



Fairfax County Public Schools: Suggestions for Increased Efficiency Do Not Solve Pending Budget Shortfall in Fairfax County Public Schools

This month Ginger Shea and Rona Ackerman of LWVFA’s Education Committee present a two-part look at Fairfax County Public Schools’ financial situation. **Part One** reports on a state-wide efficiency study of school divisions that was established by the state in 2005 and completed in 2012 for Fairfax County. Implementing the recommendations, some of which would require up front investment before yielding savings, is estimated to yield \$10.8 million over five years. This is not huge percentage of a \$2.5 billion budget but welcome nonetheless. The study details where these cuts might be made.

Part Two asks us to look at the options for dealing with a projected FY 2015 deficit of \$106.3 million. Since FY 2009, Fairfax County’s transfer to the school district has increased 5.6 percent while enrollment has increased 8.9 percent. Increased health insurance rates, increased contributions to the Virginia Retirement Systems, and decreased revenues from the state have all conspired to produce a shortfall as a new superintendent takes over. What positions should we be taking in response to both of these sections? We invite your input once again.

Calendar

December

- 2 VOTER deadline
- 3 LWV-VA Board meeting
- 4 Pre-session Roundtable
- 6 LWV-NCA Board meeting
- 7 **Briefing and At-Large meeting**
- 9-12 **Unit Meetings**
- 18 **Board meeting**
- 23-1/2 School holiday
- 24,25 Christmas Eve/Day
- 26 Kwanzaa begins
- 31 New Year’s Eve

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Presidents' Message



At this time of year, our family and friends are foremost in our thoughts. Our LWVFA members become part of our families and we appreciate all that they do to help make interesting programs, discussions and activities for our community. We are very thankful for so many great members who have volunteered in big and small ways during the year.

As the new Virginia legislative year begins with “a new cast of characters”, we hope that you will attend the LWV-VA Women’s Round Table (WRT) pre-session program (December 4). During the January and February General Assembly session, please schedule in a trip to Richmond for a Wednesday WRT discussion and a visit to our Northern Virginia delegation. These visits are informative, give the League more visibility, and are fun!

The General Meeting of LWVFA is scheduled for January 18 at the Country Club of Fairfax. We hope the weather cooperates this year! We are in the process of securing an interesting and timely speaker and, during a discussion period, we will ask for your ideas on future and current positions on the LWVUS level. (The June National convention is in Texas.) Send in your General Meeting reservation form soon.

As the winter holidays begin, we wish you and your families the very best. Take the time to cherish your loved ones and spend time with those who enrich your lives. Time passes all too quickly to wait until later.

The warmest wishes for a wonderful holiday season!

Julie and Helen



Vivica Fuenzalida, shown here with fellow leaguers (front row) and Fairfax County Supervisors (back row) as she received the coveted Fairfax County Barbara Varon Volunteer Award for her extraordinary volunteer service to the community in creating voter awareness.

WLRT Pre-Session Round Table on Capitol Square

Join LWV-VA on Capitol Square in Richmond on December 4 to hear first hand about the pressing issues that will come before state legislators. The day begins with the Pre-Session Women’s Legislative Round Table (free) in House Room 3 followed by a luncheon meeting (\$35) and keynote speaker in Senate Room 3. As always, speakers from widely diverse sectors are being invited. Speakers include nonprofit advocates and members of the Governor’s cabinet. A registration form is available at <http://www.lwv-va.org/files/revised28octpresessionannouncement2013dec4new.pdf>

LWVFA Fairfax VOTER 2013 - 2014

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or call 703-658-9150

School Year Begins With New Superintendent and 1,841 New Teachers

By Beth Henson Tudan and Virginia Fitz Shea

Dr. Karen Garza, who served as superintendent of Lubbock Independent School District in Texas since 2009, was appointed Superintendent of Fairfax County Public Schools effective July 1, 2013. Her “Opening of Schools Report,” presented September 12, stated that 1,841 teachers were hired this year after 26,823 teacher applications were reviewed.

At a panel discussion hosted by *The Washington Post* September 17, Garza explained that Fairfax used to be at the top end of teacher salaries in the area, but now we are in the middle. As a result, Fairfax is losing teachers to areas where the cost of living is cheaper. “It’s a real loss for our schools.”

School Schedules

The moderator of the panel, *Post* columnist Robert McCartney, read an email about the short day Mondays in elementary schools and its impact on working parents that stated “The early dismissal on Monday causes me to miss hours and wages.”

Dr. Garza answered, “How do we structure the school days and year? We have to consider Art, Music, P.E. Teachers do need time to work together and plan. Teacher expectations have increased, but the time is still the same from a century ago. We need more time.”

Kimberly Adams, president of the Fairfax Education Association, said, “Monday afternoons are critical for collaborative team planning – not only at the school, but across the county. We already have low teacher morale. We need the planning time.”

Steve Greenburg, president of the Fairfax County Federation of Teachers, said that if teachers sacrifice planning and development time on Mondays, the quality of instruction could be jeopardized. He also said that early dismissal Mondays is not a sustainable model and that we need to look overall at how schools

are scheduled. He said Fairfax should focus first on later start times. Garza said she supports later high school start times. “In my former system, high schools started at 8:20 and elementary schools started a little earlier.” She noted that Fairfax is complicated because we have 395 square miles to coordinate and that people also have their routines. She said, however, “This issue has been debated since 1985. I am not that patient. We’ve got to decide this issue and be done with it.”

Budget

McCartney asked the panel to discuss carryovers in the school budget at the end of the school year. Dr. Garza said, “We have a \$2.5 billion budget.” She noted that Fairfax has been funding shortfalls in other areas of our budget with the money we haven’t spent. She noted the link to a webpage with an explanation of the year-end balances. http://www.fcps.edu/cco/pubs/myfcps/family/2013_08_29/recordstraight.shtml

Here is an excerpt:

“...at the end of FY 2013, there was an available balance of \$55 million, which represents about 2 percent of FCPS’ total operating budget of \$2.5 billion. That amount is the ending balance that reflects all the activities of that fiscal year including the amount available from the previous year.

