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Fairfax County School Board Forum, Tuesday, June 23, 2026

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- Official meeting video (YouTube): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LAVf07nlxOM>
 - 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 2026-10-27. Each paragraph starts with its time [HH:MM:SS] in the meeting video.

[00:00:01] The 23-2026 form on energy-saving performance contracting and energy service companies is called to order at 10:41 a.m. and virtual participation. Mr. Dunn has submitted a request to attend this morning's meeting remotely due to personal reasons as he has a business meeting as located in Alexandria, Virginia.

[00:00:24] The chair has performed an initial review of Mr. Dunn's request, having found it to be in compliance with the school board's remote participation resolution, The chair has approved the request. Mr. Dunn, please check your audio and video. We can see you. Yes, my video is active, and I hope you can hear me.

[00:00:41] We can hear you. Thank you. I now ask the board members who are physically present to vote on the following. All those in favor of confirming the chair's approval of Mr. Dunn's request. Okay, that is Mr. McElveen, Mr. McDaniel, Ms. Anderson, Ms. St. John Cuning, Mr. Moon, and myself.

[00:01:02] All those opposed? Dr. Anderson. We will now discuss the forum topic, energy savings, performance contracting, and energy service companies. Mr. Dunn, please present your forum topic. Thank you.

[00:01:18] So I'm really excited to present this forum topic because, as all of you know, we have heard presentations regarding the CIP several times over the past three years, and for those who have served longer on the board for years beyond that.

[00:01:34] And one of the most important things that I have noted in the CIP is that we have a growing infrastructure backlog, which is approximately \$400 million a year if you look over a multi-year period and is growing at 8% to 10% per year.

[00:01:52] That is alarming. There are school districts that have infrastructure backlogs that grow to the billions of dollars. And that is a hole that is almost impossible to dig out of. So what we want to do is be proactive and thinking of creative ways to try to address that infrastructure backlog and think outside of the box. And one of the best ways to approach this is through ESCOs. And I believe that the forum topic original memo that was provided on is posted on board docs. If not, then I can

[00:02:30] circulate by email afterwards. But ESCOs is a contractual arrangement originally developed by U.S. Department of Energy in partnership with industry, whereby third parties assume responsibility, financial responsibility, for maintaining and upgrading infrastructure, such as HVAC.

[00:02:50] And it requires typically no upfront costs, so it doesn't cost you anything more than you're already paying for HVAC or other systems. But the third party essentially gets paid by being more efficient because they specialize in that type of infrastructure and uh and and the savings that they generate through their economic investments and activities uh pay them whatever they need to be paid so it's almost magic from a layman perspective because it's not costing you more

[00:03:24] but you're getting reduced risk reduced financial obligations because third parties are assuming those obligations and this is a very tried and tested type of contractual arrangement it's used extensively in the federal sector it's used extensively in the private sector and it's newer to public school districts depending on whether they have a tradition of this fairfax county recently executed a contract with a single esco service provider

[00:04:01] but um virginia through the virginia energy plan has 19 different service providers who provide a wide array of um of different services and uh and at a very cost-effective rate because they're competitively negotiated um by the by the commonwealth and so the purpose of this forum topic is to um ask the superintendent to investigate the virginia energy plan and the 19 service providers and then to provide a report and recommendation back to the school board.

[00:04:38] If I may, am I allowed to ask a question? - Yes. - I'd like to ask Dr. Reed to just comment on her experience with ESCOs and whether she supports this request for an exploration of this potential topic.

[00:05:01] - Thank you, Mr. Dunn, and you and I have spoken about this, and Mr. Gordon's also here. I will say that I'm very supportive, and we've used ESCO agreements in my prior work in other places. It's an ability to, I think, be financially thoughtful, efficient, and do work at scale that would support the goals we have as a division.

[00:05:29] So I'm very supportive of looking into this. In fact, we have met with the Fairfax County provider, ESCO provider, we met back, oh gosh, in February with a group and there's some really promising options available to us, so I'm 100% supportive.

[00:05:51] - So with that, I'm happy to open up to any questions. - Thank you, Dr. Anderson. - Thank you, thank you Mr. Dunn for being this forward. Anything that's going to help us stretch our dollars is always of high interest to me.

[00:06:09] - Just a couple of things. What you're requesting, just so I can confirm, is a review in terms of how such a protocol could be applied to FCPS. Can you just kind of tease that out a little bit more?

