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Loudoun County School Board, School Board FY26 Budget Work Session, Thursday, January 30, 2025

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[00:05:54] Good afternoon, everyone. I call to order this January 30th, 2025, Loudoun County FY2026 operating budget school board work session. Before we get in to everything today, before we begin tonight's meeting, I want to take a moment to acknowledge the tragic plane crash that occurred last night over the Potomac River.

[00:06:26] Our hearts are with the families affected, especially those in our LCPS community who have lost a loved one. This is a devastating moment for many, and we stand together in support of all who are grieving.

[00:06:42] In honor of those we have lost and those impacted by this tragedy, I ask that we observe a moment of silence.

[00:07:44] Thank you. We're going to go ahead and start with our item two disclosures, and I will start.

[00:08:08] As a member of the Loudoun County School Board, I make the following disclosure to the school board and to the general public in connection with the item on tonight's agenda regarding the budget and or health insurance and related benefits and any other discussion that may include or affect benefits for LCPS employees, specifically as a school board member and eligible to receive health

insurance and related benefits as an LCPS employee. These benefits, however, affect thousands of employees well in excess of the statutory three employees whose interests may also be affected, of which I [00:08:43] am included. I can and will participate fairly, objectively, and in the public interest. This disclosure will be reflected in the public records of the clerk of the school board for five years. Ms. Chandler. Thank you, Madam Chair. As a member of the Loudoun County School Board, I make the following disclosure to the school board and to the general public in connection with the item on tonight's agenda regarding the budget and or health insurance and related benefits and any other discussion that may include or affect benefits for LCPS employees. Specifically, as a school board member, I am eligible to receive health insurance and related benefits as an LCPS

[00:09:20] employee. These benefits, however, affect thousands of employees well in excess of the statutory three employees whose interests may also be affected, of which I am included. I can and will participate fairly, objectively, and in the public interest. This disclosure will be reflected in the public records of the clerk of the school board for five years. Thank you, Ms. Chandler. Mrs. Griffiths.

[00:09:43] Thank you, Madam Chair. As a member of the Loudoun County School Board, I make the following disclosure to the school board and to the general public in connection with the item on tonight's agenda regarding the budget and or health insurance and related benefits in any other discussion that may include or affect benefits for LCPS employees. Specifically, as a school board member i am eligible to receive health insurance and related benefits as an lcf lcps employee these benefits however affect thousands of employees well in excess of the statutory three employees whose interests may also be affected of which i am included i can and i will participate

[00:10:21] fairly objectively in the public's interest this disclosure will be reflected in the public records of the clerk of the school board for five years thank you thank you mrs griffiths uh mr astraffy

[00:10:33] Thank you Madam Chair. As a member of the Loudoun County School Board I make the following disclosure to the school board and to the general public in connection with the item on tonight's agenda regarding the budget and or health insurance and related benefits and any other discussion that may include or affect benefits for LCPS employees. Specifically as a school board member I am eligible to receive health insurance and related benefits as an LCPS employee. These benefits however affect thousands of employees well in excess of the statutory three employees whose interests may also be affected of which I am included.

[00:11:01] I can and will participate fairly objectively and in the public interest. This disclosure will be reflected in the public records of the Clerk of the School Board for five years. Thank you, Mr. Streffi. Ms. LaBelle. As a member of the Loudoun County School Board, I make the following disclosure to the School Board and to the general public in connection with the item on tonight's agenda regarding the budget and or health insurance and related benefits and any other discussion that may include or affect benefits for the LCPS employees.

[00:11:32] Specifically, as a school board member, I am eligible to receive health insurance and related benefits as an LCPS employee. These benefits, however, affect thousands of employees well in excess of the statutory three employees whose interests may also be affected, of which I am included.

[00:11:51] I can and will participate fairly, objectively, and in the public interest. This disclosure will be reflected in the public records of the clerk of the school board for five years. Thank you, Ms. LaBelle. Ms.

Chernoff. Thank you madam chair as a member of the Loudoun County School Board I make the following disclosure to the school board and to the general public in connection with the item on tonight's agenda Regarding the budget and or health insurance and related benefits and any other discussion that may include or affect benefits for LCPS employees Specifically as a school board member I am eligible to receive health insurance and related benefits as an LCPS employee these benefits

[00:12:27] However affect thousands of employees well in the excess of the statutory three employees whose interests may also be affected of which I am included I can and will participate fairly objectively and in the public interest this disclosure will be reflected in the public records of the clerk of the school board for five years Thank You mr. Knopf and I'm sure my school board members will help me remember when this when Vice Chair Donahue gets here she needs to read her disclosure when she gets her all right we'll move on to item 3 school board budget discussion before we start with our questions and discussions miss Willoughby and miss Boland would like to

[00:13:05] address some of the questions we've been receiving about retiree health care. Ms. Willoughby and Ms. Boland. Yes, I will start us off with this. I'll start with also that the packet that you have this evening includes answers to all questions that we have received to date.

[00:13:22] So we have no outstanding budget questions, which is in line with where we're at in this budget process. As I had mentioned, we should begin transitioning to really working to support the school board in costing and crafting any budget questions. motions that you would be looking to make on Tuesday evening.