“In reality, FCPS’ ending balances for the past 10 years have ranged from \$6 million to \$55 million—averaging about \$29 million annually.”

Discipline

Ramona Morrow, president of the Fairfax County Council of PTAs, said, “We had a study of the Student Rights and Responsibilities booklet last year. Many of the changes were implemented, but not all. We still have further to go. Because of the changes, there has been an 18 percent drop in suspensions during the last year. Still, children with IEPs are getting suspended disproportionately.” Garza noted that other school systems where she had worked had stronger parental notification systems. Greenburg said, “We did a lot with the SR&R Task Force, but we’re not done.”

Michele Menapace contributed to this report.



~ You are cordially invited to attend ~



The LWV of the Fairfax Area
General Meeting

Saturday, January 18, 2014

COUNTRY CLUB OF FAIRFAX
5110 Ox Road (Route 123 & Braddock Roads)
Fairfax VA 22030
9:00 a.m. – Registration & coffee

9:30 a.m. LWVUS program planning discussion

10:30 a.m. Speaker: A surprise (TBA)

11:30 – Luncheon
(Reservations required for luncheon only)

Luncheon Reservation Deadline January 8, 2014-- Cost: \$35 per person

Menu: House Salad With Raspberry Vinaigrette, Chicken Entree, Chef's Vegetables, Rolls and Butter, Dessert, Coffee Service

Program is free; Luncheon, \$35 per person.

Make checks payable to: **LWVFA** and mail with reservation form to:

2014 General Meeting, 10172 Turnberry Place, Oakton, VA 22124

Name _____ Lunch @\$35 ea. _____

Phone Number & E-mail _____

Guest(s)'Name(s) _____ Lunch @\$35ea. _____

Total Enclosed \$ _____

For special dietary needs or questions, call Mary at 703-319-2185

LWVUS Provides Comments at EPA Listening Session

On November 7, LWVUS provided comments to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on the need to place regulations on carbon pollution from existing power plants. The EPA has been holding Listening Sessions across the country on this important issue and many state and local Leagues around the country have been participating in this important process.

LWVUS Joins Letter to Congress Outlining Budget Principles

The League joined with other organizations in a letter to members of Congress urging them to keep the following principles in mind as they work on the end of year budget agreement. The letter emphasizes that any budget agreement must: end sequestration cuts, protect Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security from benefit cuts and defend core programs for those most at risk.

Fairfax County Public Schools: Suggestions for Increased Efficiency Do Not Solve Pending Budget Shortfall in Fairfax County Public Schools

By Rona Ackerman and Virginia Fitz Shea

The Fairfax County School Board and the new superintendent, Karen Garza, are soliciting suggestions from the community about the future direction of the school system in a time of continuing budget challenges. Over the next few months, School Board members will be considering how to handle a record budget deficit. They will also be reviewing the recommendations of the School Efficiency Review, which was presented September 23. A summary of these recommendations is the first part of our two-part review of school issues this month. The second part of our review includes some of the preliminary budget options that are being discussed prior to the superintendent's presentation of the proposed budget on January 9.

School Board member Sandy Evans (Mason District) gave a succinct summary of the efficiency review:

“Some of the suggestions would require significant upfront investments (that is, costs) before yielding savings, while others could provide savings right away. Overall, if all of the report's recommendations were implemented, the estimated net savings would be \$10.8 million over five years. While that would be welcome, it is not a huge amount in a \$2.5 billion budget. It's good to know there's not a lot of “fat” in our current budget—but of course that also means it will be more difficult to make major budget cuts.”

Part One

School Efficiency Review of FCPS

In 2005, Virginia established a school efficiency review program to ensure that non-instructional functions are running efficiently so that as much funding as possible goes directly into the classroom. In 2012, Gibson Consulting Group, Inc. was contracted by the Virginia Department of Planning and Budget to conduct an efficiency review of Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS.) The entire report can be found at <http://www.fcps.edu/schlbld/internalaudit/externalreviews.shtml>.

Efficiency reviews and budget reductions are not always connected. Some recommendations require immediate expenditures, some are investments that require spending money now to save later, and some don't have associated costs. Cost savings measures are implemented annually by FCPS, and in recent years many staff cuts were implemented because of reduced funding. These occurred to a greater degree in operational areas to preserve instructional resources as much as possible. As a result, FCPS is more efficient today since it has fewer positions relative to the

student population than it did five years ago.

Gibson Consulting Group made 33 recommendations that, if fully implemented, are expected to result in a net savings of \$10.8 million after five years. Some of these recommendations are discussed below. The report also commended FCPS for many of its practices.

Efficiencies with short-term cost savings:

Elementary School Office Assistants

The Gibson report found that the number of office assistants at FCPS elementary schools was based on a formula of one office assistant per 10 **professional** staff. They recommend that elementary school office assistant staffing be based on the number of students, not the number of professional staff – similar to how FCPS high schools, middle schools, and the Virginia SOQ's determine staffing levels. This would result in a reduction of 170 positions at an average salary of \$37,811, plus 43.7 percent benefits, an annual savings of \$9.2 million. The report suggests that up to 50 percent of these positions could be reallocated to middle and high schools, reducing the annual savings to \$4.6 million.

Specific tasks office assistants perform vary by school type, but generally include:

- Communicating with parents, school staff, and central office staff via phone and email.
- Processing transactions and maintaining files for student-related transactions (enrollment, attendance), executing school purchases, reporting time and attendance, initiating facility maintenance and technology maintenance requests, and managing student activity funds.
- Providing secretarial support for school administrators.

- Providing supplies, photocopying, and other support services for teachers.
- Managing the security system.
- Opening and distributing mail and supply orders.
- Managing substitutes.
- Planning and coordinating school events.

