

March 28, 2020

Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and  
Fairfax County Public School Board Members

Dear Board Member,

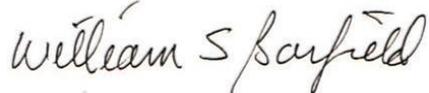
The Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations forwards to you its analysis of the Fairfax County Fiscal Year 2021 Advertised Budget.

In accordance with the prevailing pandemic restrictions on meetings, the Federation Board and Membership met virtually on March 26, 2020, to collaborate their comments on the Advertised Budget.

Since our bylaws have no provision for a virtual or electronic vote, we respectfully submit the attached resolutions under letter format for your consideration and action in this budget year FY2021 and in future budget years.

Queries on any item may be directed to the Federation Co-chairs in the attachment.

Sincerely,



William Barfield, President  
Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations

Attachment: Federation Letter on the Fairfax County Fiscal Year 2021  
Advertised Budget

Cc: Fairfax County Executive Bryan Hill and FCPS Superintendent Scott Brabrand

**Attachment to**  
**Federation Letter on the**  
**Fairfax County Fiscal Year 2021 Advertised Budget**

March 26, 2020

Respectfully submitted to the  
Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and  
Fairfax County Public School Board Members



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## INTRODUCTION

The Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations (The Federation) is an 80-year umbrella community organization representing tens of thousands of Fairfax County residences in all magisterial districts.

At the time this resolution is being drafted, the county, state, nation, and world are in the grip of a global pandemic due to the spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19). It is not possible at this time to know the pandemic's full social and financial impact. However, clearly it is going to have an unprecedented impact on human lives and on the economy. The Board of Supervisors must act to lessen its impact on county residents.

We believe the Board of Supervisors can help by providing the county the flexibility to allocate funds in addressing the current crisis. There are likely to be many unanticipated costs to combat the pandemic, its socioeconomic impact to our county, and our eventual recovery.

This crisis is an opportunity to learn how to be more prepared in the future for emergencies and to provide for continuity of operations in county government. This may require new allocations or a shift in funding priorities.

But, in the face of this ongoing crisis, the Federation urges the Board of Supervisors to not lose sight of our existing community priorities.

The Federation is aware that changing socioeconomics in the county (which combined with failures by the Commonwealth of Virginia and the federal government to provide adequate funding for their various mandates) have multiplied costs and shifted the burden of maintaining our quality of life, infrastructure, and Fairfax County Public Schools onto the county and disproportionately onto homeowners. On top of that, the county must now respond to this unplanned Coronavirus pandemic crises.

The Federation continues to support revenue diversification in order to fund schools and county services. This year, revenue diversification took a huge step forward with the passage of Senate Bill 588, which provided partial equalization of city and county taxing authority. While we are disappointed that provisions in this legislation will prevent Fairfax County from modernizing our tax structure immediately, we believe these new tools will help relieve our heavy reliance on property taxes to fund county services and the schools.

This year's presentation of the advertised budget by County Executive Bryan Hill is unprecedented because he also shared a Strategic Plan for the County. County staff charged with putting together the plan made first-rate efforts to gather feedback from a wide range of stakeholders. The Board should carefully consider the Strategic Plan and use it as an important tool in setting future spending priorities.

Federation members recognize that our lifestyle comes at a cost, but continue to strongly recommend that the following critical needs and services are addressed by the budget and by the Board of Supervisors in FY2021 and in successive years:

- 1) continued excellence of Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS), which serve as a magnet for growth and provide the underpinning for the county's economic health;
- 2) safety and security, which includes mitigation of the current global pandemic, and which provides a reasonable safety net for residents and families with mental, physical, or substance abuse issues, or are homeless, or are living in poverty;
- 3) adequately maintained and staffed parks, recreational facilities, and libraries;
- 4) responsive, transparent and proactive governance, financial planning and oversight, including maintaining of the county's AAA bond rating;
- 5) healthy environmental quality, and strong waste and pest management programs;
- 6) healthy drinking water and safe waterways.