[00:13:40] So again, the door remains open for any phone calls, emails, discussions that I can do to help you in that endeavor. Included in the packet were a number of questions that school board members had received related to the retiree health care plan. A couple weeks ago, Ms. Bolin and I presented on compensation, and we talked about changes to health plans and specifically with the retiree health plan.

[00:14:07] We neglected to include the amount that LCPS was going to contribute to the RHRA plan, which stands for the Retiree Health Reimbursement Arrangement Account. That amount is going to be \$400 per month. This information is also included in the revised budget resolution that was uploaded into BoardDocs this evening as well, so that it's very transparent and clear related to that.

[00:14:34] In addition to that information, I will now turn it over to Ms. Boland and to provide additional information related to the actual plan itself. Thank you so much, Ms. Willoughby. So to start, I just want to say that the HRTD and the business and finance team worked tirelessly with our consultant to work through some of this.

[00:15:00] And there are a lot of challenges when it comes to retiree health care. the Medicare Advantage plan that our 65-plus retirees currently go into is not without its own struggles. We get many concerns because it is a one-size-fits-all plan.

[00:15:16] There are no choices. You get put in the plan, and there are provider pushbacks. There are additional hoops that you have to jump through because it is a managed care plan. The new RHRA account that would be set up for our 65-plus retirees, beginning for those that turn 65 as of January 1st of 2026, would be, just as Ms. Willoughby said, an account in which LCPS provides \$400 a month for that retiree to make their own choices about which

[00:15:55] health care options they need to individualize the supplements to their Medicare plan that best fit their needs. So this isn't taking anything away. This is giving essentially the choice back to the retiree to make the best decision for themselves. Outside of that, if you have already turned 65 plus, we're not making any changes, you would remain in the Medicare Advantage plan.

[00:16:24] And like Ms. Willoughby said, we did update the information to make sure it was clear that the \$400 was listed there. We've done research and put in various information to make sure that that was a reasonable amount.

[00:16:40] Now, granted, things could change, and again, we could reassess in the future. But at this time, that is a significant amount to help fund any type of Medicare supplement. And I think that's all I have to help clarify at the moment.

[00:17:01] Thank you, Ms. Boland and Ms. Willoughby. Board members, do you have any specific questions about that part right now before we start the other? Ms. Chernoff. Thank you for that information and thank you for the response I'll read through all of this when I get a chance But I was wondering what if you could just revisit what was the impetus for the change?

[00:17:25] Was it because of the cost was it cost driven or was it because of the complaints of the one-size-fits-all plan? So I would say both We are always reassessing Two things costs for for health insurance coverage, but also what's best for our employees So there's a difficult balance of trying to struggle or trying to capture both items.

[00:17:51] Of course, what this does for us is this provides stability for cost, but it also provides stability for our retirees because we know what to expect. We can plan for what to expect, and that means so can they.

[00:18:09] We know it's \$400. We can plan for \$400. So, yes, I would say cost is always, of course, a factor, but this provides stability on both sides. Okay, and then with the other plan, the Medicare Advantage plan, what was LCPS putting in per employee monthly with that plan comparatively to the \$400 they will going forward?

[00:18:32] Was it significantly more per month? So the problem is there's a range. There was no stability. There's no One-size-fits-all type amount for the Medicare Medicare Advantage plan So even though it was a one-size-fits-all plan the cost varied whereas now we're not going to be on a one-size-fits-all plan But we'll be on a fixed rate. That's correct. Okay. That was my main confusion So I appreciate that clarification. How much did it vary when we pulled information?

[00:19:11] We have about 2,000 current retirees and else LCPS's contribution ranged from as low as 25 a month to as high as um 1 634 a month and this was all related to the plan structure and just the complexity of that plan any other questions thank you okay so um

[00:19:46] the reason we're here this work session was to dig in a little deeper if people so chose um so i'll start with on this side because i always start on the other side so let me start

[00:19:59] with Ms. LaBelle do you have any questions they didn't need to hear all that I have a question

[00:20:44] about school bus washing stations that would be I guess Mr. Lewis are the washing stations that you're planning to build one several do we own property to put them on or are they going to be added or amended I know we have one so if I'm if I'm understanding your question the school bus washing

stations are in a capital budget and not here in this budget and so those would be things that we would take place and we haven't picked a location for

[00:21:22] that at this point okay I'm mistaken because they were on page 79 of this budget so I just I thought they would be here and that's a summary of the CIP that the school board adopted back in December and so the in here it's just a summary of that but we can certainly have that conversation offline if you'd like to do that and we can talk about how what our long-term plan is for that okay thank you I have more questions but I'll let somebody else have a turn while I find them okay dr. she I do not have any questions thank you chair okay

[00:22:01] mr. noff thank you madam chair I have a few questions and just a few things I wanted to clarify about past questions one of the questions that popped out to me thank you for the chart on what was left out of the sea on I really appreciate that it's important for us to see you know how those prior those prioritized decisions were made I noticed on there there's I'm very grateful that the art stipends are included but I saw that the art fine art allotments were not included can someone clarify what the difference of the two I know we've covered this in CNI but I wanted the public to hear what the

[00:22:38] difference between those allotments that were left out versus the fees and I mean versus the stipends that were included thank you but sure enough are you asking about the monetary amount?

