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Prince William Board of County Supervisors Meeting — PWCS Joint Session, Wednesday, January 25, 2023

Date	Wednesday, January 25, 2023
Place	Prince William County Board of County Supervisors, Virginia
Length	2h 29m (video)

- Official meeting video (Prince William County, Granicus): https://pwcgov.granicus.com/player/clip/3235
- Official Board of County Supervisors page (Prince William County): https://www.pwcva.gov/department/board-county-supervisors

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Speech-to-text: whisper.cpp, model large-v3-turbo. Produced 2026-11-04. Each paragraph starts with its time [HH:MM:SS] in the meeting video.

[00:00:02] - Okay, well, welcome. I'd like to call this joint meeting of the Prince William County School Board and the Prince William County Board of County Supervisors to order. We have a couple housekeeping matters. We're gonna be expecting Miss Diane Ralston, so I'll just go ahead and read our policy. Pursuant to School Board Policy 139, School Board Member Participation in Meetings by Electronic Communication.

[00:00:23] School Board Member Diane Ralston of the Neabsco District will participate in this meeting through electronic means from her home due to a medical condition that prevents her physical attendance. The clerk will so note in the minutes of the meeting. Chair Wheeler. Good evening. We have a motion for electronic participation for Supervisor Franklin, who is remote this evening.

[00:00:44] So I would like to make a motion to waive the rules of procedure and approve a request to participate remotely through electronic communications meet. So moved. Madam Chair. Second. Motion made by Supervisor Vice Chair Bodie and second by Supervisor Vega. All those in favor, please say aye. Aye.

[00:01:00] Aye. And I will note we do have a quorum so we welcome Supervisor Franklin and Supervisor Bailey will be joining us when she Gets here. Thank you and Supervisor Lawson's just joining Okay, all

right. Well, so I'm just gonna offer some welcome remarks and first off I want to thank the Board of County Supervisors for joining us this evening I think at your tables are some swag bags and some welcome from the Prince William County School Division So I hope you take them home and wear some of your swag proudly as you walk through our county Advertising how great our schools are

[00:01:39] I want to take a moment to thank the Board of County Supervisors This is our third year doing this or maybe our fourth one Yeah, but a lot has happened The county has changed in the last four years or three years and it's a much different place And much of that is thanks to this County Board of Supervisors you know sharing the good news many of you heard me say this the niche rankings is sort of like the equivalent of the U.S. News and World Report they rank school divisions in the Commonwealth Prince William County Schools in 2017-18 was ranked 26th in the Commonwealth we are now 17 as of last October that is the largest jump of any school division in the Commonwealth and so

[00:02:18] that is really you know we're grateful to you all for helping fund our schools increase the funding to our schools um make sure that we're funding and spending it in the ways that that we need to to get things done and so that i i want to commend the county board of supervisors they have been really the backbone for the work that we've had to do here so i can't thank you enough um and you know your commitment to our schools has just been terrific um even the times when we've come to you over and above the revenue sharing agreement for example and some of you will know because you were on the boards before, but the classroom reduction dollars that have been coming to the schools

[00:02:57] each year, the pilot program that we tried with SROs for the elementary schools that has sort of now converted into, you know, we hired 60 security aides for all elementary schools, and we're continuing to revamp, modify, and best practices working with the police and Chief Newsham on making sure we're doing everything we can.

[00:03:22] And that's all, you know, thanks to you all. And then the computers that you guys helped fund in the midst of the pandemic emergently for the school division to help us start on that process to recover and manage the pandemic. And so all of that you all have voted for over and over again unanimously, and we're very grateful.

[00:03:43] I'd like to welcome Chief Newsham and his team here this evening. You'll be hearing this evening a little bit about security, both from the school division side and then some of the work the county is doing for safety and security. And so just to summarize, you know, we all know, especially those of you who have been around a long time, Prince William is known as a bedroom community.

[00:04:05] And it was because, you know, those folks would work in D.C. and live here. I would tell you that in the last four years, we've changed that to a family room community. it's a community where people come and live they work here they go to school here this is a destination place they want their children to come to school here and again this is all of the work that you all have been able to do for all of us and and for this community the school division has given significant raises over the four years with the budget monies that you have provided us Forbes magazine ranked us as the number one school division number one school division to work for in the Commonwealth based on external surveys a couple years ago.

[00:04:42] And then the U.S. Department of Agriculture offered us the Green Ribbon Award a couple years ago, which is a prestigious distinction that only five school divisions received that year for our Energy and Sustainability Initiative, and that work is ongoing with you all with the JET Task Force. So, you know, whether it's excelling in science fairs and robotics to our football teams and volleyball teams all of the

work that's happening is benefiting the entire division across the county and so you know again thank you and I will turn it over some welcome remarks from chair Wheeler thank you chair Lateef good evening it's great to be here I want to start by thanking my fellow board members

[00:05:21] who are here tonight as well as the other school board members who came out and are participating and thank you chair Lateef and obviously superintendent McDade for hosting us. I do want to thank the production staff who are putting this on. I know it's a lot of work in the evening to get this done, and so I just want to acknowledge that.

[00:05:40] You know, Prince William County has a great school system. My children were in this school system and have managed to survive and been launched successfully, and so I'm grateful for that. You know, we have a variety of programs here from, you know, IB, AP, the governor's school, all the different specialty programs that are throughout the county that really differentiate us in so many ways.

[00:06:04] And I know that this, you know, during Chair Lateef's tenure, that has gotten even stronger. And I wanna also acknowledge that our school system, you know, we had a pandemic and our school system came through it successfully to the point where I know we've also been focusing on how we get those students to catch up who were left behind because there were so many, you know, difficulties throughout the nation.

[00:06:27] And I know that we've done that very, very well. You know, one of the most important things we can do is invest in our school system. It really is the backbone of our community. And our community is pretty strong and great these days. And so I know a lot of that is due to the school system. You know, I'm grateful to say that as a board, we have given year over year from the prior year that we came into last year's budget, we've given over $100 million more directly to the schools, along with, I know, advocating for federal and state funding.

[00:06:58] And so the school system is strong. It came through the pandemic strong. And I think we're in a new era, I like to say, in Prince William County. I might also want to acknowledge all the things that the school system do for sustainability, the sustainability committee that does so much in planning for the school system, as well as a joint environmental task force that we just started.

[00:07:21] I think that's going to be great. We are raising the bar on raising the next generation, is what I like to say. And that will go along with we are no longer a bedroom community. We're a family room community. And so I just want to thank everyone in this room who worked to make that happen so much over the last three years.

[00:07:40] We're at a good place. And I look forward tonight to hearing more about some of the things that we're going to be doing together collaboratively To make our community a better place and a lot of that is us working with the schools for our children And so thank you for having us chair wheeler. Thank you for those remarks I'd like to also introduce mr. Chris shorter the new county executive if you can please stand and and and And we have a lot of our school division staff here get to see you. Thank you for joining us this evening. Welcome Welcome to Prince William County Schools chair wheeler Maybe you can give us a quick bio on where mr. Shorter came from well, mr. Shorter is as well It's funny, I was like, how long have you been here?

[00:08:19] Two and a half weeks? No, it feels like three years, but ignoring that. Mr. Shorter came from us via Baltimore, where he was a city manager, the first city manager of Baltimore. Before that, he was out in

Austin doing great things for the city of Austin and spent a myriad of different places in the D.C. area, Washington, D.C., doing things.

[00:08:41] And so I will tell you, I've run into eight people now, actually nine, that tell me what a great hire Chris Shorter was. And, you know, unsolicited, people call me up and tell me that. And so we are glad to have you here. A lot of stuff to do, and you've hit the ground running.

[00:08:59] And this is a great introduction to the school system, you know, this evening. So I'm glad you're here, and we'll get to work. Welcome. And I'd like to introduce, we have Dr. LaTanya McDade, superintendent of Prince William County Schools here this evening. And please give her a round of applause.

[00:09:15] And Dr. Carol Flanard, who is our new Deputy Superintendent of Prince William County Schools, coming to us from Spotsylvania, correct? Yes. All right. And so we'll get started. I think we're moving on. Chair Wheeler, I think you're going to introduce for the budget revenue folks.

[00:09:32] No, that's great. We are on to our presentation, which is our general revenue update handled by Michelle Atreid, who is our Director of Finance. Just to give us an all idea of how we're doing over the last couple years.

[00:09:48] and where we're going with general revenue. And I think it's a good moment to brag about the fact that Chair Wheeler, Board of County Supervisors, and Michelle Atreid and her whole team has worked hard along with the school team to help us keep our AAA triple bond rating, our triple AAA bond rating, which has been very valuable to us all.

[00:10:07] Thank you. Good evening. As I said, I'm Michelle Atreid, the CFO for the county. I am also a product of the Prince William County School System. First grade and on. So I know quite a bit about the school system.

[00:10:25] But I have a few slides tonight I want to talk about general revenues. We're going to start with an overview of fiscal 22 in the recap as to where we ended up for the year, the audited numbers. On this chart, you'll see the pie chart of the shared general revenues.

[00:10:41] The adopted budget is a little over $1.1 billion. The lion's share of that is the real estate tax, 68%, roughly 66% is real estate tax. with another 19% coming from personal property tax. New in 22 was the cigarette tax, and so that sliver is within the all-other category.

[00:11:01] It is a small sliver, but a step towards diversification of our revenues. When we ended the year for the audit, we had a sizable surplus. We had $75.2 million of general surplus. And I'll talk a little bit about the accuracy of that a few slides from now.

[00:11:18] But the big drivers were the personal property tax Across the country, NADA and J.D. Power's blue book values of vehicles, particularly on the used vehicle, escalated, right? You're used to buying a car and they depreciate. That's not what we saw. We saw huge increases.

[00:11:34] So that was a big driver of it. We also saw a 4.4% increase in the number of vehicles being registered in the county. So quite a spike happening there. And then, of course, our data center revenues continue to grow. The personal property around data centers continues to drive that. On the real property side, we had built in a larger exoneration, meaning we had set aside funds for appeals of taxes, thinking that through COVID there would be more appeals of taxes.

[00:12:01] And so that $16 million that we set aside, it didn't come to fruition. There was much fewer appeals than we really anticipated. So we've dialed that back in the 24 proposed numbers that we're putting together. It just isn't trending that high. So that's the driver of the real property tax.

[00:12:19] The other two are sales tax and BPOL. Sales tax, surprisingly, has grown every month for, it seems like, the last 10 years. But really, for quite a while, throughout COVID, you would have thought that spending would have cut down, particularly when there was a lot of people out of work and businesses closed.

[00:12:35] But we saw the exact opposite. Some of that, we believe, was because people were shopping from home, shopping here in Prince William County, where they live, perhaps. Some of it, too, was online shopping. We are now getting those revenues from online retail.

[00:12:51] That's helping. And what really helped drive this is we're seeing a return to services. So during the pandemic, people kind of stopped going to the movies, stopped eating out. They did takeout, stopped going for their haircuts, nails done, those type of things. And they shifted to goods.

[00:13:08] And so there was a lot of home improvements going on. But now we're seeing a return to services again. So we're seeing a spike in some of that. And then finally, inflation itself brings up sales tax, right? As the cost of what's being sold goes up, the tax on those goods goes up. And same with BPOL.

[00:13:23] So BPOL is our business and professional occupational license. That's our gross receipts from businesses. They, too, their gross receipts are going up with inflation. And so that number was also much higher than we anticipated. Those are the big drivers for fiscal 22.

[00:13:40] So what do we do with the surplus? That year-end, once it's audited, we make sure our general fund unassigned fund balance is funded at a reasonable amount to maintain our AAA bond rating. That's kind of like a rainy day fund for that worst-case scenario. Unfortunately, we have never had to dip into that unassigned fund balance.

[00:13:57] And hopefully, we never have that type of catastrophic event where we have to. But we fund that at 7.5% of our general fund revenues. After that, the remaining general revenue surplus is split with the schools in accordance with our revenue sharing agreement. So that 57.23% goes to the schools.

[00:14:16] Once that's done, on the county side of the ledger, we fund our revenue stabilization reserve. That's to shield us from declines, unanticipated declines in revenue. Again, another thing that helps us maintain our bond rating. And then we fund our own capital reserve for one-time capital needs, Our Economic Development Opportunity Fund, which we use to incentivize to bring businesses into the county.

[00:14:38] And then any remaining funds after that go to the capital reserve for one-time capital. So that surplus of $75.1 million, 3.5 of it went to the unassigned fund balance. So the schools share in making sure that that bedrock is funded.

[00:14:55] So that left $61.6 million to split with the schools. And the 57.23% of that is $41 million. And so you'll see coming up on February 7th, we have a board item to budget and appropriate and transfer those fundings to the school, in addition to some cable franchise fees that we share for INET services.

[00:15:15] And so a total of $41,051,116 is slated to be budgeted and appropriated. I want to jump now to fiscal 23, just to give you a little insight into what 23 is looking like. First, I want to show you our revenue

forecasting bullseye.

[00:15:33] We strive for accuracy. And you'll see we've been very close over the years, always over 90%, 97, 98, 99. When you look at 22, you think, gosh, that's 94. You really missed the mark. We really are right in line with where all of our peers in the state were.

