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Prince William County School Board Public Meeting on Budget, Monday, February 12, 2024

Date	Monday, February 12, 2024
Place	Prince William County School Board, Virginia
Length	12m (video)

- Official meeting video (YouTube): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KdWuDX9bPN0
- 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 2026-11-02. Each paragraph starts with its time [HH:MM:SS] in the meeting video.

[00:01:00] of this meeting of the Prince William County School Board to order. Tonight, we are holding a public meeting on the superintendent's proposed fiscal year 2025 budget. I'd like to remind school board members to provide your questions on the proposed fiscal year 2025 budget directly the chief financial officer, Shaquille Youssef, who in turn will work with the superintendent staff to develop responses.

[00:01:23] In addition to tonight's public meeting on February 21, there will be a public hearing on the fiscal year 2025 proposed budget held prior to the school board meeting scheduled that evening. Citizens may sign up to speak during the public hearing between now and noon on Wednesday, February 21.

[00:01:42] Additionally, a budget work session and a final markup on the proposed fiscal year 2025 budget will take place on Wednesday, March 13th at 6:00 PM here at the Kelly Leadership Center. We will now move on to citizen comment time. Those citizens who've signed up in advance with a clerk may address the school board this evening when they're called to the podium.

[00:02:00] Please use proper decorum manners while at the podium or you'll be asked to step aside. We ask that the audience please be respectful to each speaker and refrain from any clapping, cheering or cheering to avoid disruption of the meeting. If you do not, the board will recess and I will ask that the room be clear to restore public order.

[00:02:15] Tonight, we have three 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 speak and must confine their comments in matters related to the proposed fiscal year 2025 budget. Okay, and so our first speaker, Kate Olson-Flynn.

[00:02:44] can you make the mic live there you go good evening my name is dr. Kate Olson Flynn and my address is on file thank you for the opportunity to speak to you again I'm here to advocate for a change in the CIP so that the 14th high school is opened in 2026 since I began advocating for equity for Eastern schools seven years ago I've only known Woodbridge to be overcrowded the UVA study arguing that our population will decrease over time is short-sighted and and uninformed.

[00:03:18] If this administration and board would talk to the Board of County Supervisors, you would discover that there are numerous multi-unit developments that are being planned and built in the Occoquan and Neabsco districts. And where there is housing development, there will be schooling needs.

[00:03:33] CIP decisions should not be based on studies that have an unfamiliar understanding of the demographic contest and requirements in our part of the county. Instead, this board should work with the Board of County Supervisors to ensure that your urban planning is in alignment with theirs as we used to in the past.

[00:03:52] This construction delay only sends the message to our community that once again, our needs come last to the mid and western sections of the county. Since 2010, they have had three high schools built in their area and we have had zero.

[00:04:08] And your rationale to decrease the size of the 14th high school and build additions at Colgan and Forest Park when Hilton is underpopulated is unsound. This decision looks more like our high school boundaries are poorly zoned and that you have allowed parents to take advantage of specialty programs so that their kids transfer into schools that they perceive to be better.

[00:04:29] Instead of limiting student access to new facilities, you should invest time and money in how to make the older schools as good as the newer ones academically and structurally. A good start is to construct the 14th high school by 2026 to its fullest capacity and best caliber so that all our students can attend a brand new welcoming, safe, and sustainable school as well.

[00:04:56] More importantly, by postponing the construction of this new high school, you deny thousands of culturally, racially, linguistically, and economically diverse and disadvantaged students the opportunity to experience the pride of attending a top-notch high school facility in their lifetimes.

[00:05:13] And on another quick note, equity needs to be the focus for teacher pay in the budget as well. By awarding only certain teachers on the pay scale a two-step pay raise, the message you send to our most experienced and knowledgeable teachers is that you don't value them when they have shown their loyalty and dedication to our schools the longest.

[00:05:31] With our current teacher shortage and abundance of TAPOTA teachers who need guidance, we need our top-scale teachers to stay and not retire. Please give them as much a step raise as the teachers with less years. It is only fair, but it is not only fair, but it is the right thing to do for the benefit of all.

[00:05:50] Thank you for your time. - Thank you, Magali Hurtado. - Good evening, thank you. My name is Magali Hurtado. My address is on file with the clerk. I am the parent of an elementary school and a middle

school student. We live in the Woodbridge High School attendance area.

[00:06:08] It's unbelievably frustrating how hard we need to keep advocating for real equity. This administration uses the word every few sentences. Equity has become an overused word, but we do not see it in action. Construction of the 14th high school would alleviate the significant overcrowded in Woodbridge High School, and I understand it would help alleviate overcrowding at other schools, including Colgan, the second newest high school in the county, which is already overcrowded, thanks in part to the poor planning by the same detached from reality staff that is now planning the 14th high school.

