q&As, which are extraordinarily helpful in helping us decide how we navigate through our own budgets.

[01:14:54] And so if there is a question that you have, submit it. If it's a school's question, submit it to the schools. If it's a county question, submit it to the county budget office. But the more of those we submit early to, waiting until a week before the budget is adopted when our staffs are working hard on putting together the final budget is not necessarily helpful.

[01:15:13] So if you have those questions now in the next couple weeks as you're perusing the budgets, please submit those questions for them an opportunity to do that. Mr. Chairman, can I get some clarification as to whom I should submit the questions? Because I've never submitted questions to the county before.

[01:15:28] Yeah. Do you want to answer that, Ms. Jackson? Yeah, you could send them directly to myself, Christina Jackson, or you could send them through the school's budget office. Actually, Alice is saying, yes, do that, and then they'll send them over to us. If our board members could send them to the budget office as part of our budget question tool that we have, then we will make sure they get over to the county.

[01:15:45] Yeah, and the most important reason to do that, as opposed to a one-off, is that then all of your other colleagues get an opportunity to be educated on that issue as well. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Initially, I was going to ask, I was not hearing Mr. Chairman's instruction, limit my comments and ask questions.

[01:16:05] But since I can submit my questions in writing, then I'm going to use my time to make comments. Mr. Sherman, I want you to know that I am a senior citizen student at George Mason University, and as a senior citizen student, that I get newsletters from GMU.

[01:16:23] And this morning, a sobering part contained in this newsletter is what the George Mason University is putting out as our beginning teacher's salary versus affordability of housing, basically.

[01:16:46] 42% of Fairfax County public schools' beginning teachers' salaries going to pay for their rent, 42%. Wow. That is why we are all trying to better support our teachers and other staff who work for our students.

[01:17:09] You know, we all know that 90% of our budget are going to pay for paper. So last year, when you were making \$120-some million of budgetary adjustment at the last minute, It's position cuts coming with staffing formula adjustments, which results in, because most of our positions are formula-driven.

[01:17:36] You raise formula by one student, then you cut a certain number of teaching positions. That affects a number of administrators. That affects a number of counselors. Everything else goes into formula.

[01:17:51] And one of the things that the superintendent, first of the superintendents, was heeding the request from the school board to present the budget with a bare minimum request, which is what she did.

[01:18:09] And she also provided us with a list of things that we should be paying attention to, should there be additional funding from General Assembly. It looks like right now the situation is additional revenue that may be coming from General Assembly, please, will be devoted to meet the gap instead of addressing those additional needs.

[01:18:36] And the largest of which is restoring staffing formula adjustment we had to make last year and cutting a lot of positions. I think there's passion on the part of both of us, both sides, for our students.

[01:18:52] And I appreciate that, but I just wanted to make sure that you understand that that affected a lot of our classrooms last year. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you. Mr. McDaniel. Thank you. I like going last because then my mind changes 10 or 15 times between the beginning and the end, which it has to be.

[01:19:15] Depending on what you say, I might go last. So I would agree with the chairman's comments that in the context of budgets, the gap does not give me heartburn. And as my wife will tell you, I get heartburn very easily.

[01:19:31] What does give me heartburn are the decisions that are going to have to be made of how to close that gap. And as an example, I'm glad middle school programming came up because effectively now the middle school program is going to have to compete with everything else that FCPS does, which it is what it is. And when we look at competing against programs, fundamentally that means we're looking at competing against supports for students.

[01:19:53] And those are always very tough, very emotional decisions to make. I think the superintendent put out a very fair budget, the county executive put out a very fair budget. But as we continue this process, you know, I think both boards are going to have to go to the community and to Supervisor Beerman's point, be very explicit about what these tough decisions mean.

[01:20:11] As an example, I'm personally not willing to see any programmatic cuts to the middle school program, which means now we have to go figure out how to make that happen and what other cuts are going to have to go into place. Of the \$197 million of extra expenditures this year, \$178, but basically all but \$20 million is collective bargained salaries, benefits.

[01:20:38] So that's off the table. \$178 of \$198, give or take, is off the table. So there's \$20 million we kind of have to play with on the margin, so to speak. And I know that \$20 million out of billions and billions doesn't really sound all that much. But when we start talking about the impact that adds to the individual lives of kids and of families and of teachers, of administrators and of bus drivers and of police officers and of firefighters, that's where, you know, when that rubber meets the road, that's where things get tough.

[01:21:07] But that's why we're here. So I'm looking forward to the conversation that's going to kick off with the community and going out and listening and trying to put together a final budget package that

reflects our values. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. McDaniel. And I'll just say, I don't think there's anyone in our community that will be surprised to hear that we face a challenge.

[01:21:27] As I mentioned earlier, our families are facing challenges of unprecedented nature. And to me, I remember when COVID hit and we kind of froze everything. And in a lot of ways, the financial impact of what's happening at the federal level is not entirely dissimilar from that.

[01:21:43] And our families and students are experiencing that with their own challenges financially. And so the idea that the county has some financial challenges won't be a surprise. And, you know, when I look around the region and see what the district is dealing with and some of the jurisdictions around us, Montgomery County, We are blessed to be in a position, as you just properly characterized, we're very close here to meeting the needs of our community.