[00:22:54] Yeah, just what the allotments would go to versus what is included in the SEON. The stipends are included in the SEON, but the fine arts allotments line item says it was left out, and so I just wanted clarification on that. Yes, one of the items we discussed about potentially supporting our fine arts programs are to adjust our allotment table.

[00:23:15] Those would be just a base level source of funding for our programs at each school. Not having the allotment table in front of me many times that's a number of students or per program Whereas the stipends will go directly to pay a staff member to stay after school To work with a group of students on a fine arts experience at the discretion of the principal. Okay, thank you And then you know, I also noticed that I mean I think just I don't know what the curiosity is of the rest of the board But I think I'm gonna want to definitely do a deeper dive into stipends in general

[00:23:52] There is an undercurrent of an unspoken value system here that I'm struggling with. It's giving me a little bit of heartburn. I see so many proposed stipends in the CYON list that was left out. A couple of them got in, and I'm grateful for some of those.

[00:24:08] Some of those I personally advocated for. So I'm very curious about how those lines are drawn, continuing to uncover how we look at those job descriptions and sort of how we maybe standardize some of that so that we can begin to really understand where that money goes and why, because I'm left just a little bit flummoxed with the whole process because there's just a list of things that just didn't get in and why we're putting one over the other and in terms of importance.

[00:24:38] I've tried to kind of unpack it, and I can't really get there for this budget cycle, but I'm hoping to kind of do some more work around that as a board in the years coming. I will be fully transparent. I am possibly working on an amendment to figure out how to get athletic trainers fully staffed, two per school.

[00:25:00] I think that, you know, I think we have to be careful with that aspirational goal term because I know what it's saying. It's saying we want those things down the road, but it's also saying we can't have them now, and the safety of our students cannot be aspirational. So that's just in comparing things.

[00:25:17] I'm going to work hard to get that. I think it's \$737,000. additionally some of the items that we had talked about in curriculum and instruction in terms of right sizing the elementary specialists I feel a little disappointed that librarians weren't included overall in the budget just because we had talked about that possibly being a hinge point for allowing librarians to be staffed like specialists seeing the answer in the budget it's a big number so I had hoped we could kind of start chipping away at that i don't know if we'll be able to get that in this time but there's a lot of nuances that go into

[00:25:55] the elementary master schedule and it's giving schools a lot of um and teachers some some struggles and we've we've tackled that in committee and and i want to remain committed to making sure that we are staffing our schools appropriately so that they have those flexible options to have planning time and also meet the developmental needs of their students um i have met with staff and Chair Mansfield about the after-school program, and we've kind of talked through some options there.

[00:26:25] In thinking about this, I have some wonderings about whether five schools is the right approach. I want as many to have the opportunity, but I also want to do things really well, and I think I've stressed that in the past, so perhaps trying a two-school pilot might be a little bit more manageable, and I am also working on possibly reconfiguring some of those funds to add in a coordinator position that would solely focus on doing some real research from Montgomery County and some of our neighboring counties that do these programs to really make sure that we execute it well and that we can grow it from there.

[00:27:05] Tutoring, I continue to have some questions about whether or not tutoring is needed, especially as it relates to flexible staffing. I think that we need to give flexible staffing a shot. And we need to see what that data tells us when we hire those licensed professionals that are there to work specifically with those students.

[00:27:25] I think that that will help move the needle faster because it will be needs-based staffing instead of numbers-based staffing. So I want to think about that money and maybe think about that in relation to athletic trainers. And the last thing I want to talk about is Lexia because I have hit on that quite a bit.

[00:27:45] And I did have a chance to meet with some staff members this past week to kind of get some more clarification about what that money actually represents. And the money is coming from the support that we have in our district for the Virginia Literacy Act and the requirements to have only certain programs are approved on the state list.

[00:28:06] And Lexia is one of those programs, Lexia core five in elementary, which is what's in the budget, is one of the only program options that hits all five core skills that students may struggle with. And I, my heartburn with it is about the digital platform.

[00:28:24] And I have a real problem with kids that are of highest need, are tier three learners, a lot of which who struggled because of COVID and digital learning. have a hard time wrapping my brain around digital platforms fixing that for them and so I'm going to run it through curriculum and instruction committee we're gonna address it head-on we're gonna look at the guidelines and how we're rolling that out in order that that platform is being used appropriately with students and I do think that those things are in motion and so I appreciate the conversations with staff so while I remain skeptical about all of that I do

[00:29:02] understand the need for the service and the platform so I appreciate all of my colleagues questions I really learned a lot through what you all were asking and I think it's been fruitful in terms of getting some information so thank you Mr. Streffy thank you very much madam chair thank you all I don't have any new questions or clarifying questions based on the packets appreciate you all taking the time to give us the level of detail that we needed.

[00:29:36] From my perspective, I do agree with Ms. Chernoff around the desire to understand the decision-making and the thought process around stipends. I think it was a lot for me to process, and I still have open questions.

[00:29:54] I would like to just re-emphasize kind of how pleased I am at the focus around needs-based staffing and flexible staffing. If I'm reading the numbers correctly, there were 173.6 FTE increases that were aligned to new investments, and 74.8 of those were for flexible staffing, which is, I think, anywhere, and I've said this before, anywhere that we can double down on needs-based staffing, we double down.

