


**Resolution on the
Fairfax County Fiscal Year 2020 Advertised Budget**

Membership Approved March 28, 2019

Respectfully submitted to the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors,



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I. INTRODUCTION

The Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations (The Federation) is a 79-year old umbrella community organization representing tens of thousands of Fairfax County residences in all magisterial districts.

As homeowners, our members are acutely aware that almost 75% of the Fairfax County FY2020 Budget is dependent on residential real estate and personal property taxes, primarily borne by homeowners.

The Federation is also aware that changing demographics in the county—combined with failures by the Commonwealth of Virginia and the Federal Government to provide adequate funding of their various mandates and responsibilities—have multiplied costs and shifted the burden of maintaining our quality of life, infrastructure, and Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) to the county, and disproportionately to homeowners. This abdication of responsibility needs to be strongly addressed by all stakeholders in the county.

The Federation continues to support revenue diversification in order to fund schools and county services. Diversification could not only slow increases in property tax rates (while still supporting strong community investment), but also promises to improve our fiscal position by making the county's financial health less dependent on a single economic sector.

Federation members recognize that our lifestyle comes at a cost, but continue to insist that the following critical needs are addressed by the budget and the Board of Supervisors in FY2020 and successive years:

- (a) continued excellence of FCPS, which serve as a magnet for growth and provide the underpinning of the county's economic health;
- (b) the principles of the One Fairfax policy, which we hope are incorporated into ongoing Strategic Planning for the county so that our appropriations continue to properly reflect our values;
- (c) safe and secure communities with a reasonable safety net for residents and families with mental, physical, or substance abuse issues, or are homeless, or are living in poverty;
- (d) adequately maintained and staffed parks, recreational facilities, and libraries;
- (e) responsive, transparent and proactive governance, financial planning and oversight, including maintenance of the county's AAA bond rating;
- (f) healthy environmental quality, and strong waste and pest management programs.

II. FINDINGS

A. Revenues

WHEREAS, the commercial property vacancy rate has decreased; and

WHEREAS, the changing needs and demographics of the county and schools are reflected in rising property tax rates and additional fees directly affecting homeowners that disproportionately increase the tax burden on homeowners; and

WHEREAS, combining both residential real estate and personal property taxes, the county's homeowners pay almost 75% of the county's collected revenues; and

WHEREAS, the county must devise alternative revenue sources to sustain its revenues, while reducing over time its dependency upon homeowners; and

WHEREAS, for the past three years the Federation has suggested the county achieve parity with cities in authority to raise revenues through legislation in the General Assembly; and

B. Employee Compensation

WHEREAS, high quality services in the county require a professionally-trained workforce; and

WHEREAS, appropriate compensation levels are a key element in building and maintaining a skilled workforce; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Supervisors has a standing committee called the Personnel and Reorganization Committee charged with addressing total compensation; and

WHEREAS, the county continues to underfund its employees' Market Rate Adjustment, and, as in the past, continues to underfund Steps, Longevities, Performance Increases, Pensions, and Health Insurance, which are all components of total compensation; and

C. Public Safety

WHEREAS, the FY2020 Advertised Budget includes an increase of \$8.86M for Public Safety which funds 35 positions; and

WHEREAS, these funds support staffing for the South County Police Station; the Diversion First Initiative; the Opioid Task Force; the Gang Prevention Initiative; funding for Police Relief Sergeants; an increase in E-911 call capacity; the replacement of Urban Areas Security Initiative grant funding, and Animal Services positions; and

WHEREAS, the FY2020 Advertised Budget includes an increase of \$2.68M for adjustments to the pay scale of uniformed Fire and Rescue employees based on the recent consultant study; and

D. Education Funding and School Transfer

WHEREAS, Fairfax County's continued economic growth and strong property values both depend in part on the excellence of its public schools, a fact which is regularly recognized by the Board of Supervisors and the Fairfax County Economic Development Authority, who cite FCPS as one of the primary reasons that businesses relocate to Fairfax County; and

WHEREAS, the FCPS Advertised FY 2020 Budget focuses on improving FCPS' market position with regard to teacher and staff compensation, which is vital in attracting and retaining the finest educational personnel; and

WHEREAS, even assuming these investments in FY 2020, FCPS teacher salaries will reach the projected market average, which sets salaries at competitive but not necessarily compelling levels; and

WHEREAS, the FCPS Advertised FY 2020 Budget avoided pitting educational interest groups against one another to compete for funds, and represents a realistic requested transfer amount rather than a wish list; and

WHEREAS, FCPS School Board Policy 8258.2 states that "it shall be the goal of the Fairfax County School Board that school facilities be renovated on a 20- to 25-year cycle"; and

