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Fairfax County School Board Budget Public Hearing, Tuesday, May 16, 2023

Date	Tuesday, May 16, 2023
Place	Fairfax County School Board, Virginia
Length	22m (video)

- Official meeting video (YouTube): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NF1r8B9mOjI
- Official School Board page (FCPS): https://www.fcps.edu/about-fcps/leadership/school-board

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

[00:02:03] board members please take your seats board members please take your seats we're going to get started the may 16 2023 fiscal year 2024 budget public hearing will now come to order agenda item 2.02 certification of closed meeting in order to comply with section 2.2-3712d of the code of virginia it is necessary for the board to certify that since the fairfax county school board convened a

[00:02:38] closed meeting on may 16 2023 to the best of each member's knowledge only public business matters is lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements and only such public business matters as were identified in the motion convened the closed meeting were heard discussed or considered by the board during the closed meeting do you have a motion miss corbett sanders is there a second miss tolan all those in favor miss marron miss tolan miss corbett sanders mr koufax mr frisch miss cohen ms pokarsky and myself that motion passes i will now have one more miss omesh and dr anderson have submitted written requests to attend virtually this evening's public hearing

[00:03:17] due to personal reading reasons all those in favor of granting these requests please raise your hand Ms. Bukarski Ms. Cohen Mr. Frisch Mr. Koufax Ms. Corbett Sanders Ms. Toland Ms. Marin myself that motion passes welcome uh Ms. Omeish and Dr. Anderson Ms. Omeish can we do a mic check please Ms. Omeish are you there I don't hear Ms. Omeish here is right now so when she comes on let us know but right now she's absent Dr. Anderson can we do a mic check please I'm here good afternoon

[00:03:54] good evening welcome dr anderson i'm going to turn the meeting over to our budget chair miss tolan thank you good evening and welcome to the public hearing on the fiscal year 24 proposed budget on behalf of the entire school board i would like to thank you for sharing your comments with us this hearing is being broadcast on channel 99 and live streamed at fcps.edu tv channel 99. we have 13 registered speakers who will address the board at this

[00:04:29] public hearing speakers are allotted two minutes and we ask that you stay within that time limit the timer will start when you begin to speak and the timer will sound after two minutes please ensure that your remarks are limited to the FY 2024 proposed budget if you have not registered to speak but would like to address the board please see the clerk or deputy clerk to sign up for one of the five extra reserved speaker slots madam clerk please call our first speaker

[00:05:02] Student number one Misha turnoff good evening my name is Misha turnoff I am a teacher and I'm here to speak about the change to Cigna insurance to help make my plea I'd like to reference one of my favorite TV shows Abbott Elementary the series is a mockumentary of life

[00:05:40] inside a public school in a humorous and heartbreaking way it depicts the joys of teaching the camaraderie of colleagues and the frustrations of an underfunded education system Imagine, if you will, a scene in the teacher's lounge where the main character, Janine, enters. Janine exclaims, have you all seen our new health care plan?

[00:05:59] I just tried to make an appointment with my OBGYN, and they said they don't accept her insurance. Lisa replies, yeah, I've seen it. I had to have my class watch Finding Nemo because I was on hold so long with the insurance company fighting an overcharge for my allergy shots.

[00:06:15] Jacob looks around. Hey, where's Gregory? He wasn't in yesterday either. Wonder what's going on. As Mr. Johnson wheels out the barrels, he answers, I'm not supposed to say anything, but Gregory told me he's really sick. His MS infusions aren't covered. He doesn't want y'all bugging him, all right?

[00:06:32] Janine chimes in. That's it. We are holding a rally to demand quality health insurance. We can do this. Barbara glances up from her coffee. Janine, honey, there is a slim to none chance of them giving us better health insurance. Time to stock up on your vitamin C. Janine looks at the camera.

[00:06:48] I have faith. I think they will bring us better health insurance. I am here tonight to say I wish I had as much faith in the system as Janine, but I do have her character's fighting spirit and will continue to speak up. While your employees suffer with Cigna, FCPS saves millions. We demand better health insurance now. In closing, when a premier school division cuts quality benefits by offering

[00:07:14] SUBPAR HEALTH INSURANCE. IS IT PREMIER? THANK YOU. AMANDA BROWN. DEFNIE WATERHOUSE.