[00:15:48] Most of them were between 90% and 96% as well. It really was COVID, it was unprecedented. And so most of us took a conservative approach. We'd much rather be in a position of having surpluses that you can find things to do with into saying okay everybody needs to cut the budget because we have a huge shortfall. We are hoping to get this more in line for going forward making some adjustments now. We have a little bit of trend data and we're coming out of COVID and the country is back you know 80-90 percent recovered now. Hopefully things will begin to normalize. We do see that personal property tax those values on vehicles are still high but they are starting to come down. We think that will

[00:16:26] start normalizing over the next 12, 24 months. But we are striving for that accuracy. One of our other principles of sound financial management is diversification. And one of the things the board did this year with the 23 budget is adopted a new food and beverage tax. So that pie chart that I showed you initially, you'll see now it's a little over $1.2 billion with real estate tax only making up 64%. Personal property is still around 19.7%. Keep in mind, we valued at 80% of value this year. So that's why that number shrunk when you compare it to the prior graph. But you'll

[00:17:02] see a new slice there, food and beverage tax, 1.9%. So that is a sizable slice towards that diversification of our revenues. And we think that will continue to grow. So our Q1 update that we recently gave. We adopted a budget at actually a little under 1.1 billion. We had a set aside for the repeal of the grocery tax. If you recall last year that was floating around the General Assembly so we had a negative revenue built in in case that passed. It did not pass so the board took action to appropriate those dollars so it brought it up to the 1.2 billion. We did report a 15.6

[00:17:40] million dollar surplus from the first quarter, again driven by sales tax, largely driven by inflation, food and beverage tax, those numbers are starting to come in, we're starting to look at the trend data on it. We still don't have all businesses reporting, so that number will likely continue to grow, but we're comfortable now bringing it up by 5.5 million.

[00:18:00] And then investment income, up through '23, we believe the Fed funds rate will remain above 4%, so we're comfortable shifting that up with a little more interest to earnings. And then in the all-other-revenue category, the big driver there is the cigarette tax. We have quite a bit of data since January of last year under our belt, or since January under our belt, and those numbers are trending much higher than anticipated.

[00:18:27] On the data center revenue side, this is one of the areas that we've seen tremendous growth, and you'll see from when we started tracking data center revenue in 2012 to 2021, we've We've had 1,000% growth, year-over-year, 24.4% growth. We are now working on the 22 numbers, getting those compiled.

[00:18:44] Those will be presented likely during the budget process at one of the work sessions when we talk about revenues. We should have the 22 numbers available then, but that number will have grown again. And I want to wrap it up a little bit with our fiscal health.

[00:19:01] Not only do we share revenues, but the other area that we share is our debt capacity. And so you'll see here our credit strengths and weaknesses as reported by our rating agencies, and the two areas

where we score negatively or as a weakness is in our debt burden and then our pension obligations.

[00:19:19] And so the debt burden is something we pay close attention to. When I presented to you last year, I think I presented some charts that showed that debt capacity. We have a capacity of 10 percent of our general revenues built in, all governmental revenues actually built in. We fall well within that category. But our rating agencies, when they look at us, they look at our spending against general fund. How do those debt service expenditures stack up against general fund expenditures? Because that's where the debt is paid from.

[00:19:50] All revenues across the county can't pay for debt service. A lot of it's restricted. It's primarily general fund. Our fire levy pays some of our debt service related to fire station projects. But by and large, it's the general fund. And so when they do those metrics, most of the AAAs are at like 10%.

[00:20:05] We are at 12% at the peak. So we can't be at that low, quite that low of a level. So we're continuing to monitoring what those debt service expenditures look like. And as the CIP unfolds for the schools in the county this year, it's even more important because we're in a high inflationary period.

[00:20:22] So we know those CIPs that were developed likely need to be retooled and they're going to escalate in cost for a lot of that. So we are starting to build that model now. That's why I don't have those graphs for you tonight. It really looks very different than last year because of the costs that need to be built in associated with the inflation.

[00:20:39] So those are the areas that we'll continue to watch and report back on. But, you know, by and large, we're within our capacity. We just know we can't be at that low 10% yet. We're still a growing community. That's one of the conversations we have with the rating agencies is that we are a growing community, and they understand that.

[00:20:56] But we do want to make sure that the debt that we issue that we can't afford as a jurisdiction. The cost of a downgrade, if we were to be downgraded, so as I mentioned, we're a AAA jurisdiction. When rating agencies look at the county, they do it on a quantitative basis, so there's lots of ratios they run, looking at our balance sheets and the school balance sheets.

[00:21:15] When you do the quantitative numbers, we're AA+. Where we get our AAA is through our qualitative, and what that means is that we adhere to our five-year plan, that we have a balanced five-year plan, that we're adhering to all these principles of funding our unassigned fund balance, revenue stabilization fund and living within our means and the way we govern and so in the way the board governs really and so those are the things that pull us up to that triple triple a and so we want to continue to adhere to all of those good financial policies that we have in place the cost of a downgrade excuse me is about 907,000 per year or 15 million dollars over a 20-year debt

[00:21:55] service based on the existing CIP today and with that I'll take questions questions so I'll ask the first question so you know two years ago we didn't predict the kind of costs we're seeing now with CIP and obviously inflation and those things do you Michelle and we had asked our folks last week at our CIP meeting but what do you and I know it's hard to predict but do you think this is a peak where we're at and do you think so so two years ago we said our CIP would cost x and Now it's one and a half times that.

[00:22:32] Do you think in two years it'll be back down to, you know, X? Or where do you think we're going to be? I wish I had the crystal ball and could tell you. You know, I think we're in for another year of high inflation. Beyond that, I don't know. You know, I would hate to speculate.

[00:22:48] You know, usually things come in cycles. And so things are going to peak. And then, you know, eventually it's going to drop back off and things will normalize again. But I think we're in for another at least 12 to 24 months of higher costs and inflation. And where would you see the risk for us in the future?

[00:23:05] And the drivers for increased revenues have been, you know, obviously the personal property tax and the property tax. And if those numbers start coming down, then you anticipate, you know, an effect on our revenue as well, right? Yeah, I think some of the risks are in. You know, we've really benefited from sales, the growth in sales tax.

[00:23:20] I mean, it's been month over month, year over year. If that ever starts to slip, that, I think, you know, is a risk to us. We've benefited from that. On the vehicle side, it certainly would be the appreciation right now that's happening. That will normalize. Eventually, they'll get the right computer chips back in, you know, back on, and the cars will start getting back on the lot.

[00:23:41] If you drive around, you know, any car lot, there's hardly any cars there. And so once that inventory starts to flow again, costs will come back down on vehicles, and so that will impact. for sure data centers you know if they continue to come to Prince William County that's going to continue to grow no doubt okay and then that goes to the fact that you've diversified the tax base and that strengthens our ability to sort of sustain any negativity on the other parts that we used to depend on more it helps we are still very real estate tax dependent you know that piece of

[00:24:17] the pie is the biggest piece and so you know if there is a recession real estate and real estate and housing values drop, we will definitely be impacted. We are heavily real estate, but we are making steps in the right direction to diversify that base further through things like the food and beverage tax, which is a sizable revenue source at $30 million.

[00:24:38] Other questions? Mr. Chairman? Yep, Mr. Boney. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Michelle, for the presentation. The last slide that you had where it looks at the credit strengths and weaknesses, this is all helpful information because it sort of shows where we are and what we can improve.

[00:24:56] I know that the ESG, the environmental, social, and governance, is sort of a newer category among all of them. Can you talk a little bit about how that comes into play and how much they're starting to weight that versus the more traditional ones? Sure. So ESG has been something that rating agencies, they've actually always included in the rating.

[00:25:13] It was baked into the categories that have been rated in the past. You see here economy and demographics, financial condition, debt and pension, management, and environmental social governance is the new piece. but they were woven into those other categories in the past.

[00:25:29] Because bondholders have asked more about what are localities doing in that realm of environmental, social, and governance, they've broken it out now and are rating it separately. So we don't see that we will rate any differently. We actually were one of a few jurisdictions across the country, I think there was 39, 40 of them, that Moody's took through the ESG rating as a pilot, sort of a pilot, and we rated very well.

[00:25:54] There were some areas in the environmental where we were not top-notch. And when we asked about it, they said, well, nobody's ever going to be top-notch. I mean, so there was, within the rating

category itself, there's some things that they believe nobody can fix with the environment, that none of us can dig ourselves out of it and make it be a AAA on that piece, you know, a AAA plus or whatever.

[00:26:13] But we rate really well, as well as to be expected. And the good news is the board has taken action to put things in place that help move that need along with our environmental programs, sustainability efforts, those type of things are things we can share with the rating agencies to say that we are doing things to address ESG.

[00:26:35] Okay. Well, thank you very much, Michelle. Thank you. I really appreciate it. Okay. At this point, we'll move on to Dr. McDade. We'll present, I think we're next, right, Dr. McDade, on the school security progress update.

[00:26:51] All right. Thank you so much, Dr. Lateef. Good evening, all. We are so pleased to have our Board of County Supervisors and county staff here with us tonight to work collaboratively as we address, continue to address critical issues along with the school board as well as the school division staff that's present as well.

[00:27:10] And as we look at national trends, top of mind for us is school safety and always is school safety because we know that fundamentally we have to keep our students and our staff safe before we can accomplish anything related to education. And so tonight I do have with me our Chief Operating Officer, Byrne Bach, as well as our Director of School Safety, Ron Crow.

[00:27:33] We also have our Associate Superintendent for Student Services and Post-Secondary Success, Denise Huebner. And a lot of the mental health support comes out of Denise's shop. And we also have invited Chief Newsham to be a part of our presentation because we're really proud of the collaboration that we have with the Prince William County Police Department.

[00:27:56] Chief Newsham and I meet regularly to talk about issues and the police department has been incredibly supportive of the school division, incredibly responsive to all of our needs and so we really, really appreciate and depend on the partnership with our Prince William County Police Department.

[00:28:14] So we'll start with some updates on what we've been doing to address school safety. We continue to improve and look at national research on safety and develop our safety program in Prince William County. So we have some new initiatives that are going and we also are exploring some more innovative approaches to school safety for the near future.

[00:28:36] So I'll start with Mr. Bach. - Thank you, Dr. McDade. Good evening, Chair Lateef, Chair Wheeler. Welcome school board members, or good evening school board members, Board of Supervisors, and Dr. McDade, and welcome aboard Mr. Shorter.

[00:28:52] I wanna first start out by thanking you for this opportunity to present to you tonight. We, as Dr. McDade said, we've got a lot of exciting things going on in school safety and school security. The first partnership that I wanna point out tonight is a very close partnership between our risk management and school safety department with our student services department.

[00:29:14] In fact, Denise and I, I think our offices are right next door so there's a constant collaboration there and her department closely collaborates with Ron and his department with risk management and school safety. We thought we'd kick off this evening's presentation with you hearing a little bit about what we're doing to support our students' mental health, so I'm gonna kick it over to Denise.

[00:29:35] - Thank you, Mr. Bach. Good evening, everyone. So you have heard our amazing superintendent talk about our collective vision and our thriving future strategic plan, where our goal is that every student will graduate on time with the knowledge, skills, and habits of minds necessary to create a thriving future themselves and for the community an important aspect of this is creating a positive climate and culture in our school division and in our classrooms so you can see outlined in objective 2.1 is that we will work to provide a learning environment to the fosters inclusivity connectedness and encourages social and emotional wellness for all this includes providing our students with strategies

[00:30:13] for resiliency and responding to trauma and crisis in order to allow them to continue to learn in a positive environment so this evening I will share some of the highlights of our work in the area of mental health and how we're using trauma sensitive approaches in response to the impact of the covid19 pandemic prince william county public schools formed the prince william heels initiative which is an initiative that focuses on the well-being of students and of our staff members in order to achieve excellence for our school and for our students our students our staff and students must both be well we want our staff members to have a

[00:30:48] voice in all of our decisions and in all of our initiatives and know that sometimes it's okay not to be okay and that there are systems to support them. So we've created systems to ensure that there are multiple staff members in each school called social-emotional learning coaches who can support our leaders and our employees in this area.

[00:31:07] Under our HEALS, we provide opportunities for adults to learn trauma-informed practices and self-care so that they can help our students feel well, be well, and experience success. Currently our work is laser-focused on ensuring that all of our students and employees have a solid foundation of emotional well-being when entering our school buildings and our offices each day next slide please so by name and need that's our mantra when it comes to creating systems of support for our students for our students and you can see outlined here on this slide for example tier 1 we have social and emotional wellness and mental health awareness which is a general for all of our students this is something all of our kids need and it's provided through

[00:31:46] lessons by our school counselors and other mental health professionals as you go through the tiers you can see there's a little bit more structured and a higher level of support for those students who need the extra support, including mental health support outside of our school system and referral to resources in our community.

[00:32:02] So we recognize that there's a need for us to use this also to support our students and our staff in the emotional needs. The service is provided by our wonderful over 600 school-based mental health professionals. They're highly trained and what their goal is to remove any barriers that would impede learning.

[00:32:20] hand with our fabulous teachers and school-based teams to wrap provide wraparound services to the students and make sure that those needs in the greatest areas are met through both educational and emotional support so our tier 3 supports are designed for those students who need the most intense and frequent support and this is including threats of violence under our leadership of dr. Robeson who is and has created she is our bridge between risk management in our law enforcement department she serves as the representative and our resource in the area of safety and security when a threat does occur to

[00:32:58] evaluate that in our buildings additionally we have mental health teams and professionals who respond to incidents in the community that impact our students or in our schools our critical incident team and they are deployed to support our students as needed so as always we have training for our staff you can see the two areas of focus are our mental health professionals and also our school-based administrators and educators and we have strong partnerships with our community so some of our community-based partnerships our community services board where our new horizons work in our high schools to support our students that are impacted by substance abuse we do have mental health support right through community agencies as well as frequent

[00:33:36] communication with our law enforcement partners and child protective services and mental health response by our community services board we could not do this work without partnership of our local community our strength is in our response and our students become strong and healthy through this partnership we continue to be thankful for the support through these agencies and we look forward to moving forward as we move forward we're working to establish additional support in a relationship with community-based organizations for example communities and schools to support our students and our families and at this time I'd like to turn the presentation back over to mr. Bach thank you Denise I want to first start out by saying and getting into the nuts

[00:34:13] and bolts of school safety and some of the initiatives that we have implemented are implementing and planning that obviously our students and our employees and our visitors safety is paramount it's first and foremost for us and it's our top priority and it's very explicitly called out in our strategic plan you can see here that under our positive climate and culture our objective here is that students will you know feel safe and welcomed in our schools and we want to achieve a 90 percent measure from our students and

[00:34:50] staff reporting on our survey that they're feeling safe right now we're at 79 percent and that's unacceptable for us we know we've got work to do and we're we're knee-deep in that work I want to thank Ron and his team I started in this role on August 1st I'm super impressed with Ron's leadership as our director with Bill Miller, Bill Desmond, and Jake Edwards as our leadership team within that department.