[00:06:24] Or is this a permission? - Sure, and I neglected to mention at the outset that Carl Frisch and I brought this together and collaborated closely throughout this process. So I just want to give due credit to Mr. Frisch. he's unable to attend today due to work obligations.

[00:06:44] So ESCO is a potentially powerful tool whereby we would be able to, as a school division, address in a very comprehensive manner, a key infrastructure such as HVAC, but not limited to HVAC. And so because we don't have any existing contractual arrangements, there's kind of a choice here.

[00:07:07] We can go through the county, which has a single service provider with a limited set of services for which it acts as an ESCO, or we can go through the Virginia Energy Plan, which has 19 service providers, and we can potentially contract with multiple service providers for different types of infrastructure.

[00:07:27] So my preference would be to go to the larger set of cost-effective service providers who can provide a wider array of ESCO services, but that's an operational responsibility of the superintendent.

[00:07:44] So this is intended to ask the superintendent to look at ESCOs generally, right? And to look at the options of county versus the state Virginia energy plan program and come back with a report, nothing fancy in terms of report, but just a report and recommendation on how we can leverage ESCOs to address our growing infrastructure backlog and then which program, county, or state is preferable.

[00:08:15] Thank you. So it's an ask for information, essentially. Dr. Reed, perhaps Mr. Gordon, I don't know if you have familiarity with this kind of system, but can either of you speak to the benefits? Since you've used this in your last system, Dr. Reed, I think I heard, can you speak a little bit in terms of, again, broad brush, What are the benefits that you've experienced using this kind of system?

[00:08:39] Well, I think that we are looking at environmental goals as well and making sure we're able to achieve some of the jet goals and those types of things. And working with ESCO providers can often enable us to more efficiently and at scale move projects that we might otherwise want to do, but maybe have to delay based on funding and our ability to move on those contracts.

[00:09:14] So I think some of the benefits are having a third-party partner in getting that work done, which also, you know, one of the things we know is that time creates cost escalation. So if we can do some projects in a more expedient manner, we're going to have less cost escalation.

[00:09:33] And so at the end of the day, that in and of itself is a savings because as we project over time, things just get more and more expensive. I'll ask Mr. Gordon also maybe to add to that real quickly. - Hey, thank you, ma'am. I concur everything the superintendent said. And I would add the current ESCO contract that Mr. Dunn mentioned is that it's single use.

[00:09:53] We're looking at one school at a time, but currently looking at West Springfield to go in, look at ventilation and look at how we recommissioned current chemical systems that are currently there with

the purpose of getting to an energy star kind of certification. So we'll look at West Springfield and look at maybe eight or nine other schools.

[00:10:10] - So the benefits of having multiple of these ESCOs, it's because we could have multiple projects going on at the same time. - In line with what Dr. Reed said, and also is how do we become more energy efficient? And then there's a cost savings. So an example, I give one example of mine, we did a Anadil conversion of LED internally, where we see that that will provide a cost savings of roughly \$35,000 a year.

[00:10:32] And the \$280,000 that we spent operationally to do that will pay back value about eight years. So there's purpose to do that. So can you confirm the statement that I made is having multiple of these contracts allow us to parlay multiple projects at the same time?

[00:10:49] So I think outside looking in, the answer would be anytime you have multiple opportunities, it would be multiple contracts. And if you have multiple vendors, you would see cost savings with competition. Thank you. And just last question, kind of walk me through this a little bit, because the way I have it in my mind, a typical contract, we hire a vendor X, we pay them X amount of dollars to do this job, and then they move on, or we handle it internally.

[00:11:12] Using these types of companies, what's the difference in terms of the process? Well, the process is going to be, I would say, it's also a payback, right, return on investment. If we're using other people's money, then there's a payback for them, right? And so usually that payback comes in the cost savings that we receive from energy efficient type of, whether it's LED, whether it's geothermal, whether it's some sort of solar panel installation.

[00:11:37] And so there's a payback value for them. And then they're gonna see, it may not be every instance works or broad, it might not be to have a broad suite of options that work in every instance, right? So there has to be some sort of return on investment for that individual company to do that.

[00:11:52] - Sure, I think you lost me a little bit in terms of we're using other people's money. whose money are we utilizing? - So there's a couple of different options, right? So some of our neighboring counties are using their own capital dollars to do that. But what was initially started in the conversation was other investors coming in to provide money to support enhancements or projects for us.

[00:12:11] So I think there's two ways to look at that. - So we would have other organizations investing? - Potentially. - With us? - Potentially. - Dr. Anderson, I have a PowerPoint presentation from the group we met with that I can share as part of my report back that Mr. Dunn's asking for that I think will really make it much more clear.