WHEREAS, FCPS utilizes more than 750 temporary classrooms, and under current Capital Improvement Plan cash flow utilizing bond funding of \$180M per year, school facilities are replaced or updated every 37 years on average; and

WHEREAS, FCPS Superintendent Scott Brabrand, County Executive Bryan Hill, and their respective staffs have admirably maintained a spirit of continual FCPS and county collaboration and cooperation; and

E. Public Works and Environment

WHEREAS, the Board of Supervisors approved the "Cool Counties Pledge" committing to specified reductions in greenhouse gases (GhG) by 80% by 2050 compared to 2005 recorded levels; and

WHEREAS, the county has reduced GhG but not to the agreed upon levels; and

WHEREAS, the county is expected to collect \$45.5M from the Consumer Utility Tax in FY2020¹; and

WHEREAS, the county has announced plans to establish an Environmental and Energy Coordinating Office bringing together county environment and energy programs; and

WHEREAS, the county has proposed a Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE) ordinance; and

WHEREAS, the county is planning to issue a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) Request for Proposal (RFP) to install solar collectors on county and FCPS buildings; and

WHEREAS, the county has started replacing street lights with Light Emitting Diodes (LEDs), saving the county an estimated \$1.4M in annual operating costs; and

WHEREAS, the County's Solid Waste Management Program provides refuse collection, recycling, and disposal services for county businesses and residents; and is tasked with providing an accessible waste reduction and recycling program that meets the current and future needs of the county; and

WHEREAS, plastic bottles and jugs are the only types of plastics required to be recycled in Fairfax County but are one of the largest contributors of litter found by residents in local streams during community clean-ups,

III. REQUESTED ACTIONS

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED based on all of the foregoing that the Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations urges the Board of Supervisors to take the following actions in adopting the FY 2020 Fairfax County Budget:

A. Revenues

(1) The Board of Supervisors should revise commercial property assessments to increase the proportion of revenue from commercial real estate; and

(2) the Board of Supervisors should continue to pursue efforts to achieve City-County parity in authority to raise revenue; and

(3) the Board of Supervisors should increase its joint efforts with the School Board to obtain Fairfax's fair share of funding from both the Commonwealth and federal government; and

¹ Proposed FY2020 Budget "Where It Comes From" pie chart.

B. Employee Compensation

(4) the Board of Supervisors should pursue a fiscally sustainable path to annually fund adequate compensation for all county employees; and

C. Public Safety

(5) the Board of Supervisors should adopt staffing for the South County Police Station; the Diversion First Initiative; the Opioid Task Force; the Gang Prevention Initiative; funding for Police Relief Sergeants; an increase in E-911 call capacity; the replacement of Urban Areas Security Initiative grant funding; and Animal Services positions; and

(6) the Board of Supervisors should adopt recommended adjustments to the pay scale for uniformed Fire and Rescue employees; and

D. Education Funding and School Transfer

(7) the Board of Supervisors should accept the County Executive's recommendation to fully fund FCPS' requested transfer; and

(8) the Board of Supervisors should continue to address FCPS' capital needs, while maintaining the county's AAA bond rating, by increasing FCPS' bond funding by \$25M per year as proposed by the School Board; and

(9) the county and FCPS should establish a joint task force on facility construction, renovation, and use which may explore the creation of more flexible facilities that can serve the needs of multiple constituencies while stretching capital budgets further; and

(10) the county and FCPS should formally expand their collaborative approach to gain additional efficiencies where possible, such as in the areas of infrastructure, technology, and hiring/retention; and

E. Public Works and Environment

(11) the Federation applauds the County Executive's plan to establish an Environmental and Energy Coordination Office to decrease Fairfax County's energy costs and ensure that it meets the "Cool Counties Pledge" and other goals; and

(12) the Board of Supervisors should prioritize the spending of the Consumer Utility Tax revenues on projects that reduce energy consumption in the county, including the establishment of revolving fund programs for cost-effective energy projects for both homeowners and small businesses; and

(13) the Federation applauds the county's plans to:

(a) develop a C-PACE ordinance;

- (b) establish a PPA RFP to start installing solar collectors on county and FCPS buildings; and
- (c) transition to LED streetlights; and

(14) Fairfax County should invest in additional public education and outreach to areas with a high incidence of litter; and

IV. FURTHER REQUESTED ACTIONS

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of Supervisors should continue to seek cost savings and efficiencies, particularly in areas where benchmarks show our spending is higher than the market requires, and should adopt a tax rate that avoids any deterioration in services.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that for FY 2021 the Board of Supervisors and the County Executive be required to consider alternatives and provide quantitative cost-benefit justifications for major expenditures such as new county office buildings.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of Supervisors and the County Executive should, for FY 2021, continue to improve communication about fiscal priorities and to provide a period for citizen input on the proper balance of taxes and services before adopting a maximum advertised tax rate.