The report also noted that the anticipated upgrade of FCPS' human resources and payroll systems, and the time and attendance reporting process at schools, will significantly reduce the amount of time office assistants need to spend on these tasks.

Custodial Services

Custodians report directly to the custodial or building supervisors at each school, who in turn report directly to the principal. In addition to cleaning, custodial supervisors open school buildings in the morning, perform minor building operations and maintenance duties, help set up for special events at the school during the day, and other duties that may be requested by the principal or other school administrator. Plant operations monitors provide oversight and support functions for building operations and custodial services for multiple schools. Their job duties include monitoring the cleaning approach at schools, custodial training, and monitoring custodial supply requests as well as proper use and care of school equipment, monitoring school construction or renovation and safety and security standards.

The report proposes implementing a centralized management approach to custodial services to improve the consistency of cleaning processes and oversight, and improve methods of cleaning and work assignments. Custodial supervisors would report to a plant operations monitor. This would require adding 10 plant operations monitors with average pay of \$60,970 plus 43.7 percent benefits. With travel expenses, the annual cost for this would be \$900,000. Approximately 50 percent of the monitors' time should be spent at the schools monitoring work quality, work efficiency, and providing technical oversight.

Offsetting this expense would be a change in custodial staffing levels. The report noted that FCPS is using 1998 Association of Physical Plant Administrators (APPA) Custodial Staffing Guidelines. The updated APPA 2011 guidelines reflect a target productivity level of 25,576 square feet per FTE custodian. FCPS custodial staff productivity is 23 percent below this target.

Several actions can be considered to move FCPS closer to the new standards over the next two years:

- Centralizing the management function
- Reviewing custodial work schedules and contract days.
- Evaluating use of part-time staff or shared custodian among schools.
- Evaluating cleaning frequencies.
- Conducting studies to determine how long it should take to clean classrooms, rest rooms and other school space.
- Evaluating balance of day and night shift custodians
- Conducting surveys of school principals to monitor service quality.
- Evaluating staff levels at schools with lower productivity.

In the first year, a school by school analysis would be conducted. Position reductions would occur the following year. A reduction of 174 custodial positions with average pay of \$33,358 plus 43.7% benefits would yield an annual savings of \$8.3 million. Coupled with the 10 new monitor positions, the overall savings in the custodial area would be \$7.4 million annually. Part of this recommendation has been incorporated in the preliminary list for possible budget reductions. (See Table 1.)

Food and Nutrition Services

Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) employs over 1,300 workers and feeds approximately 149,000 customers daily. It is entirely self-supporting and is operated under the federally-funded National School Lunch and Child Nutrition Acts. No support is received from school operating funds. The FNS budget may be viewed at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dmb/fy2014/adopted/volume2/s40000.pdf>. For FY 2009 through FY 2013, FCPS charged FNS \$2.6 million each year to cover indirect costs such as human resources, accounting, facilities maintenance, procurement, utilities, and information technology. The efficiency report indicates that FCPS could charge the FNS fund an additional \$957,254 annually in indirect costs based on the Virginia Department of Education's indirect cost rate of 16.2 percent. It further states that if indirect cost allocations cause FNS operate at a loss, then operational adjustments should be made. These could include menu price increases, alternative menus, reconfiguration of lunch lines, or efforts to increase student participation.

Table 1 - Preliminary List of Possible Budget Deductions

Program or Activity	Dollars (millions)	Positions
Eliminate the Foreign Language in the Elementary Schools (FLES) . The FLES teachers come into the classroom twice a week to team teach with the classroom teacher. Lessons are integrated with the core curriculum. Note: There are 139 elementary schools. FLES is offered in 46 schools. Also, 8 elementary schools offer Immersion and 9 offer Two-Way Immersion language instruction.	\$ (5.5)	(62.5)
Eliminate all funding for the Priority Schools Initiative-2 program that serves 35 elementary and middle schools. Of the total PSI-2 funding, \$2.2 million in FY 2014 was allocated for instructional coaches. The initiative was designed as an intervention to support the goals of improving student performance on the Standards of Learning tests, lessening achievement gaps, and attaining Annual Measurable Objectives (formerly known as Adequate Yearly Progress). The most recent evaluation of PSI in December 2012 showed mixed results; however, major changes in the math benchmarks made it difficult to interpret the test data.	\$ (4.3)	
Reduce the funding allocated to summer school by 50 percent. The most likely reduction would be in the number of students served; however shortening the length of summer school is also an option.	\$ (3.8)	
Reduce funding for replacement equipment (primarily computers) by nearly 40 percent.	\$ (2.0)	
Eliminate instructional coaches funding by FCPS. Instructional coaches facilitate professional learning and provide instructional support. (This does not count the coaches funded by grants, or the PSI, or school-funded coaches.)	\$ (1.8)	(22)
Reduce the allocation of custodial positions by 50 percent of the reduction recommended in the State Efficiency Review and remove their supervision by principals by adding central positions as supervisors.	\$ (1.7)	(38.5)
Reduce the allocation of school-based technology specialists to the state mandated level.	\$ (1.5)	(15)
Reduce the allocation of assistant principals , as discussed in the State Efficiency Review. This would pilot allocating a 0.5 assistant principal at small elementary schools and a 1.5 AP at small middle schools.	\$ (1.3)	(12)
Assistant principals currently on a 12-month contract would be changed to an 11-month contract.	\$ (1.2)	

Energy Savings

FCPS spends \$28.1 million per year on electricity costs, and an additional \$6.7 million per year on natural gas. Significant efforts have been made to reduce energy consumption, and most energy conservation measure projects have achieved substantial return-on-investments with very short payback periods. Almost one-half of the FCPS facilities are reported to have ENERGY STAR ratings of 75 or greater, indicating high energy efficiency. Schools with low ENERGY STAR scores represent the best potential for energy improvements and energy cost reductions. Performing retro-commissioning (upgrades to improve energy efficiency) has the potential to reduce energy consumption by 16 percent, on average, with a typical payback of one year.