[00:35:16] And it wouldn't be possible without the Board of Supervisors' support, your financial support of the district, the support of our school board members, and the support of Dr. McDade. And Dr. McDade has clearly prioritized school safety and is paving the way for us to do our work. So a big thank you to the board members that are here tonight, to Dr. McDade.

[00:35:35] And I do want to recognize Chief Newsom and say that there is an extremely close partnership, a longstanding partnership and collaboration that we enjoy with our police department and with Chief Newsom. And I think we communicate daily. And the support that we have in our schools through a resource officer program is impressive.

[00:35:55] And Chief Newsom is going to talk about that a little bit later. We're very proactive. Our approach to school safety is to be proactive. We don't wanna be reactive. We're constantly looking for new ways to improve. What's the best practice research that's out there?

[00:36:12] What are the experts telling us? We're constantly engaging in training. And really our approach is around deter, detect, and defend. And you're gonna hear more about that throughout our presentation with the initiatives that we have in place. But again, I just wanna point out that this is what we're working towards achieving in the next few years within our strategic plan.

[00:36:33] and we're keenly focused and laser focused on that. Ron and I are gonna be tag teaming throughout the presentation. We're both knee deep in this work daily. So we're gonna inject into each other's presentation, but I'm gonna ask Ron to start out and brief you on one of our initiatives here, Say Something.

[00:36:54] - And we do have numbers of initiatives. One of the first initiatives we launched in December of '21 was the Say Something Anonymous Reporting System. It's clear that our students have an enormous amount of information on their hands that they need an outlet to report to us.

[00:37:12] So the Say Something reporting system allows for reporting by text, computer, and website, and by telephone number. Overwhelmingly, they report information by text. To date, we've managed over 573 tips that have come into the system.

[00:37:30] Those receive a 24/7, 365 response. We do that with our school partners, the SRO unit and the police department to manage those whenever they come in. We've trained over 40,000 students, over 1,300 staff on how to respond to these threats.

[00:37:50] In addition to, you know, most of those go into two buckets, and a lot of them have to do with threats to self or others or mental health concerns. We've helped numbers and numbers and numbers of students with mental health concerns after hours with help from the police department, responding to schools and getting the help they need at that moment.

[00:38:09] So that's been a really positive aspect of this. We just finished refresher training in the fall. We want to keep this on the top of everyone's mind, and we're sending banners out to schools that are going to go up in schools and go at the ball fields to remind people that this is available to them.

[00:38:28] One thing I want to mention that's not up here is our IT system just stood up, a system called BARC. Many of you may have heard that from parents. We're piling it at four schools. BARC is an IT system that overlays our student email system.

[00:38:46] It looks for certain keywords. When those keywords pop out, 24-7, 365, we're going to respond to those just like we do say-something tips. and the majority of those, again, fall into those two buckets. So we're there to respond. Our annual school safety assessments.

[00:39:03] The Virginia Code requires that we do these assessments every three years. We're committed as a school division to completing these on an annual basis and looking for upgrades and updates to our processes and facilities that make sense. This is clearly a team effort. It involves our school administration, our school security officers, as well as our school resource officers.

[00:39:23] So that's an annual assessment that's completed. We're committed to upgrading to current CCT technology in all of our schools. Some of our schools, the technology is 10 to 12 years old. It's due for an upgrade. Currently, we've completed 36 schools.

[00:39:40] We're moving on it pretty quickly. We've got two that are just finishing up. We have 19 in progress to get them to current platforms. I expect to be at about 70% of schools by the start of school next year and having those completed early in the spring.

[00:39:55] So we're moving quickly on those. Ron, if I could add, just the CCTV, it is an amazing resource. It's web-based. So our police officers have the ability, if we have a crisis in the school, our 911, our

emergency operations center, has access to those cameras, can pull those cameras up from a police cruiser arriving on scene.

[00:40:17] If we were to have a crisis in the building, that's readily accessible and can be viewed. And so it's an amazing feature that a lot of our administrators have it on the palm of their hands on their phones. So it's a really good tool. Our next initiative is starting last year, we started completing after-action assessments for significant security events.

[00:40:41] If you're part of Police and Fire, you're very familiar with these activities. They are group activities with all stakeholders that involve central office, school administration, our security and SROs, and police department, anyone who had a hand in that situation.

[00:40:57] Our goal there is to identify areas of improvement for processes and share them with other schools so we can not make the same mistakes moving forward. So we've been very active in working with schools and identifying those areas and putting in corrective actions and making sure they're followed up on.

[00:41:15] As with anything else, unless you measure it, it's hard to get your arms around what you're trying to complete. So we were really focused on providing data-driven, security-related reports to the cabinet and to schools on our daily security posture.

[00:41:31] We implemented the Guide to Best Practices in Safety and Security, which is a very easy volume to go through and see what your security at your school should look like. And we also implemented back in the spring of last year our Back to Basics. So this is where we live every day. When I walk up to a school, there's a page of about 17 or 18 things that I want to see every day at every school.

[00:41:52] We're hyper-focused on making sure all of our schools are following those. We have up to 14 staff members on the school, on the road every day, working with schools to troubleshoot and help manage that security posture and make sure it is where we want it.

[00:42:10] We have the community safety officers, which are our armed group that goes around to elementary schools. We have our security patrol staff that are unarmed, and we also have our new senior school security officers that are working with high and middle schools. So we're really excited to have those staff out there making sure our security posture is strong.

[00:42:29] One of our other commitments is to a consistent, visible, and well-trained security staff. So if you've been out to schools and you have kids there, you'll notice this year that all of our security staff are wearing uniforms. It's the same across the school division. We want them to be visible. We want the parents to know they're out there and they can see them.

[00:42:47] We want our kids to know they're out there and they can see them. We want our public safety partners, when they have to respond to crisis, to be able to know who they are. So that's been a very positive, has had a very positive effect on our community. The Code of Virginia requires that we do eight hours of training for our school security officers every year.

[00:43:08] I'm proud to say, and for numbers of years, we've been doing 36 hours of annual training for our school security officers. And when we can make that work with the school resource officer unit, we train together. So we're actually doing a training on Monday and working with the team over there on an exercise, Unity Braxton Middle School, with the police department.

[00:43:31] And the last thing I want to mention there is when you pull up the schools, even if their security is not immediately visible when you're pulling up, All of our staff are wearing high-visibility vests, and they're also carrying radios. So they can see us, we can see them. They know we're paying attention, and we know we have the opportunity to share that information very quickly, should we need to.

[00:43:52] So I'll pick up here with our implementation and relaunch of our crisis management plan. And I'm going to joke with Ron a little bit here. We had a three-inch plan that probably wasn't user-friendly, so we had a pretend fire with our principals. And through the crisis management plan and our pretend fire, and out came a 26-page document that, and I love you, Ron, it was a labor of love.

[00:44:16] And so I will say the crisis management plan, we did. We recognized that it wasn't user-friendly, three inches of stuff. And if you're in the middle of a crisis, you don't have time to be flipping through three inches. So the I Love You Guys Foundation is widely recognized as the best practice in school response protocol to crises, and they have a standard response protocol.

[00:44:43] It's adopted by 30,000 schools and institutions worldwide. It's based on best practice research from a collaboration of administrators and school security experts in the field. very plain, very specific. And I'll go ahead and advance the slide here. And Ron's going to pick up here in a second. But we had a student who I promise will remain nameless, who gave us some feedback on this. And so to the left is our old school chart that was hanging on the wall. And she said to her dad, dad, if we're in the middle of a crisis, and this was unprovoked at home,

[00:45:20] in the middle of a crisis, she said, dad, who has time to flip through this thing? And, you know, Coincidentally, we were working through this plan, and so dad pulls out this plan, and she said, wow, that makes so much sense. That is so easy. So this really, in essence, what you see in front of you are the standard response protocols of the I Love You Guys Foundation.

[00:45:43] And, Ron, I'll turn it over to you to talk a little bit more about that. Sure, and you'll notice it has icons on there. Our communications department will use that when they're communicating to the community. We have a process in place coming up to relaunch this at the schools. Our professional development department was integral in coming up with a Canvas-based course to relaunch this at the schools through principal-led training.

[00:46:08] So that is occurring now at all schools. There's also one extra action up there called hold that we thought was really important to add to the other four that have been standard for 20 years. And hold is just simply stay where you're at. You know, we've got something going on.

[00:46:25] We just want you to stay where you're at for a minute while we look into it and see what's going on. It'll probably end up being one of the most used response actions that we have in the school. So we think that's going to be a real boon to our schools. And on top of this, you know, we're also working on our central office staff and doing training.

[00:46:43] And we're going to stand up a central office support team that, you know, we say go and we're going to go and drop whatever we've got to go support schools in crisis, whether that's reunification or coming out of a lockdown or secure the building helping manage parents we're going to have a lot of highly trained people be able to respond to schools and just jump in with school administration because hey you know they've got you know in some cases thousands of students in these high schools that they're having to manage they're going to need a hand so we're going to be prepared to do that and ron's going to

talk to you a minute about that 9999 number up there i just want to point that out on the top of the chart and we'll cover that

[00:47:18] with you in a moment. So I do want to mention our strategic investments and staffing. In the last year, we've been fortunate to have the Dr. McDade and the school board fund 104 positions that are directly responsible for safety and security in our schools. Those include, as I've already mentioned, our three senior school security officers. They're out there every day working with our high schools and middle schools. 97 security assistants. That's one security assistant for every school in the school division.

[00:47:53] And more importantly, it provides a security presence at all of our elementary schools. Since the beginning of the school year, we've hired and trained 69 school security assistants, so we're well on our way to filling those positions. We actually had to put in special training programs to get them up to speed.

[00:48:13] We have a three-day certification course followed by a five-day shattering program with our middle school security officers. So when they hit the road at the elementary schools, they know what the requirements are, they know what they're supposed to do, and they have hands-on training on how to manage that. And the feedback that we are receiving from our elementary principals has been overwhelmingly positive.

[00:48:34] They're very appreciative of the support. They know they've got an extra pair of eyes and ears in the building that are focused on school safety, and our elementary principals are very appreciative. And some of the other positions that I'll touch on real quickly, We had a Security Systems Specialist.

[00:48:52] When you have all of these, you know, processes and equipment, someone needs to be able to have their hands on it every day and making sure it's up and running and functional. So the Systems Specialist will be managing the implementation of our CCTV programs and training, as well as our radio infrastructure.

[00:49:08] Our Operational Systems Specialist is going to help manage some of our other systems and security like Raptor and our visitor ID systems, our a phones and training at schools on how to manage that as well as statistical support on some of the statistics we run and provide to our schools and cabinet we are able to add an additional elementary school safety officer you'll recognize those as the group that goes around to our elementary schools and they are armed officers so now we have seven of those going around the schools they are very well liked and very well appreciated by our

[00:49:43] elementary school principals and lastly we added an additional security patrol officer that's our uniform unarmed patrol who helps to you know drive around the schools and also respond to incidents and provide visual presence in the morning a lot of times when we need bodies at schools to to have that presence if we have threats from the night before so on top of that we've obviously made a lot of investments in technology so I've already spoke a a little bit about are CCTV systems. That's a $6.8 million budget item. Some of the things

[00:50:20] Mr. Bock had mentioned that, you know, that provides for mobile phone access on people's phones, SRO access. It's web-based and it also has facial recognition technology. So if we have issues with certain people on school property, we can load it into our system and it'll provide alerts to us when they're on school property or caught on any camera.

[00:50:42] So that's a big boon for the schools getting that installed. We're also starting this summer a 800 megahertz radio replacement. We've been planning on this. The last time we replaced these radios was

about 10 or 12 years ago.

[00:50:58] The police department's upgrading some of their infrastructure, and it's time for us to upgrade our radios. So that will be going on over the next three years. That will replace all of the radios and the buses. Each school has a school emergency radio that they can talk directly to the 911 call center supervisor.

[00:51:18] And it's also used by our security patrol and some central office staff in crisis. After that, we have our Raptor Crisis Drill Reporting Module. That's another module that ties to our Raptor Visitor Reporting System we've had since 2007.

[00:51:34] And there's 15 required crisis drills, almost all of them required by Virginia Code that we do every year. This helps us track it, helps schools track it and plan those. It helps us to follow up with schools so when we get close to the end of the month, we're reaching out and going, you know, let's make sure we're up to date and getting those drills done on a regular basis.

[00:51:53] It helps us provide support to schools. Another investment in technology is our QR code security round system. So on the exterior of all of our schools, we have QR codes. I'm sure everyone knows what those are. And now we have technology on all of our phones where we can go and capture the rounds that we're doing in schools.

[00:52:13] So it's not enough that we're able to just do all of these rounds and say we're doing them. We can capture data. We can tell when we're there and ensure that our requirements that we're looking for are being met. So it's extremely helpful. And those are used by school security, our security patrol staff, and also our security residents who live in schools.

[00:52:32] So when they're doing their rounds, we're capturing when we're there. And the last thing I'll mention on the investments in technology is our digital school mapping grant. This year, the governor funded this mapping grant to put highly detailed maps in the hands of all of our public safety responders, which is managed by us to get through that system.

[00:52:55] Those maps, when they're done, will also work seamlessly with the 911 call center IT infrastructure. So when they send out calls, they'll have access to those. We got in on the front end of that, so we're first up and we're able to get that implemented.

[00:53:13] Last week, we did rounds of schools, and we're hoping to have those completed to the police and fire departments just within a couple weeks. So I'll go ahead and take over for a minute here and talk to you a little bit about weapons detection technology.