[00:12:35] It's a longer than five minute, I think, explanation, but it does increase our ability to be accountable, I think. I've seen that work well, as well as a streamlined, faster project procurement, scheduling and logistics, because you have a partner taking some of that work, in addition to the cost savings on energy bills which then get put back into new projects.

[00:13:02] And right now, we're a bit stalled on some of those projects just because of capital dollars at this time. - No, sure. I think on its face, I am supportive of what's happening here and maybe I should wait until the full report comes.

[00:13:18] I just want to kind of make sense of it in my head because the way that I think I am visualizing it, It's similar to many districts where I've worked before, where they have, for lack of better words, kind of

outsourced certain services. Would that be analogous to that, or am I just off base?

[00:13:38] I think there are options. It's a continuum of collaboration to full outsourcing, to maintaining more control. Like, there's a continuum, and I'd want to make that part of our presentation back. But it really supports progress on a variety of our goals.

[00:13:57] And I think I look forward to learning more about the 19 opportunities in the Commonwealth. We're very familiar with the one contractor in Fairfax County, I believe it's CMTA that we met with, that works with our county government. And we've never used that company.

[00:14:14] We do have a very modest contract, I think, with them, or a modest relationship maybe would be a more accurate term with them. Correct. currently writing a contract through the county we can ride their contract so i know that that's been a conversation but again for sort of one-off projects and i think what i think what the board has done honestly in the last year or so when you commission like the facility condition assessment across the system i think that was wise right because we're getting one look at everything to get a baseline i think looking at esco more broadly will give us similarly i think a more

[00:14:52] division-wide systemic look at this topic rather than sort of one-off project so I look forward to that and the team's certainly willing to explore the work sure I mean certainly more information is better than less I just I don't think my mind has pivoted into the differences between this well not the differences but how this will be executed between what we're proposing now in our typical contracts but i will wait to see your powerpoint and i'm happy to support mr dunn thank you mr

[00:15:27] moon but i will support this i'm always interested we should be as we should be looking at how to generate more cost savings or do things more efficiently but with that said with that said uh obviously we all uh we should all be looking more detailed on how this is gonna be actually implemented including you know we normally use our either operating money to pay for certain maintenance items or we use our capital fund to do

[00:16:01] our renovations you know some small larger scale and when we do when we use a cap even when we use a capital fund that interest rate we do pay is substantially lower than what it might be you know getting you know from sort private contractors. I assume that these are all private, you know, they will go with bottom line is to generate profit for them. So with it in mind, I mean, since I don't have a whole lot more information on how this works, that in the past we had a similar efforts made by the school system

[00:16:39] which we stopped after a certain number of years. So once I get the report back from the superintendent, I want to be able to compare those two. And also before, even before, you know, superintendent comes back to us, I want superintendent and staff to take a look at how we did that in the past and why we stopped.

[00:16:58] Thank you, Mr. Moon. Ms. Anderson. I'm generally supportive of the idea of this. I do have a few questions, and I'm not expecting answers today, but there are some things that I just would like us to look at.

[00:17:17] This is very similar to the solar replacement or the solar installations that we're already doing. so I understand that the cost savings of those would be significant over the lifespan of the item but I do understand that in the past part of the problem has been their repayment for that whatever the item is the lifespan it's kind of corresponds because it's it's it's generally designed that way and again it's a way that

the companies can continue to make money so I do understand that there will be cost savings and that there's an environmental impact of a lot of these things that are beneficial on their own But I would like us to be looking at how many of these types of projects across the division are viable.

[00:17:57] Because if there is not a repayment through the system, I'm sure that at the end of whatever the time period of the loan is, that we would have a substantial repayment that would be required in order to ensure that the company has recouped everything that they intended to.

[00:18:14] So I would very much like to see how the contracts are created, particularly, and to determine which projects are the most viable. So is this, you know, I don't necessarily look at HVAC systems from schools that were renovated within the last 10 years. However, looking at schools that are at the end of their lifespan, you know, what renovations or what replacements of systems can be done in order to get them to the next renovation.

