



**McLean Citizens Association Resolution
Fairfax County and Fairfax County Public Schools
Advertised FY 2020 Budget Plan**

April 3, 2019

Introduction

Whereas, the General Fund of Fairfax County's Advertised Budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 (County Budget) is balanced between \$4.44 billion of revenues and \$4.44 billion of expenditures, an increase of approximately 3.7% over the FY 2019 Adopted Budget; and

Whereas, the FY 2020 County Budget's General Fund disbursements are allocated:

- 53% to Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS), and
- 47% to Fairfax County (County) services and programs such as public safety, human services, parks and libraries; and

Whereas, since the Board of Supervisors (BOS) voted not to increase the property tax rate in FY 2020, increases in real estate property tax revenues result solely from higher assessed values or new development; and

Whereas, the McLean Citizens Association (MCA) believes the County should prioritize services that positively affect the quality of life and are available for use by all or most County residents; and

Whereas, proper maintenance of existing facilities and equipment saves money in the long run, and it is not prudent or advisable to substantially defer maintenance.

Sources of Revenue

Whereas, under state law, the County must rely heavily on local property taxes to fund County and FCPS expenditures, because it cannot diversify tax sources as much as cities or towns; and

Whereas, the County's FY 2019 Legislative Program (Fairfax Legislative Program) recommends that the state give counties the same taxing authority as cities; and

Whereas, the County can charge user fees to recoup costs for County-provided services; and

Whereas, after the Auditor of the Board (Auditor) analyzed costs of the County's refuse collection service, the County Executive proposed fee increases for such service.

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the MCA recommends that the BOS continue supporting legislation that gives Fairfax County more taxing flexibility comparable to that accorded cities or towns; and

Be it further resolved that the MCA commends the Audit Committee for asking the Auditor to analyze refuse collection costs, and the County Executive for proposing refuse collection fee increases to recoup County costs; and

Be it further resolved that the MCA encourages the BOS to adopt the refuse collection fee increase in the County Budget and to ask the Auditor to analyze the direct and indirect costs of other County services, including those associated with real estate development, to identify more user fees that should be raised, consistent with the County's policy of full cost recovery.

Pensions

Whereas, County and FCPS-run pension plans' assets were approximately equal to their estimated pension liabilities as of the end of FY 2001, but County and FCPS unfunded pension liabilities totaled \$5.3 billion as of June 30, 2018; and

Whereas, the County has increased its annual cash contributions to its three County-run pension plans in response to concerns raised by Moody's about unfunded pension liabilities; and

Whereas, rising County and FCPS annual cash contributions to pension plans, which are needed to avoid risking the County's triple A bond rating, challenge the County's ability to maintain residents' quality of life without increasing property taxes; and

Whereas, the School Board and BOS recently voted to somewhat reduce pension benefits for newly-hired employees, but rejected numerous proposals that would have brought their pension benefits in line with other Northern Virginia local governments and school districts; and

Whereas, County and FCPS-run pension plans assume they will earn annual net investment returns of 7.25% in computing their pension liabilities; and

Whereas, using more realistic assumptions would improve transparency about the costs of pension benefits and reduce the risk of needing substantially higher cash contributions in the future to compensate for below-expected investment returns.

Now therefore, be it resolved that the MCA commends the:

- School Board and BOS for reducing pension benefits for newly-hired employees, and
- BOS for increasing annual cash contributions to reduce unfunded liabilities of the three County-run pension plans; and

Be it further resolved that the MCA urges:

- the BOS to further reduce County employee pension benefits for newly-hired employees and the School Board to eliminate Educational Employees' Supplementary Retirement System of Fairfax County (ERFC) benefits for newly-hired employees, so County and FCPS pension benefits and related costs ultimately are aligned with those of other Northern Virginia local governments and school districts; and
- the County and FCPS-run pension plans to reduce their assumed net investment income rates by 0.25% per year, until the assumed investment returns do not exceed the pension plans' average net investment returns over the prior 10-year and 20-year periods.

Fairfax County Public Schools

Whereas, the County Budget includes \$2.441 billion for school-related services, including \$2.14 billion to the School Operating Fund, \$13.1 million to the Construction Fund for maintenance and \$198.0 million for debt service on school bonds; and

Whereas, the FY 2020 FCPS Advertised Budget (FCPS Budget) Operating Fund totals \$3.0 billion, an increase of \$117 million or 4.1% over the FY 2019 Approved Budget, and includes:

- three types of salary increases - \$55.2 million to raise teacher salaries, \$46.8 million for step increases and \$8.2 million for a 1% market scale adjustment for non-teachers,
- \$2.9 million to provide mental health support to students, improve safety and security training, and provide substance abuse prevention and intervention services, and
- \$4.3 million to expand the FCPSOn pilot, which is intended to ultimately provide one FCPS-issued laptop to each FCPS student; and

Whereas, although FCPS teacher salaries will be at local market levels after the FY 2020 adjustment to salary scales, comparatively generous pension benefits will cause their total compensation to exceed that of teachers in other Northern Virginia school districts; and

Whereas, in Phase 1 of FCPSOn, FCPS provided laptops to all students at five high-poverty high schools, at every school in the Chantilly HS pyramid, and at the adult high schools; and

Whereas, the FCPSOn pilot evaluation stated that teachers needed more professional development, and stakeholders expressed "a consistent concern" about "the use of devices for inappropriate and off-task behaviors," while "students at all levels conveyed that devices may be distracting at times" given their "almost daily use of devices for music, videos and games"; and

Whereas, total costs to expand FCPSOn to the remaining FCPS high schools in FY 2020 are \$11.9 million, and FCPS intends to spend \$15 million in FY 2021, \$19.4 million in FY 2022 and \$29.3 million in FY 2023 to expand FCPSOn to middle and elementary schools; and

Whereas, the BOS increased annual school bond funding from \$155 million to \$180 million, to allow for faster renovation and construction of schools; and

Whereas, the Facilities Planning Advisory Committee (FPAC) recommends that FCPS expedite maintenance and use boundary changes to reduce the need for trailers and additions.