[00:53:30] And so it's taken me about a month into the investigation of this to say the term magnetometer. And so I just want to point out that a magnetometer is very different than a metal detector. See, I'm now messing up on metal detectors. So they're very different, and it's very different technology.

[00:53:48] We have a video for you tonight that we'll cue up in a moment. But before I do that, I kind of want to set the stage with you. You know, we traveled, Dr. McDade sent a team down to Charlotte-Mecklenburg, one of the largest districts in the nation, to see the magnetometers implemented real-time.

[00:54:07] And so magnetometers are different than a metal detector. And if you've been to a pro-athletic event, if you've been to one of our museums, my family and I, over the winter break, we went over to the Smithsonian, the Hudson Vair, went through an evolved system.

[00:54:23] And then we went into town to the art museum and went through an evolved system. It's an artificial intelligence system, so when you go through, you don't even realize you're going through because you have to take nothing off your person. It doesn't hit on keys or phones or your normal things that you would carry, AirPods.

[00:54:44] It's artificial intelligence that is solely focused on weapons detection. We saw it firsthand in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. It was incredible. I think the year before they implemented this, they had 32 or 33 guns in their schools. Within the first several months of implementing, they had one gun in their schools, and a student let somebody in a side door of the school.

[00:55:09] So it drastically cut down on weapons coming into their schools. It is a high-volume event. schools of about 2600 students made it through the system within about 15 minutes so it's very quick it's not intrusive at all like a metal you know you go through the metal detector you got to empty everything out put it in a tray nothing like that so we'll go ahead and cue the video up for you so you can see it real time it'll answer some of your questions it's it's an amazing

[00:55:40] system so if Jim if we could go ahead and cue that up for everybody so what we have here is our standard configuration Express system. This is a dual-lane configuration for high-throughput screening. We can screen up to 3600 people per hour in this configuration. What you'll also notice is that there are some tablets that are connected to this system. These are wireless tablets which gives you some flexibility in the positioning and where you want to place the tablets. There's two different types of tablets here. One is our flow control

[00:56:16] and then the other one would be used for a resolution area if someone alerts the image will be displayed on the tablet and that person can be directed to a separate resolution area to resolve any type of threatening object that they may have so let's get on with the demonstrations the first thing I'm going to do is walk towards the front side of the system here I am on the front as if I'm entering a facility I'm just going to walk through at a normal pace I don't to stop or anything and you can see that nothing has happened on the system or at the tablet and

[00:56:51] that's because i don't have anything threatening on me but i do have everyday objects like a cell phone and keys and a wallet that are non-threatening and don't be considered alert now i'll demonstrate an alert using a backpack here i am on the front side of the express and i'm going to walk through normally and what you may have heard is the alert so i have an item in this backpack that does alert it's shown on the tablet screen and in this case it's a pressure cooker device

[00:57:25] that could be used as an explosive device next i'm going to show you what it looks like for kind of non-threatening items in a backpack and again i'll put the bag on my back i'm going to walk through at a normal pace and again you'll see nothing has happened and in this case i have a lightweight laptop, I have a power adapter, and some of the usual stuff that someone may have in their bag. The next alert I'm going to show is an item that may alert in a bag that's of a

[00:58:03] smaller material. Here's the bag again. Here I am walking through Express. Again, you can hear the alert from the tablet. You can see the lights on the back of the system turn red. And in this case it's the barrel of an assault rifle so we can find large objects and we can find smaller types of objects that can be threatening the last alert i'm going to show you is an item that's on my person i'm going to put a jacket on so it's concealed again here i am on the front side of

[00:58:41] the express i'm going to walk through at a normal pace you'll see the lights on the back of the system turn red and you'll hear the alert and in this case it is a small firearm that's on my hip that the Express detected. So lastly before I move on I'm just going to show you a detailed view of that alert and how it shows up on the tablet screen. So you can see we have two different types of images that we show on our tablet. One is a static image with a box around the area of the threat and the other is a moving image which really tracks the movement of that particular

[00:59:20] item as it goes through the Express system. So it makes it very easy for operators and guards to determine where the item was found and how to resolve it. I'm going to talk about some additional controls that are available to the operator to identify threats. Thank you. So we wanted you to see this to give you a feel of the technology that we've been investigating. You can see it's a very smart system. It removes a lot of the guesswork in a traditional metal detector. You would not know where that item was on the individual. You would have to go through an extensive search.

[00:59:54] You can see that this system is not invasive, and it's intended to be a high-volume system for students and folks to move through. So we are currently and still investigating that. I can tell you that, obviously, when we engage further in this, we will heavily engage our community in dialogue, setting up demonstrations for our community.

[01:00:18] Parents invite the media to come in. We will, you know, present to students as well. So that we can thoroughly explore this with the community vet this with the community and answer any questions and Concerns that the community would have Yeah timing of the engagements we're working on So next week evolve is coming in they're loaning a system to us for the next six weeks We have we'll be engaging with our principals next week and and doing a demo with our elementary principals first and then all of our middle and high school principals I want to be clear

[01:00:58] we're looking at it potentially implementing this at the secondary level but we also want to include our elementary principals so that they know about the technology and are involved in it but that will begin the February 6th and February 9th looking at potentially starting those community engagements the very next week and those dates will be made public very soon and And also bringing in our student senate and conducting a presentation with our student senate as well.

[01:01:28] So, and then wrapping it up with finally, a virtual presentation for all folks who might not be able to make it out. We're planning on doing it in three separate high schools. But for folks who can't make it out, we'll do a presentation on, we'll do it remotely on Zoom or one of those platforms so folks can see it and engage in Q&A with us.

[01:01:48] And the Evolve folks are coming out. with us and we'll be there to answer any questions right along with us. So I'm gonna move on from the weapons detection, talk a little bit about Raptor Alert. Raptor Alert is a system that, and you've heard us talk a lot about alignment.

[01:02:07] Raptor Alert is a handheld app that literally resides on any personal cell phone. And we're gonna be purchasing that next year. and we're working with principals for early adopters right now.

[01:02:23] It's an app that's totally correlated to the I Love You Guys Foundation standard response protocols, and it gives anyone who has the app on their phone the power to change the school security posture. So let's say, for example, I'm out at recess as an elementary teacher, and I see somebody coming across my school grounds with a weapon.

[01:02:43] I can put the school in lockdown right from my phone by the click of a button. The police immediately get notified. The Emergency Operations Center, 911 Call Center gets a notification. Everybody in the school gets notified that the school is going into lockdown.

[01:03:00] And it sends a geofence location out of where that person was when they triggered that lockdown so the police, if responding to the scene, know exactly where that person was when they initiated that lockdown. Our crisis management plan, it's seamless, can reside within the system, and we would build all of our emergency responders into that system.

[01:03:22] And it just gives us a real enhanced response to any crisis and to be more responsive. Ron, you want to talk about Knox Boxes? - Sure. One of the things we want to move forward with is the implementation of Knox Boxes at our school.

[01:03:37] They're fairly common, and what they do is they're a steel box that's affixed to the outside of the building and allows police and fire to access master keys to the building. I know when you saw what happened in Evaldi where they were looking around for master keys for the school.

[01:03:55] We do have access to master keys, so I'm confident we could manage that now, but it makes it infinitely easier when they have access to them 24/7, and we'll put multiples of master keys and key card access keys in those boxes so the police and fire can access those locations easily should they need to.

[01:04:15] The last thing I want to talk about Security Operations Center. We are looking to implement a center similar to ones we visited in Fairfax and Loudoun. They have operations center that support their schools and administrations on a regular basis. They work with public safety in the 911 call center, have access to cameras, they integrate with the Raptor Alert Reporting System, they manage calls from Say Something and Bark, uh provide schools with uh answering any type of questions on security they have um they're the front end on implementing uh communications to the rest of the school

[01:04:53] division for crisis incidents to come in and they help manage uh they'll help manage some of our school alarms that come in for burglary fire trouble for the fire alarm system and handle that those type of communications just to give you an idea about how many calls that they get managed We were talking with Loudoun County staff up there, and they managed over 40,000 calls last year.

[01:05:18] So, you know, there is a need. There's a 24-7, 365 need, and, you know, we're looking to do all the groundwork and look at standing that up in the near future. In the meantime, we do have an extension that we have active in the district.

[01:05:35] It's a 9999 extension. So if there is a crisis in a school and anybody needs to report that, their first response currently is to call the 9999 number in the district, and it's manned 24-7-365, and we have a response immediately.

[01:05:52] So really, that concludes our update. I'd like to invite Chief Newsham to join us. And I do want to just reiterate, Chief, we really do appreciate your support of the schools and and just that ongoing collaboration thank you chair Wheeler chair Lateef members of both boards I'm Pete Neuschman the chief of police I'm going to just echo some of the things that have already been said dr. McDade and I have had an excellent relationship since we started here in Prince William County not too long ago one of the first things that we decided we wanted to do was to

[01:06:29] correct the memorandum of understanding that we had with the school system what wanted to do was ensure that there were clear lines of authority particularly with regards to arrests of students at school uh we have all heard about the uh classroom to prison pipeline uh and neither one of us wanted to be part of that uh so we we got that mou and you know how to mous take time because lawyers are involved i see your lawyer is here but we were able to get that done relatively quickly in march of 2022 we had the new mou and it's on both of the websites it's on our website and the school's website.

[01:07:05] But as a result of that, actually arrests at the school have reduced pretty dramatically over that time. In fact, this year we've only arrested five students at school this year. And if you look at the school system, the size of our school system, that's pretty remarkable to have that few arrests.

[01:07:26] We have fielded, we talked a little bit about threats. We have fielded 63 threats. I'll talk a little bit about how we handle threats in just a second. And we recovered, and this is disturbing to all of us, we've recovered two guns from our schools this year.

[01:07:43] That is two guns, too many. And what's, I think that's scary to know that we had two guns in our schools. I think what's more scary is we don't know how many guns are actually in our schools. And you talk about weapons detection systems, that will prevent and deter that kind of thing from happening, God forbid, in our schools.

[01:08:05] Talk a little bit about our SROs. I'm a firm believer, you'll hear me say it over and over again in our SRO program. I appreciate the fact that both of these boards have supported the SRO program here in Prince William County. We have SROs assigned to all of the high schools.

[01:08:23] We have SROs assigned to three of our middle schools, and then we have SROs that rotate among the remaining middle schools. We would like to have an SRO in each of our middle schools as well, staffing right now does not allow for that, but as our staffing increases, and it will, over the next year, we're gonna increase the number of SROs that we have at our middle schools.

[01:08:50] With regards to threats, you might ask, what is a threat? There is a legal definition for a threat, and what it is, it's a concerning communication where somebody is threatening harm to themself or to others. Where do we receive our threats from? Multiple sources, we get it from the community, we get it from the school staff, the teachers, the students, and of course we get it from the Say Something app that the school have.

[01:09:15] What do we do when we get a threat, somebody's threatening harm to themself or others? We immediately go and we try to figure out who's responsible for sending that threat. We talk to any witnesses, we search the social media sites. Oftentimes, we're able to locate the source of the threat.

[01:09:32] Oftentimes, it's a student. We will interview the student, we'll interview the parent or the guardian. Oftentimes, if a search is necessary, oftentimes the search is allowed by the adults who have supervision over the kids. If that's not allowed, then we'll go get a warrant for a search.

[01:09:50] Most of the threats are determined to be non-credible in nature, and most of the threats are handled administratively with regards to discipline by the school system. I'm gonna talk a little bit about active violence. This is a conversation that we talk a lot about at the police department.

[01:10:08] I know it's scary and can be disturbing, but it's something that we have to think about 'cause we all see what's happened across the country, sometimes at our schools, but the act of violence is happening

not only in our schools, but it's happening in a lot of our communities.

[01:10:23] We have continuous ongoing active violence training as recently as this past Monday. We had a joint training with our fire and rescue team over at Potomac Mills Mall in the event that we have an active violence situation here in the county.

[01:10:40] The Prince William County Police Department does have a special weapons and tactics team that is available to respond in the event we have an active violence situation. Like I said earlier, we are always in preparation mode. We are always reviewing events that occur across the country.

[01:10:59] We are very fortunate in Prince William County to have our own training facility, our own training academy, where we can do scenario-based training with our officers. We do that on a regular basis, not just our recruit officers, but ongoing training with our officers.

[01:11:16] Recently, some of you may have followed that the county is going to purchase the elite sports facility, which is going to allow for even additional training for our officer scenario-based training. It has a state-of-the-art scenario-based training room that we're going to be able to utilize to ensure that our police officers have all the training that they need to respond.

[01:11:38] God forbid something like this were to occur. We have, I got to talk a little bit about police response since Columbine, 1999 in Columbine. Prior to Columbine, the police response to these active violent situations was essentially a patrol officer would show up and they would stage and they would wait for their SWAT team to arrive.

[01:12:03] And that's what they did at Columbine and that's why we lost so many lives at Columbine. Since then the philosophy has changed pretty dramatically. And now, and the response that you would have from the Prince William County Police Department, first officer that shows up on the scene would establish incident command, and that first officer would have the responsibility for entering and stopping any active violence threat that was occurring, whether it be in the school or anywhere else.

[01:12:32] If you look, we talked, you mentioned Uvalde. If you look at the biggest criticism of Uvalde was the fact that they did not establish incident command, and they did not go into the school. We do have tools out in the field. You talked a little bit about Knox boxes. That would be a great improvement. But I can tell you in the event we had to enter a classroom or any other building in this community, we have tools that are out in the field now, breaching tools that would allow us to get in and to confront any threat. We do multiple things when these things happen. We establish incident

[01:13:08] command and this is in no particular order. Of course, our first and foremost concern is to eliminate the threat. We safely evacuate or shelter in place. We obviously coordinate with fire and rescue to provide medical care for the survivors. We establish a reunification site and that's going to be critically important, particularly at the schools. We have to notify and update the public as to what's going on. And again, I have to say that the Prince William County Police Department is very well equipped for this type of a scenario.