[00:18:41] because i was heavily in part of a school that kept saying well we're going to get renovated so we can't do that yet um and so if we can solve those problems for folks then i am all on board as long as it still can be integrated within the school renovation so i i'm supportive of this today to get some more information but i do have some questions mr dunn can i make a comment please yes please okay please um i this whole concept is going to be an interesting one to talk through right because we're also talking about buying and selling energy units it's not

[00:19:17] just capital dollars so there it's almost I want I don't want to say it's like crypto but it's a it's another currency that we will need to be conversant in if that makes sense and so it will make more sense but yeah there are contracts around energy units which will be a another conversation so I'm i'm looking forward to delving more deeply into that thank you miss st john cunning thank you um

[00:19:51] and thank you to uh mr dunn and mr uh frisch for bringing this forward um and i was part of what mr moon was talking about i remember when we went into the energy savings um initiative under dr garza where we did have a third party um vendor come in to take care of that and then i think mr moon i I think the third-party vendor no longer worked with us, but some of those people were retained as FCPS employees, and the same work is still going on.

[00:20:21] I think that was more cost-effective. Like my colleagues, I'm generally supportive of this. I do have some questions, and also questions about what the qualifications are for someone to become an ESCO, an energy service company, and how we're going to look at their track records.

[00:20:42] Again, my concern, as one of my colleagues brought up, was, you know, if there's a third party doing this, like, what's in it for them? And if we don't want to be left or caught holding the bag if the terms aren't met, and that might increase, you know, what our outlay may be at the back end.

[00:21:05] However, just hearing from the superintendent about energy units, which is a whole other dynamic, I can see where we would have to go. So generally, anything that can help decrease the renovation queue at length time and can improve our systems.

[00:21:21] And from working in our schools where I too was like, no, no, we're not gonna replace this until the renovation. And I understand that dynamic and what our students and teachers need to be happening in buildings for them to be comfortable and for it to be viable.

[00:21:37] So anything that can decrease the queue and improve the environment for our students and teachers, I'm very supportive of. - Dr. Reed. - Yeah, I think one summary statement that might help is an energy savings performance contracting, ESPC, it essentially reallocates, it's a financing tool that reallocates energy cost savings to facility improvements.

[00:22:07] So it's a reallocation of what we would save in energy costs to do our facility improvements. So that's where we see some real benefits. And this third party helps enable that. So anyhow, more to come.

[00:22:25] - Ms. Lady, may I have a turn? - Yes. - I just wanted to mention quickly, first of all, I appreciate all my colleagues' comments. Mason Trimble, who's the head of the Virginia Energy Program has offered to come in person to make a presentation to the school board about the Virginia Energy Program and all of the benefits it offers.

[00:22:55] In addition to offering a list of 19 potential service providers, they also provide technical assistance. So there would be that add-on through the Commonwealth that would, I think, be of additional benefit.

[00:23:13] And so happy to help facilitate the conversation or connection between the superintendent and Mason Trimble if the board is interested in getting a presentation like that.

[00:23:28] - Thank you. I'm gonna take a quick turn. So Dr. Reed, it sounds like you met with some of these folks in February. Is this already in place? I mean, is this already in motion? What Mr. Dunn and Mr. Fris are asking for? 'Cause it kind of sounds like it is, I'm just. So what I can say is that we don't currently have a contract with the firm that works with our Fairfax City, or excuse me, Fairfax County government.

[00:23:54] They also work with Loudoun Public Schools and Prince William County Public Schools. But we did meet with them, and they have done work, energy reviews in our division. I know Eric's team, Mr. Gordon's team, has met with them, and we're looking at the possibility of writing the contract.

[00:24:10] We also have to, as we look at that, there has to be enough potential energy savings for them to be interested in working with us. Does that make sense? So I think they've looked at about 40 of our schools so far, Eric, or there's a plan to look at?

[00:24:27] No, they've looked at eight. I'm sorry. I'm thinking of a different project. So we're in the process of exploring it. And I think that the other 19, or maybe this is one of the 19, that's a good conversation for us to delve into as well and to review all of those options.

[00:24:45] We've really only looked at the one that currently works in the Fairfax County government and our neighboring school divisions. We've not looked at the other 18, so that we can certainly take a look at that. I think that's one of the asks. Yes. Okay, so that helps differentiate what's going on from what we're potentially asking to have go on.

[00:25:06] I guess my question is, is this something that staff can manage in terms of the time commitment? I mean, everything sounds fantastic if it can save us money and that could be churned back into maintenance. But I'm just curious about staff time and whether it's...

[00:25:24] So the review of the 19 groups and the processes in Virginia and how we might benefit here in Fairfax County Public Schools will take a little bit of time for sure. We can manage that. I think if we settle on a group or a contractor or that we all agree this process has potential for us, then it should actually save us time, staff time, If it got up and running at a scaled level that we were all comfortable with,

[00:25:59] the idea is it should save procurement, project management, some time on our part. But like anything, it takes staff time for the initial lift. And depending on how our facilities and the work we have in the queue matches up with the energy resources that we could benefit from, that's when we'll know how much more, how much staff time can be saved.