[00:07:42] HELLO. I'M HERE TO SPEAK ABOUT EXPANDING THE BUDGET FOR PRESCHOOL SERVICES. RECENTLY THE SCHOOL BOARD VOTED TO ADD INCLUSIVE PRESCHOOLS TO THE FIRST GOAL OF ITS TEN YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN. I'M HERE TO SPEAK ON THE NEED FOR ENSURING THAT THE BUDGET CAN ACCOMMODATE AS MANY SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS AS POSSIBLE TO ENSURE THAT THERE IS EQUITABLE ACCESS TO INCLUSIVE PRESCHOOL OPPORTUNITIES. I ALSO WANT TO SPEAK ON THE NEED TO EXPAND the budget for related services which are provided both in an inclusive environments and in the preschool classroom-based services. Research has consistently shown that in intensive services and inclusive preschool experiences early on can lead to requiring fewer services later in the

[00:08:18] student's academic career. National longitudinal research tracked children with a developmental delay and found that 46 percent did not need special education by the time they reached kindergarten. In fact 36 percent had no disability and were not receiving services while 10% had a disability but did not receive services. Although the remaining 54% continue to receive services that is a drastic reduction in need for continued services and a potential cost savings for the school district if the investment is made early on. Early intervention is critical for children with developmental delays. Many special education students qualify for receive services through ITC but these

[00:08:55] services are not continued upon entering the FCPS system. The highest rate of return in early childhood development comes from investing as early as possible from birth to age five. FCPS should be focusing on the first years for the greatest efficacy and effectiveness. Having inclusive preschool classrooms would be less resource intensive because inclusive classrooms are a more manageable setting for teachers. The neurotypical students serve as behavior teachers and can reduce how many hours of special education services a child would need to teach appropriate behavior. FCPS should see preschool services as an investment in their students and in fulfilling

[00:09:32] IDEA. As a parent, I do not plan my child's development year to year, but instead for his lifetime. I'm going to stop because I'm not going to be able to finish. Thank you. Thank you for your time. Karen Hershey, David Walrod. Good evening, Chair Sizemore Heiser, Dr. Reed, members of the board. Your employees are watching the budget. We saw the board of supervisors pass

[00:10:09] the budget providing an average pay increase of 7.5% for all public employees. We saw that the supervisors recognizing the danger of unfilled police officer vacancies and understanding that Fairfax County needs to be competitive to recruit officers, increased starting pay for officers by 15% and current officers by 12.83%. We also see the county now has the largest recruiting class in a decade. We saw the Board of Supervisors proudly announce their expected 8% raise for public employees. We saw leadership explain the savings that would be made by changing insurance to Cigna. However, with this change, we've seen our out-of-pocket costs increase exponentially

[00:10:46] to include higher co-pays for urgent care and mental health services, higher deductibles and annual out-of-pocket expenses, and fewer in-network providers. We've seen people's lives get upended by having Cigna refuse ongoing treatment for cancer, surgeries, and preventative procedures for life-threatening illnesses. We've seen a history of frozen pay. We saw no MSA in FY20, no step in FY22, neither in FY21. We saw this district turned down millions of state dollars meant for pay increases in FY22. Our experienced teachers see the new salary scale each year and the difference between where we should be and where we are. We see good teachers leave for

[00:11:25] local districts with better pay. We've seen so many of our colleagues leave the profession because of a reluctant career change, early retirement, or better pay in a new district. We see our special educators burning out. We see our colleagues training to support new teachers without traditional training. We see the drain that comes from our most experienced teachers retiring mid-year. Your employees are watching the budget. Your students are watching the budget. Your community is watching the budget. Students at Fairfax County deserve the best teachers we can provide them and that starts with compensation. You talk about the importance

[00:11:54] of educators. Don't tell us in words. Prove it with the budget. Thank you. Jenna White. Good evening. My name is Jenna White. I'm the vice president of communications for the Fairfax county council

pta fcc pta there's a lot of great things in this budget tonight or this year tonight i just wanted to highlight um one aspect that we're really excited about and that's something dr reed has talked a lot about and that's youth participation in sports and particularly highly

[00:12:31] how that can help support our mental health needs for our students i did a quick search and i found this great resource from the President's Council on Sports, Fitness, and Nutrition from 2020. And it has four pages of studies backing the research around the benefits of youth participation in sports.

[00:12:53] So not only around mental health and physical health, but there's a lot of great information here around educational success, academic achievement, and lifelong learning skills. I also noticed one that caught my eye, an article about the use of developmental sports for traumatized and disadvantaged youth.

[00:13:12] So we know that for the 67% of all students and youth who have experienced one or more adverse childhood experiences or ACEs, the key for them is connection. And there's no greater way for them to experience that outside the classroom than through sports, arts, or other extracurricular activities.