[01:13:41] We have breaching tools, ballistic shields, we have long guns, we have a SWAT team, and we have an excellent relationship with risk management, excellent relationship with our fire and rescue, Virginia State Police, and our federal and local partners.

[01:13:58] And the other thing that I will say about the Prince William County Police Department is, unfortunately, we've had to utilize these skills in the not-too-distant past. As you all know, we did have a shooting at a ballgame at Freedom High School.

[01:14:14] We had to go out there. We had to respond. Police officers were on the scene. Police officers were actually there, but they were able to get there, establish reunification, ended up arresting the person that was responsible. And we all know about the shooting that we had on a Sunday afternoon at Benton Middle School.

[01:14:31] Obviously school wasn't in session at the time, but they were having flag football games with multiple attendees Multiple kids were there had a shooting on the scene Prince William County Police Department responded was able to regain control establish reunification and ultimately was able to arrest the person that was responsible so that I just want to Reemphasize the fact that the relationship that we have with risk management and the superintendent is excellent Our folks on the ground work collaboratively on a day-to-day basis to ensure our schools are safe

[01:15:06] And I think that we can take any questions that anyone might have questions. It's Vega. Thank you You mentioned that currently we're at a 79% Rate in terms of staff and the student body feeling safe. Do we know what some of the contributing factors are to that number?

[01:15:28] We have looked we are looking into the data to kind of disaggregate that and tease that out To feel to get an idea of what the underlying issues are so I don't have that information at my fingertips tonight We'd be happy to provide that. Thank you. I'm chair. Thank you I'm gonna piggyback on supervisor Vega. You may not have it, but I was curious What's the breakdown of does every student and every member of your staff?

[01:16:03] participate in this survey or and more I was even wondering it as you were presenting it i'd like to know how your teachers feel because we're seeing across the country um you know especially after the newport news shooting the teachers made it very clear they don't feel safe um and i want to know how prince william county teachers specifically feel as far as safety yeah we'd certainly provide that data to everyone here be happy to do that and disaggregate that out i can tell you that um i don't have the participation rate here with me tonight but i know that the

[01:16:41] survey goes out to all of our secondary students both middle and high as well as all of our faculty and staff yeah and what I've learned from teachers in the past couple years is maybe it's even just you know that they feel a sense of insecurity or their safety threatened because of specific students that maybe are emotionally disturbed or or you know have special needs and so it's not just it's different types of concerns of their physical well-being is that fair to yeah i you

[01:17:19] know i'd hedge to to report out without having disaggregated the data no no i'm not asking i'm just kind of giving you an idea of what's going through this head of mine because i've learned from somebody that i got to know who is a teacher of um up in loudon county who i don't recall exactly um i don't i don't want to say it was autistic kids but children that were biting and and there were times where she was the victim of it and so when i say safety i'm referring to

[01:17:52] overall well-being sure i i can't share with you and uh you know this this is this is a topic that's on our kids minds you know they see what's going on uh nationally um and across virginia uh We have two

crisis management trainers in Ron's shop that go out and train our students on crisis management and response to crises in schools.

[01:18:19] And the students, I can tell you that they're very appreciative when we go out and train. It is on their minds. They bring it up. When we do these trainings, they're very willing to share that this is a topic that makes them nervous from seeing what's happening and seeing it on the news.

[01:18:38] And it is a topic that's really on their minds. You're referring to students? Students. Yeah, well, and of course, obviously, we all care about both. Sure. So another question related probably more to Chief Newsham, you know, if anybody heard it, I'm sure they were just as disturbed as I was to hear about the incident on the New York subway where, you know, a bunch of kids, I believe, teenagers were about, they were harassing an older gentleman and they were going to light his hair on fire, and then another passenger stepped in, and they ended up pummeling that guy.

[01:19:17] Very disturbing, and that's obviously very, unfortunately, a trend that we're seeing where kids are not respecting elders. Where, and maybe this is more of a Dr. McDade, like, where, if anywhere in your curriculum, do you address societal concerns or issues like that?

[01:19:46] Because obviously Prince William County is a world-class education, and I don't know if you can even address. That's a tough one. I can't say that those types of issues come up specifically in curriculum.

[01:20:06] You know, it's not necessarily content-specific. But I'll have Ms. Huebner talk a little bit about some of the things that we're looking at as it relates to social, emotional, and mental health. trauma more more so i think that's what comes into play because our young people are seeing these things happening both nationally as well as locally and in their own communities and sometimes even in their homes and so we have to address that and so we're doing a lot around addressing trauma-informed care trauma-informed training so that we as educators can identify the signs if you

[01:20:43] will when a student may have been you know exposed to something traumatic that now may be playing out with them in the school environment so you want to address that I think that's the approach that we have to take because that's what's happening right it is these are traumatic incidents for us as adults when we see or even I didn't see it just listening to you the reaction that emotions that you know came in me you could imagine that our students seeing these things either up close and personal or even through social media does create those kinds of situations where we have to address it in the classroom at time so can you talk a little bit about some of the trauma-informed training and

[01:21:21] care that we're currently implementing as well as exploring sure absolutely so you know that's the topics that you brought up are concerning and they're very real there are things that we have to face in society right now so some of the skills that we teach when we talked about our tier one instruction those are classroom lessons that are provided by our school counselors we have additional mental health professionals that can come in when there's a more critical need and work independently or you know focused with a student on their educational plan but things like social awareness relationship skills self management self I said self awareness social awareness and self-awareness as well as responsible decision-making and the goals there you know obviously

[01:22:00] developmentally appropriate when you're in first grade we're going to teach you about what your actions have you know on others let's think about others feelings but as our children grow and make

decisions that impact themselves and others like how their actions impact those around you good choices we really try to get our kids life skill ready and really make good decision-making and social awareness cultural responsiveness all that is built into our instruction that we receive through our counseling program and our FLEs that are available for review on our website thank you that's very good I'm just curious does that start in the elementary and you just build on it through high school it doesn't and I like to use this is a I think a very real

[01:22:39] example or tangible example so we start teaching kindergarteners let's let's talk about substance abuse right we certainly don't go into a kindergarten classroom and talk about substance abuse or a first-grade classroom and talk about you know drug use what we talk about is medicine safety and good decision-making related to that and you know building relationships a trusted adult how a trusted adult could help you if you have a question about medication as we get through the grade levels and where it really is more substance abuse related we start teaching and helping children think about how that impacts others and also how it impacts their own well-being so we do have that progress as our children go through you know the grades and really

[01:23:18] make sure that it's developmentally appropriate it is all based in solid life skills you know our goal is to help children make good decisions that will lead to post-secondary success and that's built on their strengths and their understanding of diversity, you know, cultural awareness, impact on others, and really self-regulation and reflection of their own actions.

[01:23:40] Just real on, since Ms. Lawson asked a question, Dr. McDade, I think you can at least anecdotally point out that the teachers at the elementary level have been very happy with the security aids. And, you know. Vern spoke about that a little bit earlier. I think it just brings a presence of there's someone that is paying attention, that's watching you know in the past principals had to kind of juggle everything that they're doing instructionally but at the same time try to check doors and do perimeter checks and that's just not the job and role of a principal so having security to do regular on-the-hour perimeter checks checking to make sure

[01:24:16] doors are locked watching the front entrance making sure that there's no one getting into the school that shouldn't be in the school does add a layer of a peace of mind if you will around safety for staff and for students so it has been a very welcomed addition I do want our deputy careful on our to share a little bit about a question you asked about surveying of staff and around how they feel and safety so there are some updates from from the state thank you good evening everyone in alignment with the video e regulations this current

[01:24:55] school year our students in grades 6 through 8 as well as our staff pre-k through eight will participate in the climate survey and working conditions survey as well and it it focuses on a breadth of information but there it is heavily focused on safety and security as well and they have actually modified that survey this year to be in alignment with DCJS so that we're really hitting video II and DCGS requirements at the same time and that survey is next year be focused on high school and so they do and every other year as far as secondary they do keep that

[01:25:32] data for us as well as we keep that data so that we can look at trends and patterns over time supervisor lawson i do want to mention too and this ties back to the magnetometer piece that we were talking about in the investigation when we were down in charlotte mecklenburg once they implemented

their magnetometers they saw a significant increase from their students and staff reporting that they were feeling much safer in schools.

[01:25:59] So they saw a huge impact with that implementation. And also what I didn't mention to the group, a side effect of implementing the magnetometer technology also reduced vaping in schools, reduced students bringing drugs into schools.

[01:26:15] They've seen all of their discipline codes significantly and discipline infractions significantly reduced. We're working on it. Oh, Supervisor Lawson, we have a great request for you, so I'm glad you asked that question, but we'll touch on that later.

[01:26:34] Supervisor Bodie. Budget season is coming after all, right? My question is in regards to communication. One of the upsides of having six kids is I have them spread out throughout the system in different grade levels, different schools, even among the same sort of peer level.

[01:26:50] And what I've found is there's, I wouldn't say inconsistency, but there's different levels of communication that happen. Sometimes when something happens at school, I hear from my kid first because he texts me. Other times I may hear from one of our colleagues on the school board that it happens first. Other times the school informs us first. So there's always sort of a different way in which things happen and how it's communicated to us.

[01:27:08] So I guess my question is, are you guys working on building on that consistency, and how is that being rolled out? Yeah, absolutely, and I think it's a great question, fair question. We're always working to improve our communications efforts. you know, we've got a great communications team, really streamlining our efforts when we have serious communication or serious crises in the building.

[01:27:34] Our goal really is to communicate out to families every 20 to 30 minutes with providing ongoing updates and in conjunction with the police and they're excellent at communicating as well. So there's a close working relationship with obviously with our communications team, with Denise and her team, and the risk management team.

[01:27:55] I appreciate you sharing that. We're always looking to improve and get better. We have significantly streamlined some efforts this year. We're still working through streamlining those, getting used to those new protocols, but we're constantly working to get better in that area.

[01:28:13] I do want to add that, you know, point taken, we knew that there were some improvements that needed to be made. I think, you know, sometimes social media technology is a wonderful thing, but sometimes it's not helpful as well, especially when, you know, communication can fly so quickly and sometimes it's not accurate information.

[01:28:35] And so what we did do is we just recently revised our communication tree and made sure that we had normalized practices across the school division because we did not have standard operating procedures, if you will, across all schools within the school division and so we've done a lot of work to norm practices and have uniformity so that every single school knows the exact same decision tree that has to be made for communication so that we're getting timely information police rescue getting timely information and we can be coordinated in our communication efforts we've worked diligently

[01:29:12] with the police department so that we are coordinating as well so that we're sending information out in its joint so that families are getting things at the same time that maybe, you know, Chief

Newsham's shop is sending information out publicly. So those are some big changes that we made just this year.

[01:29:29] What we can't prevent, right, is, you know, the text messages and the social media that sometimes things just start going and then, you know, information gets out. What we try to do is make sure that the information we send not only is timely but that is accurate.

[01:29:46] People, families are on edge and you know all it takes is for a small amount of misinformation to come out and it can just wreak havoc and come to find out the threat may not have been credible. And if it is credible we want to make sure that people have the right kinds of information to respond appropriately. So we we have just this year streamlined and created some decision trees and communication protocols and we've trained and normed across the school division to prevent what you just described from happening appreciate that

[01:30:19] thank you thank you mr. chairman uh first thanks to the bocs for being here i appreciate the longevity of the relationship with my own member um we were talking about like the classroom reduction that was a collaborative effort bipartisan years ago and it has really benefited both the east and west end of the counties this is more of a dialogue and some things I thought about and anecdotal thoughts while being out and present in the schools.

[01:30:51] You know, it's crazy, you know, I served on the state school committee here for six years, not involved by Lisa and Jennifer, doing a great job, and just the changes itself from how amazing it felt just in 2018 or 2019 to have secured vestibules in all my Potomac school because that was a huge landmark at that time thinking about something as now we look as so simple as secured entrances whereas in the past people could walk right into the hallway and then and maybe if they went into the office you know then they went into the office um so just the

[01:31:26] changes that have happened um you know using the word consistent visible I try to be at school that's consistently invisibly I think people know and I anecdotally and what you see even and what I hear from parents just by having the uniforms and knowing that this is the head security person or there's three other ones over here.

[01:31:48] There's a different type of climate when you go to the events, a big high school basketball game, a big football game. I think having that itself helps improve the climate and culture of those events that are happening. Arrival and dismissal, same type of thing.

[01:32:03] Having those visible best parents know and they say, oh, if I drop my kid off today, There's three people with those visible vests. I know who they are. I know that area and stuff like that. I appreciate Ms. Lawson's comment asking about the safety and well-being of staff. I met Ms. Lawson back when she was a parent, when I was a teacher at Gainesville Middle School.

[01:32:23] You didn't have gray hair then. No. No. I was a lot more likable, too. The kids like me better than that. But, you know, one thing I will say about the emotional well-being and one thing I noticed is, you know, when I first came on the board, you know, one thing I really hammered home on and somehow it's archived on YouTube was the speech I gave when I first came on the board about retaliation.

[01:32:51] How staff, there was this culture and climate of retaliation that if you spoke out or you did this, somehow you would be facing some type of disciplinary action. and i have felt over the last couple years that fear erode it's not completely gone i don't think it ever can be completely just you know eliminated

from the mindset of people but i think just by something simple as like the communication chain of command and protocols what i've noticed although i've adjusted with it but what i noticed is you know i don't get a sense feeling now that principals

[01:33:27] get worried if something gets beyond them and gets up to central office or a school board member before them there's this support structure in place where people can feel that ease where they don't feel like they're going to have any type of you know punitive you know reaction or something like that from a superior that i think will go a long ways to helping improve that climate score and with staff as well i think that's going to naturally be eradicated from the system as much as we can. That was one thing I thought of. The streamlined wall chart, it's, you know, it seems so simple, but it's really not. When I was doing a graduate class, one topic I did was

[01:34:07] our streamlined wall charts. And I looked at 10 years of them, and this is 10 years ago. And as they've grown and they've kept on adding more and more tabs, it just became more and more cumbersome to go through those. So I think the one page itself is revolutionary. I mean, it's just something as simple as that. The security assistance, I think that's obviously the 104 that is the most I think we've ever put into school in a single year. Again, anecdotally, I try to also, as much as possible, managing a full-time job, being visible in the schools during the

[01:34:44] day so I can get a feel of what people are experiencing, what is going on in the classroom and how are students and everyone reacting to things. And I will again say I've talked to many teachers, I think Dr. Lateef mentioned about having this additional person, especially at the elementary level, just kind of eases, again, some anxiety that has been there before.