## II. FINDINGS

### A. Revenues

**WHEREAS**, the FY2021 Advertised Budget proposes to increase the residential real estate tax rate by 3 cents to \$1.18 per \$100 of assessed value, with one cent of that dedicated to affordable housing; and

**WHEREAS**, the FY2021 Advertised Budget proposes to implement a 4% Admissions Tax in October, 2020, on the sale of movie, theater, and concert tickets; and

**WHEREAS**, U.S. real Gross Domestic Product increased by 2.3% in 2019; and

**WHEREAS**, the amount of vacant office space in the County this past year declined to 17.1 million sq. ft., and office real estate assessed values increased for the third consecutive year, which increased the commercial/industrial percentage of the total real estate revenue stream from 19.66% to 19.72%; and

**WHEREAS**, the Virginia General Assembly this past session passed a bill to partially equalize county and city taxing authority, which authorizes the County to diversify its revenue stream; and

**WHEREAS**, as a consequence of the global pandemic, the United States and the world will most likely enter a recession; and

**WHEREAS**, forecasted revenues and the economic picture presented on February 25, 2020, for the Advertised Budget are likely to be inaccurate; and

**WHEREAS**, the Federal Government will allow business to defer payment of taxes up to \$10M until July, 2020; and

## **B. Employee Compensation**

**WHEREAS**, high quality services in the County require a professionally-trained workforce, especially in times of crisis; and

**WHEREAS**, the FY2021 Advertised Budget proposes a 2.06% Market Rate Adjustment (MRA) for general county employees at the cost of \$28.73M; and

**WHEREAS**, the Advertised Budget proposes Performance, Merit, and Longevity increases for general county employees at a total cost of \$23.28M; and

**WHEREAS**, the Advertised Budget proposes to supplement salaries for state parole officers and to standardize supplements for all other state employees at a total cost of \$460,000; and

**WHEREAS**, the Advertised Budget includes an increase in the Living Wage from \$15.14 to \$15.45 per hour for all county employees; and

**WHEREAS**, Fairfax County Government advertised a total of 177 new positions in FY2021; and

## **C. Public Safety**

**WHEREAS**, the FY2021 Advertised Budget includes \$10.36M for Safety and Security which funds 51 positions; and

**WHEREAS**, these funds support the Police Department Body-Worn Cameras Program, staffing for the Scotts Run Fire Station, South County Police Station staffing, information technology requirements, and electronic control weapons (tasers); and

**WHEREAS**, the Advertised Budget includes an additional \$3.18M for 21 positions which funds expansion of the Diversion First Initiative (including E-911 Call capacity) and Opioid Task Force; and

**WHEREAS**, the FY2021 Advertised Budget includes an average pay increase of 4.31% for Uniformed Public Safety personnel; and

#### **D. Education Funding and School Transfer**

**WHEREAS**, Fairfax County's continued economic growth and its 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 FY2021 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**, in spite of FCPS Advertised Budget investments in FY 2021, FCPS teacher salaries may be set at competitive but not necessarily compelling levels; and

**WHEREAS**, the FCPS Advertised Budget avoids pitting educational interest groups against one another in competing for funds, and this Budget 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 the current Capital Improvement Plan cash flow utilizing bond funding of \$180M per year, school facilities are being 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 proposed budget calls for an increase of \$380,000 for projects that advance the County's Environmental Vision and Operational Energy Strategy; and

**WHEREAS**, the county has proposed an increase of \$320,000 to support the Office of Environmental and Energy Coordination (OEEC) in the Office of the County Executive, which is intended to address current and projected workloads in the

Environment and Development Review Branch, and to address increased departmental and programmatic requirements in the Forest Pest Program; and

**WHEREAS**, the County is expected to collect \$45.9M from the Consumer Utility Tax in FY2020; and

**WHEREAS**, in Funds 30015 and 10030 the County proposed spending for (among other items):

- 1) the Invasive Management Area Program;
- 2) restoration of 12.5 acres of park meadows;
- 3) Phase 2 of the pollinator meadow at the Department of Vehicle Services (DVS) Alban Road maintenance facility, converting 16,000 square feet of highly compacted gravel surface to a pollinator meadow within the lower Accotink Creek watershed;
- 4) the purchase and installation of HVAC controls at parks facilities that are not staffed;
- 5) a natural landscaping initiative at the Fairfax Government Center, which would convert 5,600 square feet of mowed lawn to perennial beds, plant up to 40 canopy trees, and add interpretive signage;
- 6) the Energy Masters Program at low-income housing facilities in Fairfax County, which trains volunteers to perform simple energy efficiency upgrades in apartments and in low-income housing;
- 7) wetland restoration at Green Springs Garden's magnolia bog, which is adjacent to a pedestrian trail and thus offers unique interpretative and educational opportunities for visitors;
- 8) continued partnerships with two non-profit agencies to support tree planting efforts throughout the County; and