[01:22:06] And most importantly, the personnel needs, as we have mentioned repeatedly, that's our most valuable asset. The people who work for the county, the people who work for the schools are absolutely the passion that we all have and what makes our schools great and what makes our county services great.

[01:22:23] And I would say let's take advantage of this opportunity. You know, right before this meeting, and I know the schools are doing this, but right before this meeting, we're having a conversation about a basic thing, which is school crossing guards and how can we maintain public safety and confidence of our community and have school crossing guards better cover the county, free up police to do police work and save the county money at the same time.

[01:22:46] And we have piloted that in some schools across the county and seen no impact in terms of public safety. It's a creative way that we've been able to save money, free up police resources, reduce overtime, but still provide the service that people in our community want. And that's but one of many examples of the types of things that we need to be thinking about as we close the minor gaps that we have.

[01:23:08] And from context, in context, most jurisdictions would dream of having the situation that we have. And while any programmatic cuts are difficult for our community to take, nobody enjoys doing this. But the reality is we can come out stronger with looking at programs more critically, justifying them.

[01:23:27] As Supervisor Bierman mentioned, we have found some where, you know, we need to eliminate them and let the private sector and others pick up the slack on providing those services that are duplicative. And those are the type of granular things that in tough times you have to look at and make the sacrifices so that you can put your people first, which is what these budgets do.

[01:23:48] And so as we approach this and work through the General Assembly session as they're working, I think we do need to speak as one voice here and say, look, we don't ask very often in Northern Virginia for help, but we help the rest of the state all the time, every year, for as long as anyone in this room has been alive.

[01:24:06] We have been subsidizing the rest of the state. And now we have a disproportionate impact of what's happening at the federal level on Northern Virginia that is significant. It is not unreasonable for us with the backdrop of the analysis that's been done from J. Lark and Weldon Cooper. It is not an unreasonable nor an inappropriate ask for us to ask our members of the General Assembly to return more of the money that we invest in the state here so that we can continue to be the economic engine for Virginia.

[01:24:34] And I get offended when people ask me or say to me that that's an arrogant thing to ask for, You shouldn't ask for that. It is an entirely appropriate thing to ask for at a time where we're facing these fiscal challenges, and we have positioned them to solve this problem in a meaningful way this year and continue to chip away at what we know is a foundational problem and how public education is funded in Virginia.

[01:24:57] And if we're serious about affordability, as everyone at the state level is talking about, the best thing we can do for affordability right now is adequately fund public education. And in doing that, we will make a dramatic impact on the cost of living in northern Virginia that those teachers who are paying 40-plus percent of their rent on are also paying real estate property taxes that are increasing, whether they rent or own.

[01:25:20] They're paying those to the landlord. And so that's part of what makes that 40 percent number so high. And we need to be cognizant of that as we do our joint work moving forward. But I appreciate the candor of folks here. I would just say that the collaborative nature that we started this with and that we finished with is what is going to be necessary.

[01:25:40] We're in this together, as I said at our, and Supervisor Paucek repeated this, as I said at our reception with our legislators in Richmond, we represent the same people, not different people. They're the same constituents who are asking us to solve this problem.

[01:25:55] And we need to act that way and continue to collaborate with each other in the state level. But Fairfax has to speak for one voice. And the one voice I think we can all speak for is the studies that have been done and the fact that what we're asking for is highly reasonable and highly appropriate.

[01:26:11] And we hope this session can help close that gap and build off of that in future years, which we know has been presented here today, are going to continue to present some fiscal challenges for the county and the schools. And so we'll continue to work with you on that. I would continue to advocate for all of you to submit budget questions that you have, especially if they're granular. Submit those so that staff has an opportunity to give a thorough response. And I'll reiterate that sending those in sooner rather than later will help get those answers quicker. As we get closer to budget adoption, the work of our staff gets a lot more difficult. So don't send in 30 questions

[01:26:50] a week before the budget adoption date. Send them in now, trickle them in. And as was mentioned earlier, we have time here. The Board of Supervisors does not adopt their budget until May 5th, and so we are having these conversations early. We presented our fiscal outlook to you early so that there's no surprises here, and we have an opportunity to have those conversations with our colleagues.

[01:27:14] And so we've got the benefit of time here. Let's take advantage of it. and with that i'm going to ask uh chair anderson if she has any closing comments and then we are going to wrap up the only thing that i want to say is that i i see us going down the same path that we were going down a couple years ago and i want us to be careful is comparison is the thief of joy and so when we are comparing what's going on on the county side to what's going on in the school side it's not an apples to apples comparison we need to be careful and so we all understand the situation that we're in but pitting our noble professions against each other is not going to be

[01:27:49] the way that we're going to be successful so it's just as important that we have what what is necessary for our police forces what's necessary for our teachers and I think that we all fundamentally agree with that so I want us to be very careful on how we're speaking about these things to make sure that

they understand that too um so I am I am extremely grateful that we can end and finish on a positive note, and I want us to continue to work together to smooth out the edges of what we have moving forward. Thank you very much, Chair Anderson, and let me just make sure from staff we're not missing anything. Okay, with that, our meeting is adjourned. Thank you.



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