[00:30:26] And you all heard that really well based on what I'm seeing in the budget. From my perspective on the after-school pilot, definitely agree with Ms. Chernoff on the coordinator role. I think that's super smart.

[00:30:43] I would like to get, you know, I would like to see, and this is just me, I would like to see a full five schools, if not even a few more. And that's just my perspective. I think being able to get a really good sampling and give this a shot if we are going to hire a third party to really implement this, that we are able to get a good sampling of schools, knowing that each school community is different and has different needs.

[00:31:11] Definitely not-- I mean, open to any and all conversations around that, though. I think it is exciting. I'm very excited at the prospect of even trying an after-school program pilot and seeing what other divisions have been able to accomplish, including in Montgomery County and other counties.

[00:31:27] So excited about that. One of the questions that I've asked in our packet has been about IB program expansion, and so one of the motions that I'll kind of set, I already set this up in the packet asking for the cost, but one of the motions that I'll probably move forward with is adding funding or looking for funding that would be necessary to begin IB program expansion at Parkview High School.

[00:31:55] I think it is a wonderful opportunity for us to really bridge the gap that we see in terms of the availability of AP courses or the diversity of courses that we can offer there and just the opportunity to get students to be able to enter into IB at Parkview.

[00:32:15] So we'll likely put forward a motion for that. So that's it for me. - Dr. Deans. - Not a lot of questions. I had some general ones And I got some of them answered already.

[00:32:34] In the budget, there were several pages related to the charter schools. And my assumption was that once they were given the schools, that we would not do additional upkeep.

[00:32:52] But there appeared to be some upkeep for the charter schools in the budget. That was my only concern.

[00:33:07] Ms. Chandler. Thank you, Madam Chair. And thank you to the team for providing such comprehensive answers to the questions that we've submitted in writing. I will also say thank you for providing the context around the additional four FTEs.

[00:33:24] For speech-language pathologists, I am heartened to hear that that allocation should go at least a step towards addressing the workload for those very important employees.

[00:33:41] And I'll be curious to see how we proceed towards increasing some capabilities along that department in the future. I will echo some of the concerns shared by my fellow board members, or concerns, or maybe I'll say curiosity.

[00:34:01] I'm very curious about the stipends. And to the point where I would really like to understand how the calculations are made, because I notice even that the same coaching positions across sports might have a different allocation, and is that done by days or number of students? It's definitely something I'd like to understand better, and then I will also say I find myself wanting to understand more about what the

[00:34:35] value might be in the tutoring services. I definitely will echo some of the concerns that have been shared previously by other school board members in terms of whether or not they're following evidence-based best practice but I guess if that's something that could be addressed now I would appreciate it if you I know we've talked about it quite a bit but three million is a large allocation and I would like to hear how the tutoring services are providing benefit to our students sure thank you miss Chandler so I will say that the three million

[00:35:12] dollars is currently planned for two purposes: a small amount of money to continue the virtual option for students who need that virtual option outside of school on their own time, and the bulk of the three million would be allocated to schools based on the number of students who need tutoring based on their achievement data. In terms of progress thus far this year, we are just in the coming weeks able to see growth from fall to winter so unfortunately I don't

[00:35:48] have any data that I haven't already shared with you from last year at this point because because it's because of the timing of the year I will say that the tutors that are in place in the schools are either hired by the school on a part-time basis which is what we are intending to do in the future or they are contracted with a third party and they are using evidence-based practices but as you can imagine it's hard to manage that from a division level so we really rely on the schools to to include tutoring in the school day

[00:36:27] where it makes sense for them which is why we think moving forward allowing the schools to have that allocation to use for part-time funds makes the most sense thank you so about the evidence base there was a rumor that university tutors we're going to be using video e modules for literacy is that correct in their training I would need to confirm that I don't know that for sure I don't want to misspeak thank you okay mrs. Griffiths thank you madam chair I do have a couple

[00:37:05] questions and then an amendment as far as the tutoring goes I had mentioned that sometimes we're paying up front and we're not getting all the students that are taking advantage of the tutoring.

[00:37:22] So if you could provide that data, my understanding was you had said all spots were filled, and I believe that was for varsity tutors and all-in for tutoring. Is that correct? Thank you for that question, Ms. Griffiths.

[00:37:39] I did provide information regarding your questions in the most recent packet that you just received. So if you have any follow-up questions, I'd be happy to provide that. But yes, I did say that all of the 500 seats that we have allocated through varsity tutors are currently filled and being utilized in

addition to other free options for students in grades K through 12, including on-demand virtual classes, drop-in tutoring, live chat features, and essay reviews for high school students.

[00:38:15] Thank you. I'll take a look at that. And also, I want to thank Ms. Willoughby. She's working on, per your question on stipends, Ms. Chernoff. I, too, have questions on the stipends. Some of the clubs, some get stipends, some don't.

[00:38:33] So I think we need to evaluate all the stipends. And I really appreciate, I believe you just sent me all the information on a lot of my questions. I did want to make an amendment. I don't know if I could do that today, but I did want to go over in alignment with the president's executive order.