The estimated cost of an outside contractor for performing retro-commissioning is \$0.20 per square foot, or a total cost of \$2,236,340. This effort can be spread across four years at \$559,085 annually. Assuming a one year payback for retro-commissioning, this amount of savings would begin to accumulate annually in 2014-15. (See Tanle 2.)

Three additional positions should be added to the permanent energy management staff at an average technical specialist pay of \$84,458, plus 43.7 percent benefits, an estimated annual cost of \$364,098. The return on investment will depend on the energy savings opportunities, the investment required, and the payback period for each opportunity. In the long run, an additional \$7 million in annual savings may be achieved, but most of this may occur after 2017-18.

Table 2 - Energy Savings

Energy Savings	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	Total Impact
Cost of retro-commissioning	(\$559,085)	(\$559,085)	(\$559,085)	(\$559,085)	(\$559,085)	(\$2,795,425)
Annual savings from retro-commissioning	\$0	\$559,085	\$1,118,170	\$1,677,255	\$2,236,340	\$5,590,850
Additional staff costs	(\$364,098)	(\$364,098)	(\$364,098)	(\$364,098)	(\$364,098)	(\$1,820,490)
Total	(\$923,183)	(\$364,098)	\$194,987	\$754,072	\$1,313,157	\$974,935

Note: Costs are negative. Savings are positive

Efficiencies Requiring Investment

Bus Transportation

FCPS provides transportation services to approximately 135,000 daily student riders with a fleet of 1,542 buses (operational and spares), making it one of the largest K-12 student transportation operations in the country. School Board Policy 8611.3 states that *School buses should be replaced after no more than 15 years of service as bus reliability and cost are critical considerations to a successful transportation operation.*

In recent years, purchases of needed buses have been postponed. There are 190 buses (12.3 percent of the fleet) that will exceed the 15-year age maximum by the end of FY 2013, and an additional 874 buses (57 percent) that are older than eight years. Bus purchases over the past five years have fluctuated significantly, ranging from 105 in FY 2009 to 5 buses in FY 2012. One-third of the fleet should be replaced every five years.

If FCPS were to move toward compliance with its policy over the next five years, 750 buses would need to be purchased at a cost of \$87.3 million or an average of \$17.4 million a year. Regular investment in bus fleet replacement is important to ensure the ongoing safety, reliability, and efficiency of transportation services.

FCPS should consider a commitment to reinvest in bus fleet replacement through the establishment of a reserve, in addition to replenishing its fleet in the short term through financing. A reserve would provide a more stable funding source and help comply with board policy in the long term. Over time, as the reserve fund balance permits, FCPS could gradually replace the lease financing with self-sustaining funding from the reserve. The report recommends the establishment of a reserve for bus replacement at a cost of \$6.4 million per year over 5 years for a total of \$32 million.

Response to Intervention Program

Response to Intervention (RtI) is the practice of providing high-quality instruction and interventions matched to student need, and monitoring progress frequently to make decisions about changes in instruction or goals. By addressing academic problems earlier, RtI may be able to help avoid the need to refer a student to special education. In the nine years since its introduction, RtI has only been fully implemented in 57 schools, less than 30 percent of all FCPS schools. The report recommends accelerating the pace of implementing the RtI program by hiring 10 consultants over a two-year period at a cost of \$2.1 million.

Decision-making

FCPS currently does not have a decision-making framework or any single document that defines decision-making authority between the central office, the cluster offices, and the principals. The report states that decisions should be identified in the following four categories:

- a. *Site-based decisions not requiring division administration approval.* Decisions that can be made by principals, like teaching strategies and special project assignments.
- b. *Site-based selection from a list of division-provided options.* Example: computer and instructional software. Purchasing items that are not on the approved list could result in the inability of the technology function to effectively support the hardware or software. Selecting from a list provides decision-making flexibility within a framework that helps ensure division-wide efficiency and effectiveness.
- c. *Site-based decisions requiring division or cluster office approval.* Certain decisions, such as hiring or terminating school staff, should require the approval of cluster and division administration to ensure compliance with state and federal laws and division policy.
- d. *Division or cluster office decisions.* There are certain decisions that should be made by division administration and enforced at all schools. A

single standardized curriculum and the school bell schedule are examples of decisions that should be established, or standardized, by division.

The report recommends hiring a consultant to determine who makes what decisions at a cost of \$50,000.

Technology

There are many recommendations in the report for changes or upgrades in technology. Examples include:

- a. *Interactive data dashboards:* Provide easier navigation into the details of lengthy and complex information like budget documents and transportation operations. Dashboard tools must be designed so that they are simple enough for the average Fairfax County citizen to use without instruction or help desk support, and rich enough to meet information needs.
 - i. *Budget:* The consultant cost of designing, developing, and implementing the budget dashboard would be \$500,000. There would be a \$40,000 annual maintenance expense.
 - ii. *Transportation:* Approximately \$50,000 would be needed to design and develop the transportation dashboard, and an additional \$100,000 is needed to implement the web-based distribution platform. The cost of maintaining both parts of the transportation dashboard would be \$15,000 annually.
- b. *Division-wide analytical tool:* Reports such as membership, demographics, attendance, discipline, and assessments can be downloaded from the current eCART system. Although these reports are useful, many school administrators and teachers are looking for ways to go beyond these set reports. Users want to be able to access information at the individual student level, create visualizations, use filters, and customize reports. The initial cost to develop such a tool could be up to \$1 million, with \$50,000 annual maintenance expense

Efficiencies Requiring No Cost

Long-range Strategic Plan

In 2006, the Board adopted the Strategic Governance Manual that defines the role of the Board and FCPS vision, mission, beliefs, and student achievement goals. But FCPS does not have a long-range strategic plan. Strategic plans have a beginning and end date (5 to 7 years), and are updated annually based on needed changes. They establish priorities that drive long-term plans and have measurable objectives and targets. Long-range academic priorities and strategies have a significant impact on other long-term planning needs

such as facilities and technology. Without this guidance, lower-level plans tend to operate in a vacuum having to make assumptions about those priorities. A long-range strategic plan will contribute to more effective long-range planning in other areas.