[00:13:33] So again we just really want to thank you for bringing sports to middle schools in particular. We look forward to hopefully in future years maybe looking at intramural sports for high school students for students who haven't been able to do travel sports or have opportunities to engage in things like that in ways that we can take some of the burden off of the booster clubs and get more of that support into athletics so that we can use our our volunteers to do other things and not put that burden on

[00:14:01] them and providing that equitable access. Thank you. Ruby Beckwith, Samantha Williamson, Kevin Hickerson. Hello, good evening school board, Superintendent Reed. Kevin Hickerson, I'm from

[00:14:37] Chantilly High School and I'm speaking as an individual tonight. I sent you all an email earlier today about the top step and how while it seems like a good idea in theory, it's actually counterintuitive and it's actually bad for your employees. Here's why. The extra step that will be placed at the top of the scale that is proposed will affect around 7% of your employees. The other 93%, while they'll get a step, are still stuck in basically the same position that they have been stuck in for the last four years. For instance, in 1920, when I came back from my FBA position as

[00:15:16] president I was seven years from the top of the scale with no steps for two years I was still seven years from the top of the scale last year when you all put a step at the top of the scale I am still seven years from the top of the scale if you do it again I will still be seven years from the top of the scale so we have to think about this if you do this you'll have 25 steps on the the teacher scale as a new teacher comes in next year with the same rate of no steps in the last 15 years, which is five to six, I think there was a half one year, but five to six, if you have

[00:15:52] a 30-year career, you're expected to miss 10 to 12 years of step. So to get to the top of the step scale, it will take 35 to 37 years to reach the top of the scale. Now, if you're a mid-year person coming in, and we're trying to bring in everybody that we can, if you're a mid-year person and you've come in at 35 you have no chance of reaching the top of the scale you'll be 70 years old and i think a lot of people like to retire by that point so you'll see you'll see the email if you take a look

[00:16:30] you have questions to ask me um the simple answer cassandra alcoin she's virtual so we're just waiting hello you can proceed okay thank you hi uh good evening my name is cassandra alcoin my

[00:17:08] children went to the Fairfax County Public Schools. I'm a longtime Fairfax County community member as well as a taxpayer. My husband and I are one of many homeowners this year that have seen our real estate taxes go up again after last year due to the FCPS's ever-increasing budget that is not $3.5 billion. That's $800 million more than when you started as school board members. We're also one of the many homeowners who, although we no longer have our children in the Fairfax County public schools, we're very concerned where the public education is going. We have seen falling

[00:17:46] achievement scores, learning loss from COVID, uneven and incomplete safety and security measures at the school, and some overcrowding at the schools. And those are just some of the issues. And in your current budget, I don't think these are adequately funded. So on May 9th, the Board of Supervisors had approved. They approved your budget, basically. They're going to transfer over 50% of the Fairfax County's budget to the Fairfax County Public School budget that's and with federal funding all the other funding it's pretty much well funded 3.5 billion so between now and May 25th when you adopt the 2024 budget you have an opportunity to make some changes and I would call

[00:18:23] on you to consider addressing some of the issues that I mentioned taking a look at your administrative positions look at your non-school-based positions which have grown since 2020 stop funding some exorbitant legal fees and consider any office or program that does not directly add value to the child's education safety or well-being as places to redirect funds from i like many fairfax county members want a good public education system here in fairfax county and we need to spend our dollars more responsibly and last i'd let's say we need a deep dive budget on the on the fairfax county

[00:18:58] public schools budget before 2025 so that we can make sure that our children's education is well-funded and they can excel in the world. Thank you. Robert Rigby, he's also virtual.

[00:19:15] Good evening all. I am Robert Rigby representing FCPS Pride. FCPS Pride is an organization for employers, families, and allies that believe that all people should be welcomed, safe, and respected in our system, including LGBTQIA plus students, staff, families, and volunteers.

[00:19:40] We have a request for dedicated budgetary hire. Many school districts across the country have put positions in the budget and hired liaisons for LGBTQIA plus folks.

[00:19:56] Many school districts also have advisory councils or boards, many of which include students specifically aimed at this population. The desperate need is manifest when we see the constant harassment in public and private.

[00:20:17] Are we allowed to say specifically that we have LGBTQIA plus liaisons and an advisory board? Can't we just put queer people under MSAOC, General Ombudsman, generally in the equity positions? A resounding no.

[00:20:34] It takes resources for other people and dilutes them, and it doesn't really work. Can we rely on student clubs, employees' organizations, and community groups? Certainly we should work with them.

[00:20:51] But the well-being of our students is our system's responsibility and should not be reliant solely on outside organizations. So put this in the bucket, sooner rather than later. Thank you for listening.

[00:21:09] Angela Peabody. right madam chair that was our final speaker thank you we don't have any walk-ins signed up well great I don't see anyone in addition that has come in that whose name we called earlier that this budget hearing is adjourned thank you everyone that showed up



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