[00:38:55] I would like to make an amendment to eliminate the division of diversity, equity, and inclusion and accessibility. This measure is necessary to ensure compliance with federal guidelines and to protect \$24.6 million in federal funding that supports critical programs for our students.

[00:39:13] This is so LCPS will be in compliance and does not risk losing this federal funding. While this adjustment reflects changes in federal policy, I remain committed to fostering a learning environment where all students feel valued, supported, and prepared for success.

[00:39:32] I will continue to uphold policies that promote respect, inclusion, and academic excellence for every student. I recognize the importance of transparency in this process and encourage open dialogue today as we work to implement these budgetary changes while maintaining our commitment to our student achievement. How will you comply with this executive order? If not, then what? I asked last year to put the money in special ed and our teachers, a total of about \$3 million. How will

[00:40:08] this look if we do not give better raises to our teachers, special education teachers, cafeteria workers, janitorial staff, bus drivers, etc. The list goes on. Much needed positions. Do we want to risk federal grants as well? If we do not eliminate DEI, are we willing to ignore the executive order from the president and risk losing \$24.6 million in federal funding and a state grant of \$7.2 million if the governor follows suit. This would be a 31.8 million loss to LCPS. I am asking for the

[00:40:47] 3 million to go to our teachers and our students. Data has not been provided to this school board on how DEI has helped our students. I have not seen any improvement in our Title I schools and that's why I would like to make this amendment today and if you can put it on record. Thank you. Thank you your thoughts um mrs griffis i just want to remind you that we're not making amendments today and that would be for tuesday so um it's yeah you can repeat the actual amendment um but i appreciate

[00:41:23] your thoughts for today thank you do you have any other questions i do not um i just got the information on uh from miss willoughby to go over a lot of my questions that i had already and i think that covers everything so thank you thank you it occurred to me as we passed by dr. Deans I'm sorry that maybe you might want to have an answer to your question about perhaps charter schools by mrs. Willoughby mrs. Willoughby did

[00:41:58] you want to yes thank you for that and I confirmed with mr. Lewis I was also aware there was a little bit delay on our part of not jumping in right away that there are no capital improvements for the charters in the book because we do include the capital budgets as part of the overall budget book there is a section that begins on page 101 regarding the funding that lcps provides to the two charter schools so we are the funding body that provides funds to hillsborough and middleburg the formula is based on our cost per pupil times

[00:42:35] their enrollment and then those funds is what those school boards or those two charter school boards used to run their individual schools so it's not necessarily for the upkeep it would be more they utilize those funds for the operations of their school because I think when we heard heard upkeep we're thinking like capital improvements as part of the discussion that had occurred last year so hopefully that provides some clarification regarding why you see

[00:43:01] charter schools and the budget book. Thank you, Ms. Willoughby. Before we move on, Ms. Vice Chair Donahue, would you mind stating your disclosure? Thank you, Madam Chair. I apologize for not being able to be here on time. As a member of the Loudoun County School Board, I make the following disclosure to the school board and to the general public in connection with the item on tonight's agenda regarding employee salaries, the budget, and or health insurance, and any other discussion that may include or affect salary and benefits for LCPS employees

[00:43:40] specifically my spouse my minor children and I are enrolled in LCPS health insurance that may be affected by any potential changes to employee salaries the budget and/or health insurance additionally my sister-in-law is an LCPS employee who does not reside with me and is not dependent on me these subjects include thousands of employees well in excess of the statutory three employees whose interest may be affected of which my spouse my minor children my sister-in-law and I am included. I can and will participate fairly objectively and in the public interest. This disclosure will be reflected in the public records of the clerk of the school board for five years. Thank you Vice Chair Donohue. Vice

[00:44:18] Chair Donohue, do you have any questions that you would like answered today? I do not. Thank you Madam Chair. I also want to thank Ms. Willoughby and staff for putting together all of the information that we have before us and working with us to answer questions and I appreciate the questions that have been presented by my colleagues which have been helpful working through this process. Thank you Vice Chair Donohue. I would

[00:44:49] like to echo some of my colleagues thoughts about the stipends. Makes me a little sad because I want to have more stipends for people who are really facing and working with the students like our special education teachers and you know um that is kind of what I want to be sure we're focusing on are the people who are actually facing the students um I also have some questions because

[00:45:26] I don't understand the athletic the athletic stipends and the differences and everything um mostly because I wasn't a you know a sporty person I was not sporty spice um so but I also have some questions about like the and I was an arts person so I have some questions about stipends for all of the different high school arts and theater and vocal coach and all the rest of that and I wanted to be sure that it just went to one person that one person can't get like four stipends

[00:46:06] could someone answer that question for me thank you Ms. Mansfield so let me just start by saying I appreciate all the questions in regards to stipends.

[00:46:25] HRTD has worked with the Department of Instruction, a variety of different departments, to really hone in on a criteria for stipends. A few years ago, Mr. Sorokin asked that we review stipends and look at a tiered approach, which unfortunately was out of our budget.

[00:46:48] The team is still looking at criteria and to revamp stipends, and so more to come on that. That said, we did make sure that when we implemented the theater stipends, that we were clear that it was one stipend per person, per season, or per show, or whatever the segment was.