Standardize Curriculum Support Materials

Teachers have access to curriculum and curriculum support documents such as pacing guides for math, science, social studies and reading. However, there is significant variation in how each content area's guides are prepared. FCPS should seek to standardize the level of detail and format of the elementary pacing guides to make them consistent and easier to use.

Part-time Elementary School Assistant Principals Pilot Program

The state minimum staffing standards for elementary school assistant principals (AP) are 0.5 assistant principals for 600 to 899 students, and 1.0 for 900 or more students. FCPS currently employs a formula that is approximately double that number. The report recommends that FCPS pilot a program of part-time assistant principals at a sample of low enrollment elementary schools. If FCPS learns through the pilot program that schools can achieve the same or higher level of success with fewer administrative staff, consideration should be given to modifying the staffing formula for assistant principals. This would be a short-term cost savings, unless, as recommended in the report, any initial savings are used for additional high school assistant principals where the staffing levels are low. Then there would be no fiscal impact associated with this recommendation. Part of this recommendation has been incorporated in the preliminary list for possible budget reductions. (See Table 1)

Part Two

Fairfax Schools Face Budget Gap

At the October 21 School Board work session reviewing the efficiency report, John Ringer, Associate Director of the Virginia Department of Planning and Budget, noted that the topics in the efficiency review and "how you balance your budget" are not always directly connected. The savings identified in the efficiency report do not come close to helping balance the budget for the next fiscal year. The next work session featured a review of the FCPS budget.

The FY 2015 fiscal forecast is that Fairfax County Public Schools will face a deficit of \$106.3 million if the Board of Supervisors (BOS) provides a 2 percent increase in the

transfer of funds to the schools. In the FY 2014 Budget Guidance passed by the BOS in April 2013, it stated, “based on anticipated resources for FY 2015, the FY 2015 assumption for the increase to the Operating Transfer to the Fairfax County Public Schools is adjusted from 3 percent to 2 percent.” FCPS receives 69.8 percent of its funding from the transfer from Fairfax County government, which comprises 52.7 percent of Fairfax County General Fund disbursements. Since FY 2009, the County transfer has increased by 5.6 percent while enrollment has increased 8.9 percent.

Revenues have not kept pace with growing enrollment and increasing mandatory costs. Next year an additional 2,800 students are expected to enroll, costing an additional \$25 million. A health insurance rate increase will cost \$27 million. Increased contributions to the Virginia Retirement System (VRS) will cost \$37 million. The loss of one-time incentive funding and the recalculation of the LCI, local composite index, is expected to result in the loss of \$21 million in state revenue.

The LCI is adjusted every two years using three factors:

- True value of real property (weighted 50 percent)
- Adjusted gross income (weighted 40 percent)
- Taxable retail sales (weighted 10 percent)

In 2012-14, Fairfax’s LCI was .6789, meaning that for every \$100 spent on basic education (as defined in the Standards of Quality), Fairfax paid \$67.89 while Virginia contributed \$32.11. In comparison, Scott County in southwestern Virginia had an LCI of .1831 and Rappahannock’s LCI was .80, the cap. As a result of the LCI, FCPS received \$1,855 per pupil in state aid, while the state average allocation per pupil was \$3,420. FCPS’s cost per pupil in FY 2014 was \$13,472. It is expected that in 2014-16 Fairfax’s LCI will rise, reducing the amount of state aid we receive.

FCPS also has used one-time funding for recurring expenditures, resulting in a structural deficit. Kristen Michael, director of the Office of Budget Services explained that the FY 2014 Approved Budget included a budgeted beginning balance of \$65.7 million and a VRS reserve of \$16.9 million. Together, these total \$82.6 million in one-time funding that was used to balance the budget and meet ongoing expenditure requirements. “To eliminate the structural deficit, FCPS would need ongoing revenue to meet ongoing expenditures and one-time funding would only be used to fund one-time expenditures/purchases that don’t have recurring/ongoing costs.”

The FY 2015 forecast anticipates a budgeted beginning balance of \$45 million and no VRS reserve.

After the School Board adopted the FY 2014 budget May

23, 2013, the members unanimously voted to direct the Superintendent to develop an FY 2015 Proposed Budget that includes compensation increases for employees, with step increases as their preference. The salary schedules are divided into steps based on years of experience and education. A step increase for all employees would cost \$42.7 million. There has only been one step increase funded in the past five years. When a step increase is added to the deficit of \$106.3 million, the deficit would increase to \$149 million.

The other means of increasing salaries is the market scale adjustment (MSA). To be eligible for \$6.3 million in state incentive funding, the School Board included a 2 percent MSA, effective January 1, 2014.

Table 3 summarizes the forecasted deficit:

Cost-cutting options

At the October 21 work session, Dr. Garza said she had asked all central administration departments to draft budget cuts of 10 percent in their departments for planning purposes. She also presented a preliminary list of possible budget cuts. “I have no proposal or plan today,” she stressed. “It is too early in the budget process.”

Here is a summary of the items with the largest cost saving found on that preliminary list:

Increasing class sizes

Increasing the student-to-teacher ratio by 1.0 student per teacher in general and career and technical education would save \$19.5 million and eliminate 271.5 positions. Smaller savings would result from a similar increase in the student-to-teacher ratio in special education classes (\$3.9 million), English for Speakers of Other Languages classes (\$1.7 million), and advanced academic centers (\$1.8 million). Table 4 shows a comparison of class sizes in several school districts in the Washington area.