[00:06:42] It seems like our leadership cares more about not upsetting parents with a boundary change with opening of the 14th high school as planned. Well, parents are upset. Ignoring the commitment to equity for the eastern side of the county and delaying the construction of the 14th high school while considering additions to newer schools with a smaller percentage of disadvantaged and English learner students is not equity.

[00:07:09] Honoring your commitments to our community should weigh more than your fears to upset parents. Giving all community schools with facilities and programs that attract students to stay in their communities is also a great way to reduce overcrowding in the western side of the county.

[00:07:25] Overcrowding in our high schools is a fact that we cannot ignore by quoting one project about slower population growth. Slower population growth is still growth. There are five new housing projects approved for what would likely be the 14th high school attendance area. So the population declined countywide is certainly not something we are observing in the eastern side of the county.

[00:07:48] The 14th high school is needed urgently and it should not be delayed to favor funding other projects that may be worth it but should not take precedence over the well-being of thousands of students. Lake Ridge Middle School welcomed their largest class this year. It doesn't look like it's getting any smaller next year and yet you are okay with delaying the construction of an actual solution for the overcrowding of the high school these kids will attend in 2026. If everyone is so concerned about attendance, give the students a school they feel safe attending, not one where they are constantly elbowed, pushed and shoved every time they need to change classes, simply because there is no

[00:08:26] space for them to move in the poorly lighted hallways. The welcome centers are an important first impression. I have been to them in 2016-2018 and I don't have a strong opinion or an impact on how it affected my kids' educational experience in the way that attending the overcrowded high school will do. Why are we prioritizing two welcome centers at the expense of helping thousands of students in our already overcrowded high schools? Take actual planning seriously. Plan a budget for them when the overcrowding in our schools has been solved. What kind of planning are you doing? Thank you, Ms. Hurtado. Oh, okay.

[00:09:05] Thank you. Cheryl Macbeth. Good evening. It's been a while since I've stood before you as a homeowner and a parent of an Occoquan district student but I felt heard then and I hope my sentiments tonight will be taken to heart as well I also tonight implore you to reconsider delaying the 14th high school as it pertains to the 2025 budget while I understand that the delay proposed is driven in part by the projected shift in population impacting enrollment I again would like to remind folks of all the new housing units planned for that area

[00:09:40] that will bring new high school students. Further, I would like to ask the board to consider overall enrollment, i.e. retention of the students living in the area around the proposed school. The 14th high school would be geographically located between Woodbridge High School and Garfield High Schools. Last school year, between 2022 and 23, Woodbridge High School had a 23.8 chronic absenteeism rate and a 6% dropout rate. Garfield likewise had a 34.6 absenteeism rate and a 12% dropout rate. Perhaps daily attendance would improve and dropout rates would decrease if the

[00:10:18] structure that the students attended was more inviting, as eight-year-old Colgan's 1% dropout rate suggests. Back to how the school would be between Garfield and Woodbridge. Nearby high school, nearby Potomac High School is 43 years old and even Freedom is 20 years old, but this year Garfield will be 52 and Woodbridge High School is 50. I have a seventh grader and once upon a time he would have been attending this 14th high school in its first year open if it went on as planned and as someone who excels in math and science he was thrilled at the prospect of new tools and

[00:10:53] technology available to a learner like him but he was crushed to hear of the planned deferral. As such we recently visited Forest Park for their open house and he was intrigued by its information technology program until he heard they usually only have enough capacity to accept students who are naturally zoned for that school, leaving little room for transfers. So now I have to tell him that he stands to miss out on the new school entirely, but as a consolation, once he completes middle school at Fred Lynn, which opened in 1964, by the way, if he goes where we're zoned instead to Garfield, it's still relatively new since it opened eight years later in 1972. So I

[00:11:31] I apologize if I really struggle to comprehend how there's a proposal to delay the new schools so that Colgan can potentially get an expansion. The January 10th presentation showed that 17% of kids transfer out of Garfield and 18% transfer out of Freedom.

[00:11:46] So give them somewhere else close by to go if you're worried about Colgan being overcrowded. I understand there's concern about overcrowding in the existing Central and Western schools, but perhaps that's because there aren't enough attractive offerings elsewhere in the county.

[00:12:06] you. Thank you. Okay, at this point, that concludes our citizen common time, and there being no further business to come before the board, I now declare the meeting adjourned.