[00:47:13] Thank you. The other thing that I'm wondering is about the school psychologists, And thank you for answering my questions in this particular packet, Mrs. Richardson. Could you tell me, you said there are four school psychologists that left the role and these positions were backfilled.

[00:47:37] What do you mean by that? Thank you for that question, Mrs. Mansfield. We currently, as a division, have 17 school psych vacancies. We had four school psychologists to leave during the 24-25 school year to date.

[00:47:55] And so when I say they have been backfilled, their responsibilities and school assignments have been reassigned to our existing school psychological staff members. So does that mean they're doing more?

[00:48:11] Yes. Okay, sorry. I have a real concern about this, and my understanding is that Fairfax pays, and thank you for these numbers, could even be, what, \$20,000 more per school psychologist.

[00:48:31] And so we're losing to Fairfax? That is correct. Three out of the four school psychs that have left this school year have indicated that they were leaving for more compensation to other school divisions. One left because their spouse's job had reassigned them.

[00:48:52] So I would like to find out how we could help with that situation because we have eligibility and then we have triennials. And that kind of makes me nervous, not having people do that assessment and actually making one person do even more assessments.

[00:49:12] I see that there could be a sign-on bonus or a retention bonus or something. I would like to work with somebody to help us do something because I don't want our psychologists to leave. I'm on page 11.

[00:49:32] So Mrs. Mansfield, if I may? Yes, ma'am. The sign-on bonus for school psychologists is part of this budget cycle, part of the request for this budget to add school psychologists for sign-on bonuses. Additionally, the team is working through a policy change that will ultimately, in regards to placement practices, that would potentially find a way to provide recognition for our school psychologists

[00:50:05] interns, as far as experience is concerned, if they intern with LCPS. So there is work to look at other adjustments outside of just compensation as well. So your thought is to make, to have interns do the assessments? No, ma'am. It's, so we have school psychologist interns that intern with us. And during that internship, we don't currently, by policy, recognize that experience

[00:50:40] as a step placement practice. And so we would like to adjust that. And we are working through, that is a, I shouldn't say different than compensation, that is a different form of compensation to adjust rather than just simply adjusting the scale that helps the individual who interned with us to get that experience recognized as part of their placement on the salary scale.

[00:51:10] Well, so why would that be better than if they have their minimum scale at \$75,000, we have ours at \$69,000, how would that be helpful? Well, it's not better. It's just another way we are trying to assist, because what does happen with school psychologists is and and other positions too is that once we go up Fairfax goes up it's a little bit of a game we've been here before especially with this position so we are well while we we could do both if you would like that's great but we're trying to find other avenues that also would

[00:51:49] help support thank you for that information I learn new things every single day um any other questions Ms. LaBelle yes I was looking at the program that was presented and it mentions one of the screenshots mentioned lead special education teacher elementary school \$1,061 school-based MANT trainers \$1,061 elementary

[00:52:25] fine arts \$1,061 lead social worker elementary \$3,973 And then we have the 3IB, Creative Activities, Essay Coordinator, and Theory of Knowledge Coordinator at \$2,575.

[00:52:47] Why is there such a distinct difference between these stipends? So thank you, Ms. LaBelle.

[00:53:04] So at the end of the day, what happens with stipends when they are reviewed is based on internal equity and external competitiveness. So if there is a stipend that is reviewed like the special education lead stipend that is similar to another stipend such as the elementary lead stipend, those two are kept consistent.

[00:53:30] And many of these stipends have been in practice for quite some time, and so there hasn't necessarily been a consistent approach in how they have been deemed or put on the scale.

[00:53:47] But moving forward, that is what we do. Equitably, we look across internally and externally to make sure that they are equitable internally and competitive externally. And if we don't have a current stipend, we look to our comparators.

[00:54:06] We typically look to Fairfax, Prince William, Alexandria City, Arlington to assess market value for those stipends. Outside of that, like I said, the team is doing a compensation review of how to create a criteria that would consistently place stipends.

[00:54:29] The big thing with this is, though, really looking at those stipends and being prepared if a stipend doesn't currently meet the criteria for what they are receiving, being prepared to either move them or recognize that we're overpaying that stipend.

[00:54:45] And so there will be some questions and some hard decisions once we have that criteria. Thank you. Appreciate it. When talking with Ms. Chernoff and Dr. Ellis about the potential coordinator for the tutoring, my understanding was that this person would also be doing the arts and the summer program and things like that.

[00:55:14] After school program, not tutoring. I mean, sorry, after school program. Enrichment program, sorry. Thank you, Ms. Mansfield. So, originally, the position that you did not see in the SION was for summer school programs, specifically at the elementary level, and tutoring.

[00:55:39] And we decided that we could, while not ideal, we have structures in place to manage summer school currently obviously and tutoring we were going to allocate the funds to the schools that being said the position did not make it into the Sion we could look at as miss Chernoff mentioned that position coordinating summer school efforts across multiple departments currently the executive one of the executive principals in the elementary office works across departments to bring

[00:56:18] teams together to plan summer school so the coordinator could be responsible for that as well as the after school programs starting the pilot taking an assessment of other activities that we do after schools and mapping out a plan for expanding after school opportunities beyond the pilot schools did i answer your question yeah i'm gonna have to listen back to the tape but um it did um the other thing is that for the pilot we were the thought was 55 students per

[00:56:52] five schools is that correct 55 students per school times five schools was our original thought that number was um found after talking with our colleagues at parks and rec who managed the casa program and that is the maximum number of students that they have in any given casa program So I'm wondering what it would look like to, because my understanding is that people want it at five schools, if it wasn't 55, it was more like 30.