Reducing needs-based staffing

Variable levels of additional staffing are provided to schools based on the percentage of students eligible for free and reduced-price meals. Reducing needs-based staffing by 30 percent would save \$14.6 million (208.1 positions). Currently almost all the schools have some of this additional staffing.

Eliminating many instructional assistants

If all non-kindergarten general education instructional assistant (IA) positions were eliminated, the savings would be \$10.2 million (306 positions). Currently all kindergarten

Table 3 - Fiscal 2015 Forecast Projections (in Millions)

	<u>FY 2014</u>	<u>FY 2015</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>Total Change</u>
<u>Funds Available:</u>				
Beginning Balance	65.7	45.0	(20.7)	
Virginia Retirement System (VRS) Reserve	16.9	0.0	(16.9)	
Textbook Reserve		3.5	3.5	
County Transfer Assuming 0 percent Increase	1717.0	1717.0	0.0	
State Revenue Assumes LCI increase	387.2	365.9	(21.3)	
Sales Tax	169.9	177.1	7.2	
Federal Aid	42.5	40.4	(2.1)	
Fairfax City & Other Revenue	61.2	62.4	1.2	
Reduction in Total Funds Available				(49.1)
<u>Expenditures:</u>				
Compensation	2166.9	2166.9	0.0	
Savings Due to Turnover	0.0	(24.9)	(24.9)	
Market Scale Adjustment (MSA)		15.9	15.9	
Virginia Retirement System Rate Increases	0.0	37.0	37.0	
Health Insurance Increase	0.0	27.2	27.2	
Other		1.1	1.1	
Student Enrollment Increase		25.0	25.0	
Logistics Adjustments (various)	256.4	264.3	7.9	
Transfers Out (Summer School, FECEP, etc)	34.5	33.2	(1.3)	
Increase in Total Expenditures				87.9
Reserve Funds				
Textbook Reserve	2.5	6.2	3.7	3.7
Projected Deficit Prior to Increased County Transfer				(140.7)
2 percent Increase in the County Transfer		34.3	34.3	34.3
Projected Deficit After 2 percent Increased County Transfer				(106.4)
STEP Increase		(42.7)	(42.7)	(42.7)
Projected Deficit After STEP Increase and 2 percent County Transfer				(149.1)

Table 4 – FY 2014 Average Class Size

<u>School District</u>	<u>Students per Classroom Teacher</u>		
	<u>Elem</u>	<u>Mid/Int.</u>	<u>High</u>
Arlington County	21.1	20.4	19.5
Fairfax County	21.4	24.3	25
Loudoun County	23.4	23.1	25.1
Montgomery County, MD	18.9	25.5	27.3
Prince George’s County, MD	19.4	19.7	25.1
Prince William County	23.3	30.8	30.3

Source: FY 2014 Washington Area Boards of Education Guide (WABE) p.29

classes have a teacher and an IA. A proposal to eliminate all the IAs in kindergarten while lowering the class size from an average of 22 students to 17.5 students would result in a net savings of \$6.3 million (419.4 positions). However, there might not be enough classrooms for this option.

IAs have various responsibilities. They monitor children on playground, coming on and off buses, to and from the classroom or lunch room as assigned. They also monitor students while the teacher is occupied, help maintain classroom records and files; prepare, compile and copy instructional materials; set up and clean up instruction projects, operate instructional equipment, take attendance and collect forms.

Reducing school counselors

Reducing school counselors to the minimum required by the state would result in a 12 percent reduction at elementary

schools, a 37 percent reduction at middle schools, and a 34 percent reduction at high schools. The savings would be \$10.2 million (121.9 positions).

Compensation

Reducing all employees' contract lengths by one day would save \$9.1 million. A contract length reduction would be a permanent change that will result in ongoing reductions to employee salaries. As a result, a contract length reduction would also decrease the employer and employee contributions to retirement that are based on employees annual salaries that would be reduced.

Another option would be furloughing all employees for one day, which would save \$7.9 million. A furlough is temporary; it only occurs for one year and does not reduce the employer or employee contributions to retirement.

At the October 21 work session, Dr. Garza noted that it is possible to have both an increase of a step and either a contract length reduction or a furlough in the same budget year. She also noted that the one-day costs savings listed here can be multiplied to produce larger savings as needed.

Other Proposed Reductions

Table 3 (see page EF-3) lists some of the other possible reductions presented by Dr. Garza at the October 21 School Board meeting. This list is representative and the items on it were all chosen because each has a possible savings of \$1 million or greater.

Revenue Enhancement

The discussion items included three methods of increasing revenues. An athletic participation fee of \$100 per student per sport, which would be waived for students eligible for free and reduced-price meals, would raise \$1.8 million.

Requiring students to pay for the cost of the tests in Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses would raise \$4.5 million. The tests would be optional, since fees cannot be charged for mandatory tests. The test fees would be paid by FCPS for students eligible for free or reduced price meals.

Increasing community use fees charged for use of FCPS facilities by 5 percent could raise \$200,000. However, this estimate does not include the potential for decreased usage.

Further Reading

For more detailed information about the budget situation, A Citizen's Guide to Understanding the Budget can be found

at www.fcps.edu.