[01:35:07] Something as, oh God, did I leave the door cracked, which we don't allow. But, you know, something as simple or, you know, did I forget something or that, you know, those people are there. I see them walk kids outside sometimes with the teachers. I see them greeting kids. So it's, I think, a nice addition to the schools in lieu of not having enough, you know, SROs.

[01:35:27] But one thing I will compliment the full board on of the VOCS is that you guys have put a concerted effort to increasing salaries of our armed, our officers, not just for recruitment, but also retention. So I think that's going to go a long way. So I appreciate the VOCS with that.

[01:35:44] Mr. Wilk, thank you. We have another presentation that the county's going to give. But I'm going to go to Angry, Wall, and then I saw, I think, Bailey. And then we'll go to the next presentation, and then we'll have more questions. Mr. Angry. Questions. You know, we talk a lot about guns nationwide, and the data you gave and the statistics you gave, and the software that we're using.

[01:36:12] I pulled out a steamer. I wasn't really expecting a steamer to come out of that bag. I'm really curious, you know, knives in the school, and one big thing is, you know, as we kind of secure this from weapons coming in, what is your dad on school fighting?

[01:36:30] And then I want to just ask about, with that, de-escalating skills of the kids. You know, we talk about that in police and fire and how to de-escalate a situation. I think those are some of the simpler things we can do for two kids, you know, in an altercation because the world is changing.

[01:36:50] Really, tempers and that have kind of gotten short. So I'll stop there and just leave that at that. I don't have data on my, you know, disaggregated data on what types of different types of weapons. But I will say that what you pointed out on de-escalation, we do engage in that in schools.

[01:37:10] and we do have restorative practices in schools and trained educators and staff that work with students to help them self-regulate and understand how to de-escalate, how to engage in conflict resolution.

[01:37:26] So those techniques and approaches are currently in our schools. Just one final question on the, I forget what you call that software for the weapons identification. As you go through with this, integrate them into the schools.

[01:37:43] How are you going about that? And just from elements, I think you were saying middle schools and high schools. What would be the order of that? Will all of the schools get them, or is there a set? I'll let Vern talk a little bit about the approach. What I want to do is make sure that we thoroughly engage our community.

[01:38:02] And so with the three roundtables that we're going to be having this upcoming month, as well as ongoing input and feedback from the community, that will really inform what we will do by scale. Because we want to make sure that we're doing this as a collective effort where all voices are heard and input is provided.

[01:38:21] Because that's what's going to allow this to be successful and work well in all schools. We know it's necessary. We know it's needed. And we've been hearing from families, from parents that are saying that they welcome this, right? So we just want to make sure that we get input from all different levels and then I'll have Aaron talk a little bit about how we would phase this in.

[01:38:42] Yeah, it's nice because we're not left up to our, you know, by ourselves to implement. We've got Evolve. This is something that they guide schools through. When we went down to Charlotte-Mecklenburg, they made a lot of mistakes and they were very upfront with us through the implementation.

[01:38:59] They tried to roll it out in many, many schools initially. They recommended kind of a trickle approach. pick some schools across the division, maybe a handful, roll it out slowly, bring those schools up to speed, and then almost like a tiered approach, then you have a next group come on board.

[01:39:19] They also tried to implement it the first day of school, which was a real challenge because, as all of you know, parents in the room, that school buses are late, bus drivers are ironing out routes. It's a little bit chaotic the first couple weeks of school, So they really encouraged us to, you know, take a little bit of a softer approach.

[01:39:38] So we envisioned we would get into the start of the school year. Obviously, there's a significant training component, training up staff. There's a piece of training students as well, how to go through the system. And so we're not going to jump in and try to implement this in all of our middle and high schools at once.

[01:40:00] Ms. Fall. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wanted to echo what I'm hearing from staff and building principals in particular, how very much the additional security officers are appreciated and how all of these seemingly small security improvements are cumulatively making a really big difference.

[01:40:24] And then I also, going back to the conversation about communication and response, and I had a question about the Security Operations Center, so I was one of the ones that went up and saw that and wowed it. In my understanding of that, and you can correct me if I'm wrong or maybe back up what I'm

saying, is that the Security Operations Center, if we do proceed with that, that should make a big difference for our ability not only to respond to a crisis but also to handle communications in real time.

[01:40:56] Yeah, absolutely. We've heard loud and clear from both Latimer and Fairfax how quickly they're able to respond. Typically, if there's a crisis in a building, the principal calls 911, their second call or a staff member from the building, their second call is to the emergency operations center, and they're in immediate contact with and coordination with the police.

[01:41:18] They're worth sending folks that we have on staff for risk management to the scene. We're giving advice to the principal in that situation, things to consider, things to think about, and to implement. It allows us to be extremely responsive should a situation arise.

[01:41:37] And would they also handle communications as far as notifying the community, notifying the affected families, parents? Our communications team would still take the lead on that. But the protocols that Dr. McDade was talking about earlier, that would initiate those protocols of notifying the necessary folks within the division.

[01:41:55] And then so that step would take place through the emergency operations center. And then all of those communication protocols that Dr. McDave mentioned that we have in place would then be followed by the staff within the district. Awesome. Thank you. So I'm going to go to Supervisor Bailey and then Supervisor Franklin, and then we'll move on to the next presentation.

[01:42:14] And we'll have time for more questions afterwards. I mean, it's an important topic, so we don't want to rush through. Supervisor Bailey. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good evening to everyone. My apologies for my target as earlier. Thank you for bringing me in the door safely. I want to say hi to you, I haven't met you, but welcome.

[01:42:32] What I am enjoying to hear, and Ron, just being on the school safety is Justin and I think we're all at the same time. These conversations are totally different from what they were when we were on the school safety, but totally different. And so I am very much thankful and glad about the proactiveness that everyone is taking in our school system.

[01:42:54] I think that's important. My first question, Denise, will be to you, because I know you've been doing this a long time, and I feel, well, I mean that complimentary, and I don't, I do, that's what I do. And my first question is to you, and then I want to segue over to you about the mental health piece.

[01:43:12] Everybody knows that's near and dear to my heart. We have CRC as common chief, thank you for your support in that, and our babies are very important to us as it relates to that. And so what is the need? I love tier one, tier two. I love all of that. Give quickly your voice to the need. If it's too long, please let us know because you need to be a part of those decisions that are coming forth as it relates to mental health.

[01:43:40] I'd be happy to spend a lot of time speaking with anyone who wants to hear about the need and bringing resources. The number one thing is community support. Our children need access to mental health support. Our schools, our education, our core business is education.

[01:43:55] We don't provide therapy, but we can connect families with resources to help their children be well. So definitely access to community support. We have a high number of kids threatening to harm

themselves, so we need better support systems and resources in that area. You know, kids who are truant are getting in trouble when they're out in the community instead of being in school.

[01:44:13] So we need support, you know, connecting with families, but really enforcing that kids should be in school with truancy. And I mean, I could go on and on and on, but those are some of the areas that I think the mental health resources in general and more access to our kids.

[01:44:29] But the song that's being sang across the table here is it's the things that you're doing, reducing babying and things like that, that all melts into that. Yes, but the substance abuse is significant. We've lost children this year to overdose, and it's an ongoing epidemic in our area.

[01:44:48] The Oviac Task Force is really working to address that. We have some systems bringing Naloxone and Narcan, which we're doing with all that, but we're both the same thing, addressing that. But we really need help with substance abuse. That's all. All right, and then I just want to, if I can, go over to Vernon, Rob, about the training in middle school.

[01:45:09] That concerns me also. I know we had activity in high school, but trending in terms of purity as it relates to mental health or not. Is there a trend in the middle school environment?

[01:45:26] What we see on the news that there is. - Sure, and I'll defer to Denise for the mental health side of that. - Well, as Lauren said, we work very closely together, and what I'm hearing, you say concerns related to safety around men. So Fred's assessment is something that Paul's under my shot, but we work closely with Ron.

[01:45:44] and learn to determine when there is a threat, and oftentimes it is related to mental health, not necessarily a physical threat, but it is a mental well-being, and so we do wrap around with that. Additionally, we do see an increase in children who lack conflict resolution skills where their mental health is asked best about is that they're engaging in fights or engaging in behaviors that are not productive from the school environment, disruptive from the school environment.

[01:46:08] So I think the training that we're seeing is in particular middle school focus. We do have more students in middle school engaging in behaviors of harming themselves or harming others. Supervisor Bailey, I didn't come prepared with numbers, but Ron and I were just chatting.

[01:46:24] And, you know, the safe-to-say numbers, the tips that come through with the safe-to-say line, there are a fair number of middle schoolers and tips that come through that safe-to-say for middle schoolers. And I just want to reiterate, when it's life safety, we have structures set in place that if that were to occur at 1 o'clock in the morning.

[01:46:45] We're working with the folks from Safe to Safe, and we're coordinating efforts with the police that if we need to do a wellness visit to a house, that's being done at 1 or 2 o'clock in the morning. And I'll close by saying just briefly, we have been very focused on the CRC, and we've just secured funding for our children to be a part, we haven't talked about that, but just to be a part of the CRC with the provisions necessary.

[01:47:11] that is my reasoning for asking that question. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Supervisor Franklin. Sure, thank you all. Can you all hear me okay? Very. Yes. Great. I'll make it quick, but I do have a few questions and a comment. I'll just start with, I've said it publicly, but I'll say it again now that we're in a joint meeting. I just want to thank the school system for the work that you all have done in

collaboration with the county and the police department on the Route 1, Prince William Parkway intersection.

[01:47:45] Heard from a lot of constituents who are happy that we're doing some work in that area and kudos to the school system for moving rather quickly over the past couple of weeks on that. So thank you. I did want to ask a little bit about mental health and then also just procedure with regards to if there is a public safety event that takes place, kind of what those procedures are.

[01:48:08] But I'll just start with, is there a mental health counselor or employee in each school? Denise? Yes, absolutely. We have a variety of mental health staff members. We have our social workers, our school counselors, and our school psychologists that are available to help our students.

[01:48:30] Our staff is trained when a student is experiencing a mental health crisis in that communication protocol and how we can get the right professional in there to help the student. Sure, and then also I just wanted to ask about the relationship between the school counselors and the SROs. So I've had the pleasure of working closely in a middle school with an SRO, And I can assure you that the SRO counselor communication is critical because our SROs become not just people that are there to enforce the law, but they become a part of our school community where every trusted adult can refer kids to resources that are needed.

[01:49:04] And they do partner very closely with our counselors. You know, the goal is to help kids make good choices and be well. And so there's definitely a good partnership. That's great. And then also, can you walk through a little bit in terms of what resources the school system provides to students that may be experiencing a personal crisis?

[01:49:23] And understanding that obviously, you know, the main role of the school system is academia and education. But, for instance, if there is a child who loses a parent or a sibling, what type of services are available in the school system for that student?

[01:49:39] Sure, absolutely. our social workers and our counselors both conduct. And I will say, sorry to interrupt, but I can't really hear and I can't see anything anymore. Oh, should I wait or should I continue? And I promise it's not my illness.

[01:49:55] Yeah, it's on our side. It's a quick tech glitch. Can you hear me, Supervisor? I can hear you, Dr. LaZee. Yeah, so there's a glitch we're working on fixing. Okay, if someone can just speak as loudly as you are. Can you get closer to the mic, Denise? Alright, I can talk really loud. Those of you who know me, I talk loud. That's good.

[01:50:12] So you used an example of grief, and so one of the things that we've implemented is really collecting information voluntary from parents at the start of the year, as well as surveying our students to see what their specific needs are. Our goal is always to partner with parents. We don't just provide, you know, any type of counseling or plan without involving the parents in this.

[01:50:32] But we are equipped to have our counselors work with students in crisis and also long-term in small groups with parental permission to know that we're addressing things such as grief counseling. So we do also at some time evaluate whether that's enough for the student and if the student is in need of more significant support, our tier three supports, we would connect those with community resources that are available, our community services board.

[01:50:57] And I am aware that there is a shortage in the county. So at times we also have individuals that are supported right now through our ARPA funding, our ESSA ARPA funding. We assign a counselor that's called a Support Corps counselor where we form a plan and we work outside of school hours and in the home to support students who need a little bit extra beyond the school day. Sure. And then very quickly, when there, I'm switching gears here, when there is a public safety event, such as an active threat, or even a threat that turns out not to be legit, can you all just walk through what procedure is,

[01:51:35] particularly when it comes to communication with parents? I think that'll be helpful just put out publicly yeah i think we can we can we'd be happy to speak to that and i think chief could chime in too from the from the police side of things um it really it really depends on the nature of the crisis um let's say that we um you know had a situation where we have a crisis going on within the school building um obviously um the principal's contacting 911 immediately they're contacting the 9999 number that's triggering significant communications occurring

[01:52:15] at the district level that's also mobilizing some of our central office staff to support the building principal the building principal is is the decision maker within the first 15 minutes and police and and fire and ems would likely be responding setting up incident command outside and we would be supporting those efforts.

[01:52:34] But I want to reiterate what Dr. McDade said earlier about communication. We have to be patient because oftentimes within the first 10 minutes there's trash that's coming out. It's not accurate communication.