[00:26:29] - Okay, that's great. And I had another question, but I forgot it. So I'll go back to Dr. Anderson and maybe think of my other question. - No, just two quick things. I'm glad to hear that there's some education that needs to happen on this for all of us because I was feeling as if I misread something or did not read something.

[00:26:50] It's a little bit more technical than I think I realized walking into this conversation. So I'm really looking forward to that conversation. And if we have access to some experts that can help us expedite that, I would definitely want to throw my support behind that.

[00:27:05] Additionally, I believe Mr. Moon had raised that this was a, at least some version of this was in prior practice, NFCPS. So I would also want to lend support to knowing, is it the same, is it different, and if it's similar, why was it abandoned and again i don't know how many years ago that was but we're in a new day and i think there's some opportunities here to pursue um i just wanted to add those two things i really am looking forward to learn more because half of the things you just said did not really land super well with me not because you didn't articulate it well it's because i think i'm

[00:27:45] lacking background thank you i do remember my question and then i'm going to go to mr mcdaniel is that I do not see a timeline in here. So is that, I'm just making sure that we're perhaps moving something form that's not time bound because we don't know how long it's gonna take.

[00:28:03] Is that fair? - We did, so we, Mr. Frisch and I brought the forum topic, I believe in January, roughly January, but I welcome correction by Ms. Anderson, if that's incorrect.

[00:28:19] And I think just busy school board calendar US FROM BRINGING THIS TO A WORK SESSION BEFORE TODAY. I THINK THERE'S BENEFIT TO MOVING MORE QUICKLY, BUT WE DIDN'T PUT A FIXED DEADLINE IN THERE BECAUSE THERE'S A LOT OF STUFF GOING ON WITH OUR FACILITIES DIVISION, SO I WANTED TO PROVIDE FLEXIBILITY TO THE SUPERINTENDENT.

[00:28:43] THANK YOU. MR. MCDANIEL. MR. DUNN, I BELIEVE IT WAS SUBMITTED IN MARCH. THANK YOU. So I don't have any heartburn about the superintendent coming back to the report.

[00:29:02] Some of the questions that I'll be looking for in that report, I just kind of wanted to raise here to flag those. And it's similar to some of the lines that Mr. Moon was going down. It's on the financial side of the house because, look, anytime you use somebody else's money to pay for something up front, you're going to pay a premium on the back end.

[00:29:19] So the question becomes, within the context of Fairfax County's perfect, very highly valued AAA bond rating, what we can borrow at versus what a contract like this would give us in the long term on a rate, benchmarked against any potential savings, because we're already a pretty energy-efficient jurisdiction.

[00:29:39] So it's that cost-benefit analysis that I'm going to be looking for when this comes back. And also, I think there needs to be some conversation, some analysis on whether or not if we do go out and

have a bunch of these contracts in place and increase that, effectively increase a borrowing rate, what would that look like in terms of debt on a balance sheet?

[00:29:57] What does that look like in terms of bonding capacity? Does that have any impact on what the rating agencies, Moody's, Standards and Ports and Fitch, what they look at? So on that financial side of the house, that really needs to be fleshed out because, as we all know, we don't have our own taxing authority.

[00:30:13] We don't have our own bonding authority. We're kind of at the mercy of the prevailing jurisdiction on top of us. But if there are ways that we can target this to upgrade some systems and realize some savings and use that savings in the long term in a financially smart way to pay off that upfront investment, I'm all about it.

[00:30:31] So thank you. All right. Thank you. I don't see any more placards. So I will adjourn the forum as of 11. Miss Lady, we need to do a consensus.

[00:30:47] Oh, consensus. I thought it pretty much sounded like consensus, but we'll ask consensus votes. Ms. Brown's going to put something on the screen so that we are all on the same page. So then we will now consider the consensus when it appears.

[00:31:20] Okay, this reads, the board agrees to direct the superintendent to report back to the school board on the school division's previous, current, and potential future plans to use Virginia Department of Energy's Virginia Energy ESPC program to help address FCPS's deferred maintenance backlog. those in favor that's unanimous for board members in the room including mr.

[00:31:40] Dunn so the board agrees to do this now this forum has ended at 11:12 will not take a short 10-minute break before starting the work session thank you



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