Endnotes

- 1 A Citizen's Guide to Understanding the Budget, page 9
- 2 A Citizen's Guide to Understanding the Budget, page 2
- 3 <http://www.fcps.edu/news/fy2015/bottomline/bottomline101813.html>
- 4 http://www.doe.virginia.gov/school_finance/budget/compositeindex_local_abilitypay
- 5 A Citizen's Guide to Understanding the Budget, page 2
- 6 A Citizen's Guide to Understanding the Budget, page 4
- 7 K. Michael (personal communication, November 6, 2013)
- 8 A Citizen's Guide to Understanding the Budget, page 9
- 9 A Citizen's Guide to Understanding the Budget, page 9

Discussion Questions

1. In a time of budget reductions, does it make sense to spend money now on future efficiencies?
2. A reduction in the number of teachers and a step increase are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Should teachers receive step increases when we have to let others go? Or should we forego step increases to retain as many teachers as possible?
3. Each additional penny in the real estate tax rate will produce approximately \$21 million in revenue at a cost of approximately \$216 for the average household. Do you think the Board of Supervisors should increase the tax rate to fund or partially fund a \$149 million deficit? How much?
4. Last month we talked about a meals tax. What would you think of a meals tax dedicated to funding education?
5. The County transfer is not based upon enrollment, but FCPS enrollment is increasing steadily. Are there pros and cons to changing the funding to a per-student enrolled basis?
6. What is the difference between a contract length reduction and a furlough? Which do you think would be more appropriate?
7. Is increasing class size an appropriate way to reduce the budget?
8. What do you think of the idea of reducing the number of instructional assistants, school counselors, or eliminating kindergarten instructional assistants?
9. Should foreign language be taught in all the elementary schools?
10. What do you think of the revenue enhancement options?

October Library Discussion Summary: Units Voice Opinion and Ask for More Information

By Karole McKalip

Introduction

The future of the Fairfax County Public Library System (FCPL) has been a reoccurring topic in our newspapers and in many local blogs for several months. The issue has sparked many county citizens to urge the entire community to learn more about the decisions that are taking place and that are proposed; to attend meetings; to take actions if necessary. Should the Fairfax LWV take any action to amend its current position? What should be our focus? While not comprehensive, our October VOTER article presented a picture of the county libraries with some of the key questions, concerns, and problems being faced by the decision-makers. In our October meetings, unit discussions centered on member opinions and suggestions that will contribute to wider public input.

Discussion

League units responded to the library director's proposals by voicing their concerns and suggestions about the library system's future. Lack of money due to budget cuts and the emerging technologies that have an impact on library usage were cited by all units as driving the efforts to reorganize the FCPL. Reston Evening summarized it this way: We thought the driving factor was the budget reduction; however, several of us thought that libraries need to change to adapt to the changing world and how people get information (printed materials/online) and use libraries.

Several other issues emerged in the various units. Not to be ignored are the needs of our increasingly larger and more diverse community (McLean, Springfield, Mt. Vernon Evening). The multicultural character of our county and the needs of lower-income patrons (Mt. Vernon Day) must be addressed in proposed library models. A lack of public knowledge of and input to possible changes concerned many members.

This last issue led into a discussion of the decision-making process and strategies that have so far been demonstrated by the director and the Library Board. Reston Evening, Fairfax Station, and Centreville/Chantilly called for greater "transparency" in meetings. All units decried the lack of public input and the perceived secrecy that seem to characterize meetings. Further, as some members attempted to get more information, their requests went unanswered. Because early on there was no advertising of Library Board meetings, the public was not part of the decision-making

process. Consequently, the public is unclear about the "Beta" plan and the concept of a "Central Desk."

The pros and cons of some of the proposed solutions were examined by the units: the one-desk model with a cross-trained staff requiring fewer Master of Library Science degrees; children's rooms and programming becoming part of a more generalized "youth services model," library programs and services expanding into the community, and more services being provided electronically. Members liked the idea of a greater community presence, but they felt the libraries should not lose their positions as a focus in their various communities. While it may be inevitable that libraries will become more technology based, they should still retain their role as centers for printed books, at least in the near term (McLean). Some in Reston Evening thought that we should support the libraries in changing to meet the new technological demands of the community.

All units agreed that books should continue to be an important focus in libraries. The Fairfax/Vienna unit stated, "We should always keep books." Mt. Vernon Evening said that library services should be complementary, not a competition. Not everyone has access to the Internet and e-books.

Four units believed that the current League position on libraries need not be changed. One unit believed it did not have enough information to make a judgment. However, while the current position is "adequate for advocacy" (Fairfax Station), nonetheless a number of items should be monitored and/or supported:

- Examination of the current position for relevancy
- Adequate funding for staffing, more open hours, more computers in each branch
- Emphasis on transparency in decision-making
- More autonomy for each library branch to serve its community as needs dictate
- Concerted efforts to engage the local community in the governance of its branch

Comments, Suggestions, Questions

Several units recognized that this VOTER article was published in the midst of public discussions about proposed library changes and noted that this topic needed further investigation. Some units went beyond discussing the questions posed in the article and ended their meetings with more questions to be answered, suggestions on what League members could be doing now, and observations about the evolving library situation.

Reston Evening had several questions related to the article:

1. Why aren't certain publishers selling e-books to libraries?
2. What was the stand of the Library Board?
3. What is the Beta plan?
4. What is the deal with Amazon and libraries?
5. Why did the library discard books and not give them away, contribute them to book sales or donate them to developing countries, etc?

The topic of book disposal generated a great deal of discussion, and if libraries needed to clear their shelves, several units had suggestions of how better to accomplish this. The Springfield unit asked who decides what books should go. When? Where can they be moved? One member pointed out that while libraries have been getting rid of books for many years, the number of disposed books has increased and their quality was still good. Others thought that these books could be put to good use in hospitals, retirement homes, or in poorer areas.

Fairfax City/Vienna had some other points to make:

1. With the increasing number retirees, there is an increased number of potential volunteers.
2. Rules need to be changed regarding when books should be purged on the basis of not being used. Dolly Madison and other libraries have lots of empty shelves.
3. Users of libraries should be called "patrons" not "customers."
4. Eliminating the MLS as a librarian requirement and counting retail experience as applicable is wrong.
5. "Single Service" desks are risky, particularly with the homeless, disruptive, sick patrons, etc.
6. Fairfax County libraries need to be funded comparable to other surrounding jurisdictions.

Mt. Vernon Day had some additional observations:

1. The unit wants to continue to be informed on library issues and have our point of view made known to the Library Board and the Board of Supervisors, particularly in the area of adequate public financing.