[01:52:50] And so our communications team, we're really working to verify the information that's coming out. We're working with the police department in coordinating our efforts with communication. I mean, I can see I've got our chief information officer here, and Dr. McDade threw me a lifeline.

[01:53:08] So, Matt. Good evening, everyone. Matt Guilfoyle, chief information officer. So, within my area of purview, I have both communications and IT for the school division. So, yes, as Mr. Box started to describe, we have an outstanding relationship with the PIO department for the police department.

[01:53:28] We speak probably hourly when schools are in session, and that's not an exaggeration. We are literally on the phone all day, every day, having very close coordination. What the police department typically does is that, as Vern said, not every incident is a little bit different.

[01:53:48] As soon as it depends on the severity of the incident. If we have an active threat situation, the police department do not wait for us. They will communicate immediately, and we will follow rapidly. Typically, that is instantaneous with the goal that basically within the first 10 minutes of that lockdown occurring, for example, that that information is going out the door, if not faster.

[01:54:13] And the police department is not going to wait to notify us. They're going to act quickly, the PIO department, if there's a public safety concern. Now, there are situations that are more slow rolling than that. Not every situation is that rapid. And sometimes situations evolve.

[01:54:30] The initial information, a lot of times, I can tell you, as somebody who gets just about every incident in the school division, nine times out of ten, the initial information we get is not correct. And so what we don't want to do is further misinformation.

[01:54:46] So we do make every opportunity to try to get that information out as rapidly as possible, typically within the first 15 to 20 minutes if it's an ongoing situation like a lockdown. Secure the buildings, for example, if there's police activity in the area, we get those out just as soon as we hear about it from the school or risk management.

[01:55:09] Typically, that's within minutes or seconds. And in other situations where we might need to wait for the situation to have further information, for example, an ongoing police investigation, they needed to go to a child's home to see what was that threat, We'll wait for that information from the police so that we can give a concrete description of what occurred to parents.

[01:55:31] We make every opportunity as we can to try to make sure that we communicate incidents that may seem minor in nature. We communicate those out to parents. So parents may be like, "Why am I getting yet another letter that says this?" And our goal is to be as transparent as possible.

[01:55:48] Look, I have two students in the system. I have a middle schooler and a high schooler. I totally understand. Social media is not our friend. Texting is not our friend. These things move rapidly, typically with misinformation. We've seen incidents where we've had threats that came from, that maybe was a threat from outside the state that a child picked up on social media and then extrapolated that and said this was specific to their school.

[01:56:13] So again, those things take time. We wanna make sure that we're getting accurate information and we do wanna do it in a transparent way. But I guarantee you that we are on these things literally 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Yep. And I know I'm short on time.

[01:56:28] So just one more. I've noticed students kind of milling around throughout the school day. Obviously, you know, my office is near a school. And so I'm just wondering, what is protocol for when students actually have to physically be on campus? Because I can see that as being a public safety issue as well, particularly for the students. If something were to happen to them during school if they're off campus, what does that look like?

[01:56:57] Dr. McDade, true. I don't know if I understand the question. And if you're saying students who didn't come to school, or are you talking about events that are related, a school event where they're off campus? Because if it's a truancy...

[01:57:14] Yeah, so I can't say if it's a truancy or not. I'm just saying that a lot of times I do see kids, I guess, out and about during the school day. So that would be absenteeism or truancy, students who are not coming to school.

[01:57:37] What we do is we inform parents daily. If there's an absence, we let them know. We have protocols for truancy after so many days. Letters go out, communications to families, phone calls. And so we are aggressively addressing chronic truancy and absenteeism.

[01:57:56] It is a big problem post-pandemic. We're seeing that throughout the county. But what you're describing is students who have not reported to school and you're seeing them in the community, which is something that Denise talked about earlier when students are not coming to school and they're out and there's oftentimes nothing for them to do, that's when you find they may get themselves into activities that are inappropriate.

[01:58:24] but truancy and absenteeism, we are aggressively addressing at every single school. - Thank you. - Thank you. I think we'll move on to the next presentation. Chair Wheeler, you wanna introduce that? - So I know it's late, and we have a long presentation that we're gonna do very quickly, but I do wanna say that the reason we're here and talking about this and we're having such a great conversation is because nothing is more important than school safety in a lot of ways, and it's on people's minds.

[01:58:54] You know, a few years ago it was the idea that if children were hungry, they couldn't learn. Well, if children don't feel safe, they can't learn, right? And, you know, we were just talking, I mean, 90,000 students plus another 10 or 15,000 of employees, that's over 100,000 people in our county every day that need to feel safe so they can, you know, learn or do their job.

[01:59:17] You know, 25% probably of our daytime or more. And so, you know, for me, school safety and making sure that our community feel safe going to school is really, really important, which is also out to our broader community, which is our community safety initiative.

[01:59:34] We just had this presentation of the board within the last month. This is something that we are going to work on and focus on over the next year. It is a priority because, once again, if people don't feel safe in their community, even if Even if statistically there are low levels relative to population in terms of crime, if people don't feel safe, you know, we need to address it, which is why our community safety initiative was done.

[02:00:03] And we do have Dan Alexander, our deputy CXO for public safety, who has been with us. And I will actually turn it over to county exec Chris Shorter to kick us off in this regard. And Mr. Alexander has said he's going to whip through this.

[02:00:20] But I do want to let people know that because so much, even our youth are involved in this, and that's what we're going to sort of touch upon. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair and joint board members. Really appreciate being here tonight and being able to deliver this presentation.

[02:00:37] As our chair mentioned, Dan Alexander has had the opportunity to make this presentation to a number of stakeholder groups. When we think about community safety, and certainly what I am excited about in terms of the model here, is that we are swimming upstream, and we're really focused on intervention and prevention of crime and violence.

[02:01:01] And so when you think about population health, you think about social determinants of health, there's a real centering here around community and making sure that we are focused holistically on individuals. And so ultimately, I also want to acknowledge that this is a future-forward discussion that we're about to have.

[02:01:24] I don't want to ignore the fact that there will likely be questions about what we are doing today. And so we have certainly invited directors who are really on the ground, really working with young people and families today. I'd like to just acknowledge directors Courtney Turney, Lisa Madrone, and Kim Keller.

[02:01:44] If you all would stand up, thank you so much for being here tonight to answer any questions that you all might have about what is happening today and what is happening right now. There are a number of programs that I've been briefed on just today that I'm sure they're happy to talk about.

[02:02:04] And so with that, I'll turn it over to Dan. Good evening, everyone. As was mentioned earlier, we've been through this before. I think we had a 90-minute discussion last time, so we're going to pare this

way down and try to move this along. This is rooted in a lot of the conversations that are happening around safety and what's occurring throughout our country.

[02:02:22] But it's also rooted in our strategic plan that was actually set in place before a lot of that. And so it's important to recognize that this falls right in line with a lot of what we've talked about tonight and a lot of what we've talked about in the past as it relates to community safety. So on the agenda tonight, we're going to talk very quickly about what I mentioned earlier, setting the table around our plan.

[02:02:43] plan. We'll talk a little bit about an overall strategy and implementation. We'll mention a structure that we think will work for us, hopefully, as we look forward with this plan and also what it might look like in terms of examples and projects moving forward.

[02:03:00] So we've mentioned before, this is very much consistent with our strategic plan. First of all, our vision is for us to be safe and caring as a community. And of course, I won't read all of this, but the reality is if you look at a lot of the text in green, it speaks to a holistic approach to how we deal with safety, multiple stakeholders, regular community engagement. There are a lot of terms in here that speak to a very broad and, again, holistic approach to how we look at safety. We're introducing a linear concept here called Left of Bang, a little provocative in terms of the concept, but falls very much in line with

[02:03:38] what we would like to see us do as it relates to prevention, intervention, engagement, diversion. Left of Bang is a Marine Corps concept that really represents what happens before the Left of Bang, a critical event occurs. Now, for them, it's probably an ambush, an IED attack.

[02:03:57] This is also very consistent with what we see in targeted acts of violence as we look at pathway to violence and we look at threat assessment, right? And all the things that happened on that pathway, all the way from a grievance to violent ideation to planning to probing. It's consistent with what we see in the schools and in other places as we look at what happens before something bad occurs.

[02:04:17] So we want our focus to be on that left of bang concept, dealing with prevention as opposed to handling damage, again, focused on prevention, intervention, engagement, diversion. As we look at our initiative and the way we want to approach this, we want to be holistic, evidence-informed, equitable, inclusive, using data and active community engagement to determine our priorities and our focused action plans.

[02:04:47] As we look at some of the guiding principles around this, multi-sector stakeholders, and you'll see a lot of that later on in here, trusted messengers and practitioners to deliver the intervention strategies, be driven by data, and this came up earlier, being very focused on trauma-informed approaches.

[02:05:06] Now I'm not going to go through these in detail other than to say that this whole process is rooted in what's worked and what we've seen work across the country as we go through problem solving, right? So we talk about building collaborations, engaging and assessing, planning and implementing. As we go on to the next slide, once you recognize success, ensure that, measure it, and also create sustainability. A couple themes in here throughout this is that constant engagement and re-engagement, and ultimately being evidence-informed and evidence-driven in the way that you approach this concept. I'm going to turn it over to Ms. Brown to

[02:05:42] talk a little bit about how the structure might look. Good evening Nikki Brown assistant to the county executive. As Dan mentioned this is certainly a holistic approach that touches every area of county

government so we thought it was appropriate that the office resided in the office of executive management reporting through the deputy county executive and the county executive similar to what we have done with our sustainability office as well as our equity and inclusion office.

[02:06:11] There's a couple positions we felt are critical to move on right away to move this program forward. It's the community safety initiative manager that will manage the program, certainly come in, wrap their arms around this, and start to move the program forward and start to manage expectations.

[02:06:29] And then also the senior analyst. As Dan had mentioned, this is based on data-informed, evidence-informed. So we need a data analyst who can gather that data and aggregate, analyze, and be able to share that in a way that is meaningful and understandable.

[02:06:47] So those are the two positions we feel like we need to move on right away. We're in that process. And then as part of the FY24 budget process, look at an administrative support person, as well as a community engagement specialist.

[02:07:02] Obviously the community is a huge piece of this program, and so having someone that is making sure that the community is informed and there's a chance for interaction with a community on this is huge. They will continue to support what the police PIOs are doing and fire and our communications office so they'll all work together on that. And then of course the Community Safety Initiative Program Manager will also manage the CSI Advisory Committee. The committee we're looking at no more than 20 members which is a lot. We know that's a lot but we

[02:07:37] We have been pleasantly surprised with the folks that have been interested in participating. We've already heard from some folks. We know that there are a lot of people in our community that are doing great work. So we are looking at no more than 20 because we want this to be an effective working group.

[02:07:56] We want them to be able to get things done and get things accomplished. So it would be comprised of members from the appropriate government agencies and then members of the community. It would not be an appointed group. It would be a group much like some other groups that the county has where board members and others make recommendations of people they feel are trusted community voices in their district, whether it be organizations that do this kind of work, coaches, or other folks. They will make that recommendation to the program manager who will then determine what that group may look like. Then obviously, because there are

[02:08:34] so many. They need to have a shared vision, a shared goal, have very clear roles and responsibilities, and also be held accountable. So we want to make sure that they have an opportunity to report back to the board, not only on an annual basis, but on a regular basis as well as to the community.

[02:08:51] One thing I'll add just super quick, I think it's really important to point out that this does not replace any groups that are currently doing this work. So there's a lot of great committees and groups that are already working on this. There's the Juvenile Justice Improvement Program. There is certainly the opioid task force, the EBDM group. There's a lot of groups that are already meeting and doing great work. So this would not replace that. This just allows all those groups to come together so we all know what each other are doing. And with that, I will turn it over to Dan, who will talk about how some, there may be opportunities for working groups within the committee. Yeah. So I want to focus on the right side of this slide first and talk a little about

[02:09:31] the different groups that might influence this committee, public safety agencies, community organizations, entrusted voices, obviously schools and higher education. We had a lot of conversation today around safety and a lot of nexus between what we do in the county and what happens in the schools when it comes to safety, it knows no borders.

[02:09:48] So what happens in the schools spills out in the community, what happens in the community spills back into the schools, whether it's an incident or longstanding issues, there's definitely a strong connection that we think needs to exist there. criminal justice agencies, recreation, parks, and transportation, and that we have good representation here tonight from Human Services and the critical role that they play, we think, is safety.

[02:10:09] On the left side, as Nick mentioned earlier, we have areas of focus, and this is a very short list, not all-inclusive, community violence intervention, traffic safety, active violence prevention and response, which we'll talk a little bit about, Things like hand handling, substance misuse, human trafficking, just about anything that might affect or in some way touch on community safety can be part of this as we look at a very broad structure.

[02:10:34] So we'll park on this for a couple minutes, not too long, but as we talk about that linear kind of timeline and approach to this and the left of bang versus right of bang, you can see a lot of the things that go on currently, you know, that may or may not be well coordinated and a lot of things that we do on the right side of a negative event that might occur.

[02:10:56] And again, this is an all-hazards, all-hands-on-deck type of approach to looking at community safety. And it touches on things that we wouldn't have to think, like emergency management, looking at affordable housing, property maintenance and rehabilitation, neighborhood watch, job training, tips reporting, comprehensive threat assessment was something that came up earlier as a piece that occurs in the schools and occurs, obviously, in the community otherwise.

[02:11:21] On the right side, we talk about outcomes and the reactive nature of a lot of what we do. Even as we look at things from an evidence-based perspective, it's for people who are already in the system largely, right? That's where we spend a lot of the time as we look at these issues. Now, it's important to recognize that folks that are involved in this have value and bring value to what happens on the left side of the equation.

[02:11:44] There's a lot of folks we've talked to that are involved in the system, so to speak, that are very interested in doing things that keep people out of the system. So that's an important part of this as we look at this overall strategy. This is a linear model for simplicity. The reality is this is an ecosystem, and everything that's on this page affects community safety in some way, shape, or form, regardless of what your timeline might look like.