**WHEREAS**, the County's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) includes, among other items, the Community-wide Energy and Climate Action Plan (CECAP), the Energy Service Companies (ESCO) contract, the Energy Strategy Program, investments to provide composting at government facilities, Light Emitting Diode (LED) streetlights, and parks lighting and energy retrofits,

### **III. REQUESTED ACTIONS**

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** based on all of the foregoing that the Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations recommends the Board of Supervisors to take the following actions in adopting the FY 2021 Fairfax County Budget:

## **A. Revenues**

- (1) The Board of Supervisors should retain a flexible approach to how it is marking up the Advertised Budget and to how it instructs agencies to spend in FY2021, since the current global pandemic may require many unforeseen expenditures that are evolving on a daily basis; and
- (2) the Board of Supervisors should plan to implement new revenue streams derived from the equalization of city and county taxing authority; and
- (3) the Federation supports the Board of Supervisors in adopting a posture of shared sacrifice in determining which revenue streams will fund our response to the Coronavirus pandemic, allowing those groups which have been most affected economically to lean on the strength of others in a time of need; and
- (4) with such principles of shared sacrifice in mind, the Board of Supervisors should consider a delay to the proposal to implement a 4% Admissions Tax in October 2020, since the entertainment industry will be greatly impacted by closures per Governor Ralph Northam's state of emergency; and
- (5) the Board of Supervisors should consider delaying certain taxes, particularly for small businesses, to give them time to meet costs and recover from the global pandemic and its economic effect; and

## **B. Employee Compensation**

- (6) the Board of Supervisors should carefully balance full funding for employee compensation against the proposal to add 177 new positions to the County payroll, given that it may not be financially feasible to add particular positions at this time and given that the County may have to rethink hiring priorities in a global pandemic; and

## **C. Public Safety**

- (7) the Board of Supervisors should adopt the FY2021 Advertised Budget for Public Safety, including staffing for the Body-Worn Camera Program, an increase in E-911 Call Capacity, information technology requirements, tasers, the Diversion First Initiative, and the Opioid Task Force, and should reassess the staffing for the Scotts Run Fire Station and staffing for the South County Police Station; and

## **D. Education Funding and School Transfer**

- (8) the Board of Supervisors should accept the County Executive's recommendation to substantially fund FCPS' requested transfer; and
- (9) the Board of Supervisors should continue to address FCPS' capital needs,

while maintaining the County's AAA bond rating, by increasing FCPS' bond funding to the greatest extent feasible; and

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

#### **E. Public Works and Environment**

(11) the Federation applauds the County Executive's plan to fund the County's Environmental Vision and Operational Energy Strategy; and

(12) the Federation supports energy education and outreach initiatives, particularly because community engagement is essential for driving these types of projects forward; and

(13) the Board of Supervisors should prioritize the spending of the Consumer Utility Tax revenues on projects that reduce energy consumption in the county; and

(14) the Federation applauds the County's commitment to restoring native plants, birds, and pollinators by removing non-native invasive plants, as such activity is important to support the ecological integrity of natural areas; and

(15) the Federation supports funding phase 2 of the pollinator meadow at the DVS Alban Road maintenance facility; and

(16) the Federation supports installation of new HVAC controls at park facilities that are not staffed in order to reduce energy use; and

(17) the Federation encourages County efforts to use natural landscaping at more County sites; and

(18) the Federation applauds the County for the Energy Masters Program because the program benefits low-income and elderly populations by reducing their energy and water bills while lowering the County's carbon footprint; and

(19) the Federation supports County efforts to restore wetlands and specifically for funding the Green Springs magnolia bog and the development of interpretative and educational opportunities for the public so they can learn about this incredible resource; and

(20) the Federation strongly supports continued efforts to bolster the County's tree canopy; and

(21) the Federation supports the use of CIP funds for various energy programs, including CECAP, ESCO, Energy Strategy Programs, and LED streetlight conversions; and

(22) the Federation supports the Composting Pilot Program at Fairfax County government offices; and

#### **IV. FURTHER REQUESTED ACTIONS**

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Board of Supervisors should take action during the Coronavirus pandemic to shift resources in order to save lives and protect the public. We realize this means the Board may not be able to fund other priorities we support in the Advertised Budget, and that additional revenue-related measures may need to be taken; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Federation advises the Board of Supervisors to prioritize the needs of those who have been most affected by the pandemic, and we understand this will require contributions from those who have been least affected, and/or from those whose economic position was more robust prior to the pandemic; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Federation praises Chairman Jeff McKay and the Board of Supervisors for providing clear, timely information for citizens on the subjects of health resources, food services, unemployment benefits, and small business tax relief during the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic.