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Prince William County School Board Public Meeting on the Budget, Monday, February 6, 2023

Date	Monday, February 6, 2023
Place	Prince William County School Board, Virginia
Length	16m (video)

- Official meeting video (YouTube): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tT43bM5-k0o
- Official School Board page (PWCS): https://www.pwcs.edu/about/school_board/

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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.

[00:00:01] I'd like to call this meeting the Prince William County School Board to order pursuant to school board policy 139, school board member participation in meetings by electronic communication. School board member Diane Rawson 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.

[00:00:18] Tonight we are holding the public meeting on the superintendent's proposed fiscal year 2024 budget. I would like to remind school board members to provide your questions on the proposal, proposed fiscal year 24 budget directly to chief financial officer john wallingford who in turn will work with the superintendent staff to develop responses in addition to tonight's public meeting on feb on february 15th yeah there will be a public hearing on the fiscal year 24 proposed budget directly prior to the school board meeting on february 15th citizens may sign up to speak during the public hearing between now and noon

[00:00:57] on Wednesday, February 15th. Additionally, a budget work session and final markup on the proposed fiscal 2024 budget will take place on Wednesday, March 8th at 6:00 PM here at the Kelly Leadership Center. We will now move on to citizen comment time.

[00:01:13] Those citizens who have signed up in advance with the clerk will address the school board this evening when they are called to the podium. Please use proper decor manners while at the podium or

you'll be asked to step aside. We ask that the audience please be respectful of each speaker and refrain from any clapping, cheering and jeering to avoid disruption of the meeting.

[00:01:30] If you do not do so, the board will recess and I will ask the room to be cleared to restore public order. Tonight, we have five citizens signed up to speak. When I call your name, please come up to the podium and state your name and address for the record. Each speaker will have a total of three minutes to speak and must confine their comments to matters related to the proposed fiscal year 2024 budget.

[00:01:50] Okay, at this point, the first speaker will be Riley O'Casey. - Good evening, Dr. Lateef, Board members, Dr. McDade, thank you for the opportunity to speak this evening.

[00:02:05] My information is on file. While I have not read the entire executive summary, I have read enough to share a glow and provide growth-producing feedback. Thank you for adding 75 special education TA positions, 65 security assistants, and 62 parent liaisons at all school levels.

[00:02:27] These positions will dramatically help our students and staff. Why are we spending $300,000 and $165,000 to conduct a staffing study and a compensation and classification study?

[00:02:42] During the 2016-2017 school year, PWCS conducted a compensation study which produced clear and effective results to classify and compensate employees. $465,000 would go a long way to directly help our schools.

[00:03:01] As one who adamantly defended the number of staff at central office, I noticed the following. For 2022-2023, the superintendent staff consisted of 12 employees. However, for 23-24, the superintendent staff now consists of 16 employees.

[00:03:22] Do you realize how much of an impact four positions would make in our schools? I believe there are approximately 46 new positions in central office. I see a lot of directors, coordinators, and supervisors.

[00:03:37] What I don't see is filled school positions for our current year. Approximately 100 special ed positions. Approximately 168 elementary positions. Approximately 105 middle and high positions.

[00:03:53] I must be honest, as a veteran educator in this county, I'm very discouraged with the 3.2 million that will be spent on recruiting educators. Did I miss the line item in the budget that mentioned retaining current educators? What is the plan to retain current educators?

[00:04:12] What is the plan to hire substitutes to keep employees safe? A 5% pay increase is helpful. However, many have come to the point where money is not the issue and money will not keep them here. Core value number six says we take the responsibility the well-being of students physical and mental health and take measures to help students families and employees feel supported and protected in order to thrive this is not happening in the schools

[00:04:41] thank you kate olson flynn good evening chairman latif board members and dr mcdade my name is dr kate olson flynn i'm happy happy to be here to advocate for equity in the budget educational equity and excellence are not just ideals that we talk about in a ethereal way but they are are principles to which all school divisions, administrators, teachers, and parents should aspire to ensure that our all students are provided access to the same opportunities to achieve. In other words is the heart and mind of public

[00:05:21] education. And what does educational equity and excellence look like in our community? Well of course we should start with the heart of schools, the principals, teachers, and staff. Prince William County Schools teachers, principals, and staff are some of the hardest working people who work daily to achieve high standards despite the odds of pandemic learning loss, mental health concerns, new mandated curriculum, assessments, data collection, and school safety pressures. Retention of our workforce should be the highest priority in the budget. A healthy mind in public education means that each school provides courses and programs that enable students with opportunities to grow their

[00:05:58] knowledge and skills for the 21st century. This means that all schools must have the means to pay for teachers to deliver college-bound coursework. No student should feel that they must transfer from their home-based school or pay for an online class because it doesn't serve their academic needs, interests, or goals. Every high school and middle school should have the money to fund teachers for the same advanced AP, IB, and dual enrollment courses at all levels. In addition, we need to rethink the per-pupil spending in the budget and how schools get their funding so that Title I schools have the funding to support their students along their academic journey. For example, the line

[00:06:37] item in the budget for gifted education students to receive more funding why do they have to receive more funding than disadvantaged students how does that budget inequity serve our disadvantaged schools and poor underserved communities please increase the spending for disadvantaged economically disadvantaged students to at least equal that of gifted students particularly if you want schools to continue their work in supporting students with their learning needs after the pandemic and extracurricular opportunities in every school are also vital for healthy minds to grow. If parents can't afford to pay for club sports, tutors and after-school activities then you need to provide the

[00:07:16] funding for kids in those disadvantaged communities so that they too can participate in choir events, theater activities, band, crew, science fair and robotics to name a few. If parents can't pay for their child to participate then the high schools are paying and with what funds? The money that is taken from something else in their school budget that they can no longer finance.

[00:07:40] Please increase the extracurricular supplemental funding for our Title I middle and high schools. Remember that our teachers and staff are our hearts and our courses and programs are what strengthen our minds in public schools. Please ensure that all our students get equitable opportunities to access excellent teachers, classes, support, and activities in all our schools.

[00:07:59] Thank you. - Thank you, Jennifer Rokoski. - Okay, good evening. - Chair Lateef, Vice Chair Wall, Dr. McDade and school board members.

[00:08:17] My name is Jennifer Rakowski and I reside in the Occoquan district. I speak tonight because I wanted to share some things that you should consider for your budget and future capital improvement projects. One of core values I feel that is not covered in this executive summary budget is the wellbeing. To quote Desmond Tutu, there comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river.

[00:08:38] We need to go upstream and find out why they're falling in. Why are staff frustrated in leaving? Is it because of a lack of guaranteed planning time, too many meetings before and after school or during planning time, late buses, too much testing, standards-based grading is a good idea, but turning in or retesting until the last minute is stressing staff out and not teaching accountability to students.

[00:09:02] There is a push for social-emotional learning for staff, but some of the funding for those programs are going away at the school level, leaving the school to come up with the funding for programs for staff. Also, I think the proposed pay raise is not quite enough. We're still in inflation times and staff are working extra to help cover costs at home.

[00:09:22] Please consider increasing the COLA. Instead of a $300,000 staffing study, maybe a study should be done on student behavior and absences. Many feel the school board administration are obsessed with getting test scores back up. There should be a new study with all the changes since COVID.

[00:09:39] Many educators feel that teaching has changed dramatically, not only with instruction, but also classroom management because of all the stress, anxiety, and trauma of the past two years. A staffing study was done in 2017. Is it really time for another study like this?

[00:09:55] As for the CIP, I'd like to see the school board explore having a vocational technical center or vo-tech center. I grew up in Western Pennsylvania and there and across the state and even some parts of Virginia, there are vo-tech centers where students are bused to after they take their core classes at their base school.

[00:10:14] This could free up some spaces in schools and move the vo-tech classes to a centralized location. Perhaps even Manassas and Manassas Park would like to come in on this. Also, ask staff what they would like in their classrooms and buildings. They're tired of paying for things for their classroom, and yes, it still does happen.

[00:10:33] Another example of some things that teachers want, elementary strings teachers would love to have a dedicated strings room. New schools built since 2011 have a dedicated strings room. Instead, other teachers who don't have that, they have to share with another classroom, moving those teachers out, or they have to squeeze onto the stage and deal with noisy PE classes or lunches.

[00:10:56] Thank you for your time. - Thank you, Catherine Lechbad. - Good evening. I got here just in time, great. My name's Catherine Walker-Lechbad.

[00:11:12] I live in the Occoquan District. Good evening, Chairman, Vice Chair, Honorable members of the school board, Dr. McDade, and distinguished members of the KLC staff. I have already sent an email to many of you and I want to be very succinct, so I'm basically just gonna read from the email.

[00:11:35] While it's difficult to give comment without seeing the actual budget, I mean a line item budget, I do want to point out the optics and practical impact of spending over seven million on recruiting, both with VCU and internationally, while not focusing on the true reasons for the attrition rate from PWCS and education in general is like putting a bandage on a broken bone with an open wound.

[00:12:01] I've so much to say and so many questions and thoughts. Dare I say the vast majority of PWCF staff have questions and thoughts. Will those questions, thoughts, and ideas be solicited by the school board or by KLC? I'm talking directly solicited, not this general invitation to speak.

[00:12:21] extremely disappointed. There's so few people here. An actual survey and a solicitation for input from those who are actually doing the educating. Will the unsanitized situation of what is happening in this district from the perspective of those in the classrooms, cafeterias, and hallways be presented to the decision-makers? In my opinion, raw practitioner-generated information is necessary to determine the needs of delivering education to all students. It seems to me that we are very focused on the back-end

data from the plethora of testing we administer. And while this data is very useful and indeed needed, may I

[00:12:58] suggest we need to consider the front end and a holistic information on the needs of delivering educational services to students. We must consider the needs of the staff. And who has the best information about these needs? Who? Is it the school board? Is it KLC? Is it the public? Of course not. You all know the answer. Indeed, wouldn't it be good to have all this specific information before the budget is determined. When will the hardened professionals be consulted in the budget process and regarding policy and decisions made about the education here in PWCS? Adding more staff

[00:13:37] to an already dysfunctional system is not going to improve student results. We need to work on the perception and value and respect that are given to educational staff. I thank you for your time.

[00:13:53] Nicole Holliday good evening board members I wanted to comment again without seeing a line budget itemized an itemized line budget that in looking on the website I didn't see where anything

[00:14:28] has been mentioned as far as resources that would be available to either parents or students as it pertains to the epidemic that we're facing as far as fentanyl is concerned so I wanted to make sure that in the FY 24 budget that there are resources that are being allocated to obtaining counselors positions that are dedicated to counselors who can provide resources to students and parents specifically in that area also there are resource counselors that are needed to assist

[00:15:06] students as well as parents for students who may be struggling with other issues I think that we can see that as it pertains to the amount of issues that we are having with juveniles and the amount of behavioral activity that has escalated within our community at large so I just wanted to speak tonight to make sure that the budget does encompass resources for those two areas thank you

[00:15:42] thank you okay so at this time again this wraps up citizen comment time we We will have another public hearing and that will be before the February 15th meeting and you can sign up to speak at that as well.

[00:16:01] And at this point being no further business, I declare the public meeting now closed and the meeting adjourned.