[00:57:29] Because I don't know, is there really cost of programs that have like over 55 kids? Do they really have that space? Yes, my understanding is some of the programs are that big, and many of the programs that are smaller at smaller schools have waiting lists, which is a concern we hear pretty consistently.

[00:57:48] Thank you, Dr. Ellis. - Any other questions? - Yes, Mrs. Griffiths. - Thank you, Madam Chair. Getting to the Welcome Center, I think it's a little bit confusing.

[00:58:05] I did not really know where it was and I asked at our last meeting with the address or where it was. I went on to a link for the Welcome Center and it brings up an Ashburn address.

[00:58:20] When I think of a Welcome Center, I think of new students registering. I'm just trying to understand why we need to expand and why do we have the Ashburn address here and not the Leesburg address.

[00:58:38] And I understand we were going to have another building. I'd like to see the data, or if you have the data, I don't believe it's, it might be in the sheet we just received, so forgive me if I'm being repetitive. But I'd like to have data as far as how many people are coming through the Welcome Center that causes this demand for expansion when we don't really have the Leesburg Address on our website for anybody to go on and register their students.

[00:59:10] Thank you. - Thank you for that question, Ms. Griffiths, and hopefully the information I shared in response to your email is helpful. The address at the bottom of the page is on all of our websites.

[00:59:25] It's 21,000 Education Court, which is this building. The Let's Talk form that you sent me has about 12 different ways to interact with the staff at the Welcome Center depending on the needs of the specific family, and that's the main route.

[00:59:41] We have schools refer to families to set up appointments, ask questions, and to get information about the process for the Welcome Center. I did also send the actual Welcome Center landing page where there is information about the location.

[00:59:57] I would say that the Welcome Center isn't necessarily meant to be a walk-in service. The staff does take appointments and there's a number of things that need to be communicated ahead of time. But in terms of working on outreach and communication such as that, we're open for feedback and I'll share that with the team in terms of making sure that the location is more visible.

[01:00:19] In terms of the need, there are a number of questions in the Welcome Center in the packet and I believe a number of them talked about data. This isn't a recommendation this school year for the expansion of the Welcome Center. The process of expanding to an Eastern Welcome Center has been in the works for a number of years in our school system, and now we're actually at the point where the building is gonna be available to us.

[01:00:43] And so we are proposing our budget this year to staff that location appropriately. - I guess I'm confused. The email that I sent you was not from Let's Talk. It was just the link to the website. So I'm a

little confused by that.

[01:01:00] The website would take a constituent or a family to the Let's Talk to submit a query through our Let's Talk system. So it wasn't a Let's Talk email. It was a way that our families interact with us.

[01:01:16] Okay. I think as far as data is concerned, we will definitely need to see the data. I'm not sure at this point in time that this is necessary without the data. And as I mentioned, it wasn't very clear that we have a location in Leesburg, and that needs to be clear on the website.

[01:01:39] I understand that you put the Ashburn address, you know, on your website and that sort of thing, but I think you should have the Welcome Center address on here because I'm confused as to if it's not there, I mean, I guess they have to fill out a form and then they end up going to Leesburg.

[01:01:57] I mean, it's not very clear, and without the data, it's hard for me to say that we should be expanding to another Welcome Center. So I'll be looking out for that. Thank you. Thank you. I will see what else I could provide.

[01:02:13] I do want to note that part of the expansion is also in response to there are many families that do not receive services from the Welcome Center. Currently, the Leesburg Welcome Center provides services to a portion of our schools, not including schools in the eastern part of our county or the southern part of our county.

[01:02:35] So the expansion of the Welcome Center into the east actually expands services that do not currently exist for those families or schools. As a Welcome Center, you know, it's kind of funny. I think of when you drive into another state and they have a visitor center or a Welcome Center, I think of it that way.

[01:02:54] I guess, I don't know if I should be. You can just get out of your car and go in and you can get brochures and that sort of thing. I'm just curious to know why it's a secret, why the address isn't here. So families could just walk in and get assistance.

[01:03:16] We appreciate that feedback and I'm not sure I would describe it as a secret. It is a well-used and appreciated resource in our community. I'm happy to visit the building with you and to talk with staff about their day-to-day and how they interact with the community.

[01:03:32] But as I've mentioned, I am going to take the feedback back regarding the physical address. It is visible if you visit the main LCPS Welcome Center website, but we could always improve and we'll work with our communications office to see if there's a different way we could design that particular website.

[01:03:51] Thank you. I have one more question about the retirees. You said the low end was \$25, and then the high end was? The high end for LCPS's monthly contribution was \$1,634.

[01:04:17] If I can also provide the employee contribution range, the employee contribution range could be as low as \$21 and as high as \$1,314. So that range affected not only LCPS as the employer, but also the retiree.