[02:12:14] All right, so we're going to give an example very quickly of how this might work as we look at a concept of community violence intervention, which has gotten a lot of attention throughout the country and obviously in our community. The examples include assaults, fights, and oftentimes shootings in public places, typically, again, out in the public and intentional acts committed between unrelated individuals.

[02:12:36] They may know each other, they may not. It's typically outside the home that we're experiencing that. In the CSI model and under an action plan, we follow the same process on problem solving. engage, put information, go through the process of looking at a plan, developing action plans that

are multivariate, multi-sector in character, and that we would go ahead and go through that entire process. What we might do relative to this is look at high-risk individuals using police data and community knowledge to identify folks that might be involved in that. Now, that doesn't just mean the suspect part of this. It goes back to this trauma-informed approach, victims, bystanders,

[02:13:15] witnesses, everyone that might be involved, and take a close look at that and see where we can do the interruption and intervening. Going back to developing credible messengers and interventionists, an important part of this is this can't be a government program and expect success from the standpoint of developing trust, which is a huge component of building social capital with our community and being effective around community safety.

[02:13:39] So having those credible messengers and interventionists is absolutely key in this. As we go into potential action plan steps, otherwise, we look at that whole multi-sector services. There's a lot of really neat work going on around hospital-based community violence intervention, supervision, education, employment, mental health.

[02:14:00] All the things that we know are critical as it relates to having a holistic approach. We look at environmental design and principles in particular areas, cleaning up properties, doing better on property management, And also looking at the issue of strategic accountability.

[02:14:17] You know, at some point, you know, obviously arrests and prosecutions are part of the equation, but certainly is just one part of an approach to dealing with community safety. There are a lot of other examples that we can get into in terms of a multi-sector approach to dealing with the issues we mentioned earlier.

[02:14:36] I don't think we have time to get into that. One of the things I know that we've talked about as we've moved forward with this is what does success look like? Well, a couple of things that we can think about is-- and the advantage of putting groups together is defining outputs, outcomes as a part of this process, right, and determining from the community and from our groups what success looks like in terms of community safety.

[02:14:58] And we want everyone to be part of that discussion. We can look at key result areas and KPIs as far as what we'd like to see in terms of success. Some of those might involve indicators around domestic violence, human trafficking, crashes, even feelings of safety, we talked about that earlier, how the community feels about safety in the community, government and police trust indexes, looking at EMS calls, life safety code violations, FEMA community rating scores around community preparedness.

[02:15:29] So I won't bore you with a longer list, but the reality is there's so many different areas that you can look at individually and quite frankly aren't siloed. These things overlap in a significant way as we look at community safety. As we look at our next steps, again, we talked a little bit earlier about bringing a couple of folks on board.

[02:15:47] Start the whole evidence-informed process in terms of assessment, priorities, action plans. Engage the community regarding all those priorities and moving forward. Establish that advisory committee and then build out the remainder of the program in the FY24 budget.

[02:16:03] I think that might be a record for this presentation. I'd be happy to address any questions. So just a quick question. So other communities have similar models that have been successful? Yeah, it's a great question, and the board asked it earlier, too.

[02:16:20] There are a lot of, you know, models out there around community violence intervention that are fairly holistic. Boston is famous for Operation Ceasefire, and as a matter of fact, we were successful in obtaining a community violence intervention grant recently.

[02:16:37] So most of them are kind of focused in that area. We see this being a little bit broader, and there aren't many programs that are this broad. So it's very ambitious. We recognize that. But again, I think there's so much overlap, and we heard it tonight in terms of all the things that go into safety and feelings of safety, that we needed to cast a wide net and a wide umbrella.

[02:16:57] To Nikki's point, we're not looking to replace a lot of the great work that's going. A lot of this might be coordination and leveraging a lot of the positive things that are going on out there. Every time we have a conversation around this, someone brings up a program we didn't know about, or some great work that's occurring in our community.

[02:17:13] And folks that really should know, they don't. And so a big part of this on the community engagement piece is, hey, we're doing this work. Let's talk about how we can work together to deal with each of these issues. But to your point, probably not as ambitious and as broad in terms of what we've seen.

[02:17:29] Most of it's focused primarily on community violence intervention. I mean, I think you're right. You know, when you said that there are things that we don't even know that are happening, I mean, I commend you all and the Commonwealth Attorney's Office and the school system on the human trafficking efforts that the county has done, which is really a model for the Commonwealth.

[02:17:48] And you guys have done a great job with that. And just leveraging resources and wraparound services to put that together has been very impressive. Mr. Bodie. - Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just wanted to highlight, again, want to thank Nikki and Dan and everyone else who's been working on this.

[02:18:05] But I wanted to highlight the fact that we're having this conversation now. 'Cause I'm sure Dan and Nikki will vouch, When they were in my office a few months ago about this, my first question was, are we approaching the school system with this? Because I know that, as Dan said, there's no borders between school and county when it comes to these issues.

[02:18:22] So I wanted to appreciate the fact that we're having this conversation now, and I look forward to working with all of you on the school division side to make sure we're making this as holistic and as impressive as possible, because this affects both sides, and I know that if we do this right, we can save and help a lot of lives on both sides of the fence.

[02:18:37] Thank you, Mr. Chairman. - Ms. Bailey. - Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Congratulations on this program. I think it's a great, great initiative, particularly now with the activity level that we're having in our community. One of the things that we didn't talk about tonight was gang violence.

[02:18:57] How does this partner, or how does this help us partner with those community entities, with the board and with the school system to eradicate the gang violence that we're seeing in our communities? - Yeah, part of it, we had this discussion this morning about, again, issues in general, and that's fluctuating.

[02:19:18] Things are changing in that environment daily as it relates to the level of activity, how they're organized, and ultimately what's happening within those groups. So I think absolutely, you know, gang

violence has to be a focus and part of this. But, again, we have to bring everyone to the table to have that discussion to make sure we're all looking at this from the right perspective and that we're getting everyone's voice around that.

[02:19:42] So it's definitely an issue. We get a grasp from a data-informed perspective on what's actually happening out there because I think there's even some debate, you know, as we talked about this issue this morning around that. But this certainly is a great framework to address that and deal with it from a multivariate, multi-sector perspective.

[02:20:02] Mr. Chairman, one other thing. The other thing, too, as we were talking, Dan, this initiative is not, and you may have said it while I was out, and I apologize if you did. This initiative is not like the regular commissions that we're accustomed to.

[02:20:18] Did you mention that as well? I think Nikki covered that. To your point, not to diminish the value of commissions and committees. Of course not. We really want this to be a working group that is evaluating what we're doing, our priorities, and looking at our outcomes and looking at what works and doesn't work, and to have a real strong voice around substance and making sure we're getting the job done.

[02:20:49] So it's not to say the commissions don't do that, but we want to shield them to a certain degree from that process in order to make sure that they can be efficient and effective in their work. And please help us. Some may be shy. I'm certainly not. Help us when those 20 are put together.

[02:21:08] Stop us from putting the wrong, not wrong, but you know what I'm trying to say. stop us from moving in that direction as we appoint or give you recommendations as to who should be a part of the 20. Yeah, because you want immediate impact.

[02:21:26] Well, look, inclusion is absolutely key to this. And I think in a lot of our meetings that we have with the community, we see some people talking and some not. You know, at times you see the doers being very, very quiet. But we've got to get all the voices to the table and engage in this. So absolutely point well taken.

[02:21:45] Ms. Jessie. I just want to comment. I've been here for a long time and I've been in these schools and I want to thank you for getting rid of the big notebook, I think, and having the box outside because as a principal when something happened in a building, you were looking for that notebook and the person had to have a list and all these kind of things.

[02:22:07] So I want to thank you for that. We're not living in the same world that we used to live in and I think some of you were concerned about the 76%. The 76% has little or nothing, has something to do with Prince William County. but it has more to do with what people see.

[02:22:24] I dare say, if you surveyed this room right now, you would not find people comfortable with safety, not necessarily because of Prince William County, but what they see on television every day. These kids have access to social media, so their feelings are not necessarily related to Prince William County.

[02:22:42] Their feelings are related to a national problem. When I became principal at that school, I used to say, kiddingly, we should ask the terrorists to knock. In other words, don't leave the doors open. But it was a joke because we never thought anybody was really going to come in.

[02:23:00] They carried the notebook, but none of us thought what has happened in our schools and what's happening in our nation would happen. So I just want to bring everybody back to the fact that we

just saw violence on television. All of us are uneasy. I looked around this room tonight and I thought, let me look around.

[02:23:16] And are we feeling secure? We're not feeling secure because of what's happening nationally, not necessarily in Prince William County. And I want to thank Dr. McDade and Ron. You and I have been here for a long time. I cannot believe how you guys have put together this package.

[02:23:33] It is a phenomenal package, and I'm proud to be a part of the school division. Thank you. So I'll wrap up here. On the agenda, though, we had put on there just an announcement. I know the JETS meeting.

[02:23:49] Kenny, do you want to announce the meeting just so that everyone knows? We don't have to get into it any more than that. Sure. And for folks that don't know, the JET is a joint environmental task force between the school division and the county. And our first meeting will be on February. Is it the 9th, Julia? Is it February 9th at 6 o'clock?

[02:24:05] Here. So here, it opened to the public. As with most of our boards and commissions, it's open to the public. It's subject to FOIA. So please come and join us. We're looking at doing a lot of good work with sustainability on both the county side and the school side. Again, February 9th. February 4th, 9th.

[02:24:21] 9th, 6 o'clock. Thank you. Okay, thank you, Mr. Bodie, Supervisor Bodie, we really appreciate it. I'm gonna wrap up with a couple of remarks and then I'll let Chair Wheeler wrap up if she has any. Just, you know, as Ms. Lawson had pointed out earlier, you know, how soon can we do this? You know, part of our work that we're doing is, no, in all honesty, is socializing it with the public, right?

[02:24:41] Knowing what the public wants and where they wanna go. I think I was more of a traditionalist in the past thinking that, you know, this is not something I would like to support or anything that I was interested in seeing in my schools. Every day changes and just anecdotally as I go out and talk to constituents, teachers, staff, there is a level of lack of feeling safe and secure and there is a desire to want to feel more safe and secure.

[02:25:07] And so we will be socializing it. Dr. McDade will have some roundtables and what I'd like to ask Dr. McDade to do is also invite you all back to see the system in action and your staffs as well, whether you're part of the normal day when the public is coming or whether we set up another event just for everyone here, Dr. McDade, if that's possible.

[02:25:28] And I think that would be important, I think, for all of us to see, you know, and I'll just leave you with my last thing because i always ask you all for money but just to to lament no just to lament one thing that you know as as as you know as miss jesse said and even you know um earlier pointed out by miss bailey i mean this is a different world than um it was when we were in school i don't remember a school board when i was a kid spending this much time talking about security in the building i mean it's ridiculous the amount of money we're spending that doesn't go in the classroom that goes to everything outside of the classroom school divisions are

[02:26:03] expected to be detective agencies, police forces, nursing facilities, mental health facilities. Every failure in society is expected to be adopted by the school division to cure. And I can tell you we're not going to be the best mental health facility. We can't be the best detective agency.

[02:26:20] We can't be the best police force. You know, we can be the best at teaching and learning if we're allowed to do our core mission. And so as I come to you all, it will always be to say, look, can we keep more dollars in the classroom and find ways to do these other things we have to do because whether it's the federal government or the state government failing at being able to sort out the things that need to be sorted out so we don't have to do it.

[02:26:43] I will continue to ask you to consider that and all of your help, again, over the years, if you were here at the beginning of the meeting, I pointed out all the great things you all have done for the school division has helped us plug more dollars into the classroom. So, you know, when I told you the niche rankings, Those are comprehensive rankings.

[02:27:01] Those are based on our performance, our student success, our safety and security, all those things go into that. So we went from 26 to 17. I wanna crack the top 10. I believe you all can make that happen for us. And I want us to be, when they talk about school divisions that people wanna end up in the mid-Atlantic, they should be saying Prince William County Schools.

[02:27:21] I say it already, I believe it. I know Chair Wheeler believes it. I know Supervisor Lawson believes it 'cause her kids went here. And I know, you know, we all believe it. And so, you know, again, as I lament this, I will be coming to you and asking you, you know, I think this board will come to you and ask, and I think Dr. McDade that, you know, as we look to get more dollars in the classrooms, please consider whatever, you know, things we can do to just make our schools safe.

[02:27:47] It is a shared responsibility that we all have. So I really appreciate your time this evening. I really appreciate the community coming out to listen and the press for being here as well. Chair Wheeler. I'll just wrap it up and say, you know, there is no school board or board of county supervisors or school system or county.

[02:28:09] I mean, we are all one, right? You know, the success of the school system and the safety of the school system is the success and safety of the county. It's not like it's two entities. I mean, sometimes people look at it like, oh, that's a school system. No, this is all one, you know, and making the safety initiative that you outlined tonight is just really important to the county, not the school system, to the county, because the school system is a county.

[02:28:31] And so I'm just grateful that we can all sit here, have a great conversation about this, great information. You know, it's great to have people have, instead of just complaining about the problems, have a way forward, right? And that's what we saw in both of these presentations today.

[02:28:47] These are ways forward, and we just have to embrace them and support them. So, you know, good meeting, always good to spend time with our school board members. And, you know, and I do. I love Prince William County school system, and I always say that.

[02:29:04] It's a destination school system. A lot of people move here for it. So, you know, we can always raise the bar on raising our kids. So with that, we officially have to adjourn. Yeah, we don't have to officially adjourn, but you can officially. You don't have rules, I guess. We don't let the lawyers get as involved as you do.

[02:29:21] Okay. We have a motion to adjourn. Motion seconded by Supervisor Angry. All those in favor say aye. Aye. Anyone opposed? We're adjourned. All right. We're adjourned. Thank you all.



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