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the MCA commends:

- the School Board for prioritizing teacher salary increases and implementing a program to improve student mental health; and
- the BOS for increasing the school bond limit, and

Be it further resolved that the MCA encourages the School Board to offer signing bonuses to new teachers in hard to fill subject areas and grade levels and to prioritize teacher raises over raises for other FCPS employees in the future, so that FCPS teacher salaries continue to keep pace with local market average levels; and

Be it further resolved that the MCA recommends that the BOS uses funds identified during its FY 2019 and FY 2020 budget reviews to increase funding earmarked for the maintenance of FCPS facilities and equipment; and

Be it further resolved that the MCA recommends that the School Board analyze whether current funding levels adequately address FCPS students' mental health needs and current allocations optimize mental health support for students across FCPS; and

Be it further resolved that the MCA urges the School Board to defer expansion of FCPS until concerns raised in the June 2018 evaluation of FCPS are fully addressed, especially if non-County funding (e.g., from the state or federal government) for FCPS is less than the amount assumed in the FCPS Budget.

Public Safety

Whereas, the Police Department's McLean District Station (McLean Station) serves McLean and other suburban areas, as well as urban areas of the Mosaic District and Tysons; and

Whereas, service calls in the McLean Station increased with the opening of four metro stations in Tysons, development in Tysons, and the resulting increased traffic congestion; and

Whereas, the County Police Department assesses that the McLean Station needed 6 more officers by 2019, an additional 23 officers by 2024 and a total of 65 new officers by 2029 just to keep pace with the growth; and

Whereas, the approved 5-year staffing plan for the Tysons Urban Team, which is assigned to the McLean Station:

- gradually increases Tysons staffing to ensure public safety in the Tysons urban area without detrimentally affecting public safety in suburban areas,
- was not implemented in FY 2019 and is proposed to be deferred in FY 2020; and

Whereas, given that it takes nine months for new officers to complete training, it is critical that the County take steps in the very near future to make a “down payment” on implementation of the McLean Station staffing plan.

Now therefore, be it resolved that the MCA urges the BOS to begin implementing the McLean Station staffing plan, including:

- Interim assignment of some newly-trained recruits slated for the South County Station to the McLean Station until the South County Station is up and running; and
- funding, beginning in FY 2021, for the Tysons Urban Team staffing increases outlined in the McLean Station staffing plan.

Parks and Libraries

Whereas, the County and the Fairfax County Park Authority manage over 400 parks, which include over 42,000 acres of parkland held in public trust; and

Whereas, the libraries had over 4.5 million in-person visits in FY 2018 and the County’s FY 2019 Legislative Program notes that libraries “provide communities with critical services such as student homework support, research assistance, and public internet access”; and

Whereas, parks and libraries are used by people of all ages and income levels; and

Whereas, the Fairfax County Economic Development Authority promotes the library system, parks, the arts and public schools as contributing to County residents’ quality of life; and

Whereas, according to the 2016 Park Authority Needs Assessment, 87% of County residents visited at least one County park during the prior 12 months, but only 29% of respondents rated the physical condition of parks, trails and recreation facilities as excellent; and

Whereas, County parks and other recreational facilities are maintained and operated in part by the Fairfax County Park Authority and in part by Fairfax County staff; and

Whereas, Park Authority and County employees report that due to increased severity of storms and higher levels of precipitation, which may continue, the Park Authority’s revenues declined and the County and Park Authority had higher-than-expected maintenance costs; and

Whereas, between FY 2013 and FY 2018, the number of Park Authority employees decreased by 4% and other positions for parks, recreation and cultural programs decreased by 7%, while the number of positions for many other County agencies and offices increased.

Now therefore, be it resolved that the MCA urges the BOS to fund new positions for park maintenance and libraries:

- from funds that become available during FY 2019 and FY 2020 budget reviews, and
- in FY 2021 and subsequent budgets through direct expenditures and/or increased transfers to the Park Authority.

*Approved by the MCA Board of Directors
April 3, 2019*

McLean Citizens Association, PO Box 273, McLean, Virginia 22101

Cc: John Foust, Dranesville District Supervisor
Jane Edmondson, Dranesville District Supervisor Chief of Staff
Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
Bryan Hill, Fairfax County Executive
Joe Mondoro, Fairfax County Chief Financial Officer
Captain Alan Hanson, McLean Station Commander
Timothy Hackman, Dranesville Representative, Park Authority Board
Jane Strauss, Dranesville District School Board Member
FCPS School Board
Scott Brabrand, FCPS Superintendent
Leigh Burden, FCPS Chief Financial Officer