[01:04:37] So again, of trying to streamline the premium structure as well as just the equitable distribution into those RHRA accounts hopefully helps alleviate this discrepancy. Ms. Chernoff.

[01:04:55] So I'm not a health insurance expert, but as I'm thinking through that, does that mean that these new plans hurt our people with the greatest needs the most? So people that are running those higher

premiums per month that need those appointments or have those needs that we're relying on those higher costs are seeing a large reduction?

[01:05:17] Is that not correct? I would not want to presume any of the personal health situations that our retirees are on and not make a correlation between a premium that they chose to pay versus what they may be personally experiencing because there's also other factors outside of actual personal health situations it's also risk you know different retirees and employees as we see even in our active population have different appetites for risk whenever they're

[01:05:52] selecting their plans. I understand that I just also don't want to assume that \$400 a month is going to cut it for people that need more. So keep in mind that the Medicare Advantage plan as it is, is one size fits all. So if you need something that is outside of that one size fits all plan, you are paying for it. That is the part of the additional cost, which is why we have to be careful. This RHRA plan allows you to pick and choose what you need, which means you're not

[01:06:31] paying for things you don't need, if that's helpful. It is. Thank you. If I could also just piggyback one additional item. We did work with our consultant in establishing the \$400 monthly amount. We looked at the market in terms of what packages would look like on the marketplace. So all of that was taken into consideration with establishing the \$400 amount. One additional item that I'll just share as an advantage of the RHRA account is that, again, depending on the

[01:07:07] retiree's personal situation in their choice, if they elected and found a plan that was less than \$400 a month, then those additional funds remain in that RHRA account. They roll over from one year to the next, and they remain available to that retiree to cover not only their personal costs, but any spouse or dependents that they may have as well. Okay, board members, any other

[01:07:38] questions now is your time okay i do not see any more questions um seeing as there's no more questions and no more business well first dr spence did you want to say anything or no ma'am i appreciate the uh continued collaboration discussion with the board we look forward to tuesday night and sharon do you want to just do one last reminder of the process for tuesday night so that folks are prepared for that absolutely um so we have already begun working with some

[01:08:15] school board members on crafting their motions so again please reach out and share your thoughts ASAP so that we can help with the costing as well as formulating those motions the deadline that we had asked for having all of those submitted to me was Monday at noon that again just allowed us you know time to properly prepare the information what we want to avoid is on Tuesday night having a motion come out of the blue and we try to cost it on the fly. That just sets us up for a high

[01:08:48] risk of miscalculation. On Tuesday evening, we will have the TOTE board up and available. We will have already shared a listing of the motions that we have received and worked with school board members with the school board chair to aid in facilitating the meeting. The first motion on Tuesday evening will be to to approve the FY 26 C on budget as presented after that we will have another excuse me and we'll have additional language regarding technical adjustments because

[01:09:24] we will have at least one technical adjustment that I had shared earlier which would reduce the budget by about I think it was about sixty one thousand dollars after that initial base motion is made then the floor is open for school board members to make their motions go through the voting process and we record the changes on the Tote board with the end goal as recommended by staff to maintain a balanced

budget meaning that we do not increase or decrease however it is the school board's prerogative to they can increase the budget above what has been presented in the

[01:10:00] Sion which has the result of increasing the ask of the county funds transfer request and then vice versa the school board could also reduce the Sion overall budget would have the impact of reducing the ask from the county and that would be our Tuesday evening we would go through until all the motions have been presented and voted on and then the final motion would be to adopt the budget as amended and then we're we're done until the presentation to the county board of supervisors

[01:10:32] which is scheduled for monday february 24th at 6 p.m here at lcps um in addition i was hoping to ask the school board members not to make big long speeches you know just a little introduction one or two sentences as to your motion and then we go on just because you know i don't want to i don't know that we all want to be here all night long or whatever so um that's

[01:11:01] why we were here was to talk a little bit more to that tonight okay um any more business yes ma'am um miss willoughby mentioned that uh the meeting with the board of supervisors is the 24th i have the 13th thank you so much for telling for reminding me about that that changed wait a minute that changed wow i forgot to put that in here um so yes uh i guess dr bergen do you want to tell us what happened with the board of supervisors and that that that changed it just

[01:11:40] changed like last night yes ma'am we were just informed that there is some inability of the board of supervisors to meet on the 13th as we had previously communicated so that date has changed to the 24th and the start time will be at 6 p.m it'll be in this room so that's not the 13th now the 24th at 6 p.m. and we can put that out in writing for the board as well okay did y'all hear

[01:12:12] that you should get calendar invite too i'm sure okay vice chair donahue has a little bit of an announcement thank you very much madam chair i just wanted to remind everyone that the loudon education foundation's annual fundraiser old ox rocks for teachers will be on saturday from 3 to 9 p.m. at the old ox brewery and yes there will be karaoke by gary clemens and other local celebrities so I encourage everyone to come out and support our our staff and employees thank you

[01:12:48] madam chair thank you vice chair Donahue all right seeing as there's no more business the January 30th 2025 Loudoun County School Board work session for the FY26 operating budget budget is now adjourned please drive home safely hug your babies to each other



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