2. We need a League observer at Library Board meetings.
3. Encourage members to join the Friends of the Library at their local libraries.
4. How is the county increase in diversity going to be served?
5. We should encourage more children's programs to increase children's literacy. Keep qualified children's staff.
6. Going to eBooks is very costly for libraries.
7. Clarification is needed regarding the book weeding policies.

McLean proposed:

1. Begin an email campaign—as individuals—to alert the Board of Supervisors to concerns over the future of the county libraries. Ask them for a "library corner" in their newsletter.
2. Encourage members to contact their representatives on the Library Board of Trustees, asking to be kept abreast of Board meetings and decisions, to learn the results of any Beta tests and to be permitted to attend meetings.
3. Update the FCPL Strategic Plan after public hearings.

Mt. Vernon Evening saw activities provided by the FCPL as contributing to a countywide community. The library provides a sanctuary, from school kids to seniors living alone, without another place to go.

The Briefing Unit asked for a future VOTER article to follow-up on what other libraries are doing. Do others have Beta plans? We need more discussion to identify what actions the Fairfax League can take now.

Conclusion

Libraries are very important to our members who revealed the many ways that they use them:

- Borrow books, both hard copies and eBooks
- Utilize meeting rooms for events
- Purchase books at sales
- Participate in book discussion groups
- Do research
- Tutor students
- Disseminate information
- Volunteer

Because of the value that our membership places in libraries, all units responded vigorously to the questions, voicing their opinions and asking for more information. In doing so, they call for greater public input into the changing nature of our society and to the proposed changes to the Fairfax County Public Libraries. Partnerships within the community are critical to ensure that future changes be smooth and gradual.

This Month's Unit Meeting Locations

Topic: The Future of Fairfax County Schools

Members and visitors are encouraged to attend any meeting convenient for them, including the "At Large Meeting" and briefing on Saturdays when a briefing is listed. As of November 1, 2013, the locations were correct; please use phone numbers to verify sites and advise of your intent to attend. Some meetings at restaurants may need reservations.

Saturday, December

10 a.m. At-Large Unit and Briefing

Packard Center
4026 Hummer Rd.
Annandale 22003
Contact: Judy, 703-725-9401_

7:45 p.m. Mt. Vernon Evening (MVE)

Paul Spring Retirement Community
Mt. Vernon Room
7116 Fort Hunt Road
Alexandria 22307
Contact: Jane, 703-960-6820

7:30 p.m. Reston Evening (RE)

Reston Art Gallery at Heron House
Lake Anne Village Center
Reston 20190
Contact: Lucy, 703-757-5893

Monday, December 9

1:30 p.m. Greenspring (GSP)

Hunters Crossing Classroom
Spring Village Drive
Springfield 22150
Contact: Kay, 703-644-2670

Wednesday, December 11

9:30 a.m. Mt. Vernon Day (MVD)

Mt. Vernon Dist. Government Center
2511 Parkers Lane
Alexandria 22306
Contact: Louise, 703-960-0073

Thursday, December 12

9 a.m. Reston Day (RD)

1624 Sourwood Lane
Reston 20191
Contact: Margo, 703-620-9054

9:30 a.m. Springfield (SPF)

Packard Center
4026 Hummer Rd.
Annandale 22003
Contact: Nancy, 703-256-6570
or Peg, 703-256-9420

Tuesday, December 10

10:30 a.m. Centreville-Chantilly (CCD)

Sully District Gov. Center
4900 Stonecroft Blvd.
Chantilly 20151
Contact: Olga, 703-815-1897

9:30 a.m. McLean Day (MVD)

Star Nut Café
1445 Laughlin Ave.
McLean 22101
Contact: Peggy, 703-532-4417 or
Sharone 703-734-1048

1 p.m. Fairfax City/Vienna (FX-V)

Oakton Regional Library
10304 Lynhaven Pl.
Oakton 22124
Contact: Bobby, 703-938-1486 or
Liz, 703-281-3380

10 a.m. Fairfax Station (FXS)

7902 Bracksford Ct.
Fairfax 22039
Contact: Lois, 703-690-0908

January Meetings:

No Unit Meetings - Sign up for the General Meeting



The League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area (LWVFA)
 4026-B Hummer Road, Annandale, VA 22003-2403
 703-658-9150. Web address: www.lwv-fairfax.org

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Decemberr, 2013
Julie Jones, Co-President
Helen Kelly, Co-President
Ron Page, Editor
Liz Brooke, Coordinator

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages the public to play an informed and active role in government. At the local, state, regional and national levels, the League works to influence public policy through education and advocacy. Any citizen of voting age, male or female, may become a member.

The League of Women Voters never supports or opposes candidates for office, or political parties, and any use of the League of Women Voters name in campaign advertising or literature has not been authorized by the League.

LWVFA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

(Dues year is July 1 through June 30. Current dues year ends June 30, 2014.)

Membership Category: Individual \$65 ____ ; Household (2 persons-1 VOTER) \$90 ____ ; Donation \$ ____
 Student \$32.50 ____ ; (Coll. Attending _____)

Membership is: New ____ ; Renewal ____ ; Reinstate ____ ; Subsidy Requested ____

We value membership. A subsidy fund is available, check block above and include whatever you can afford.

Dues are not tax deductible. Tax-deductible donations must be written on a separate check payable to LWVFA Ed. Fund.

Please Print Clearly!

Name _____ Unit _____

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City _____ State _____ Zip + 4 _____

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Thank you for checking off your interests:

- | | | | |
|---|--|--|---|
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Fiscal | <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Quality | <input type="checkbox"/> Human Services | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public Libraries | <input type="checkbox"/> Land Use Planning | <input type="checkbox"/> Judicial Systems | <input type="checkbox"/> Affordable Housing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | <input type="checkbox"/> Water | <input type="checkbox"/> Juvenile Problems | <input type="checkbox"/> Domestic Violence |

Mail to: LWVFA, 4026-B Hummer Road, Annandale, VA 22003-2403