

Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations
Membership Meeting of January 16, 2003
DRAFT MINUTES

1. The meeting was held at the Packard Center at 7:30 p.m. (Attendance list is attached.) President Art Wells introduced Jack Knowles and Jan Auerbach, the Federation's representatives on the FCPS Community Task Force on the Budget.
2. Program – FCPS Superintendent Daniel Domenech, accompanied by Paul Regnier, Public Information Coordinator in the FCPS Office of Community Relations addressed the meeting on his proposed FY 2004 FCPS budget. His budget is now before the School Board for consideration, public hearings, and then adoption of the School Board's FY 2004 Advertised budget on February 13. The advertised budget will then be transmitted to the County Executive for inclusion in the County Executive's FY 2004 Advertised Budget Plan to be released on February 24 and transmitted to the Board of Supervisors for its consideration and decision.

Instead of presenting a detailed synopsis of the proposed \$1.6 billion FCPS budget, Superintendent Domenech touched on major points and solicited questions and comments from the audience. Some highlights of the presentation are:

- a. State funding in FY 2003 was cut \$46 million. FCPS felt there would be a \$30 million cut in FY 2004 so cut \$19 million from the proposed budget. However, the Governor has since proposed to maintain funding for K-12 education so FCPS reinstated \$19 million, as reflected in a pamphlet updating the Superintendent's proposed budget (attached). FCPS also reduced the increase in its County transfer request from 9% to 7.9%, [subsequently reduced to 6.3% by the School Board] and added 2 days to teacher contracts for training at a cost of \$8.4M.
- b. The budget increase is due primarily to teacher compensation increases and to projected membership increase of 2,880 students (\$23.6 million). There will be no new programs.
- c. Employee compensation and benefits represent 86.4% of the budget. The budget includes a 2% market scale adjustment (\$25.6 million); step increases (\$32.1 million) and the addition of a new Step 18 to the unified salary scale (\$1.9 million).
- d. Benefits costs will also increase. Health insurance will increase 14% at a cost of \$12.1 million. FCPS will begin this year paying the employee's payment of the FCPS share of the state retirement system (VRS) at a rate of 0.5% per year, costing \$5 million this year. FCPS employees have better retirement benefits than most school divisions since they participate in two retirements systems—state and County.
- e. Lease/purchase of 109 replacement school buses are included at a cost of \$2.2 million.
- f. Head start transportation program – new federal mandate will cost \$4 million if FCPS accepts federal monies. It will be less expensive if the County pays for the entire program. Acquisition of textbooks will cost an additional \$5 million.

A summary of the question-and-answer period follows:

- a. In response to a question about program management efficiency, Dr. Domenech explained that FCPS has eliminated two Assistant Superintendent positions, that 45% of the students are now

minority, that the cost of students with special needs is an additional \$2,600.00 per student, and that the federal “No Child Left Behind” program places an achievement mandate on the schools with little federal money.

- b. Special education v. regular students: People move to Fairfax County because of its Special Education Program. Each school has a Special Education Committee to review the needs of and approve an IEP for each such student. The average cost per special needs student is \$9,600.00, the cost for regular students is \$7,000.00, for ESOL and Special Needs students \$11,000.00, and for Special Ed students \$16,000.00.
- c. Performance appraisal system effectiveness: The merit pay system required an evaluation every five years. This has been revised to require annual evaluations of a majority of teachers with senior teachers being evaluated every three years. There has been a 50% turnover in teachers during the past 3-4 years. Of his 19-member leadership team, only three of those in place when he came to Fairfax County remain.
- d. Community Task Force on the Budget: This group will review and make recommendations on the proposed FY 2004 budget, issuing an interim report in February and a final report in May.
- e. Audit: FCPS is contracting for a management cost-effectiveness audit.
- f. Distance learning: Administrators are partnered with schools elsewhere in Virginia to help them. FCPS provides instructions via technology to schools in other areas in algebra, English, math, Social Studies and other courses. Access to technology prevents some schools in other parts of Virginia from receiving the instruction.
- g. Project Excel: Seven Project Excel schools are performing well above expectations.
- h. Capital projects: The state pays little to help with construction projects. FCPS receives about \$2 million from the state Literary Fund.
- i. County budgetary guideline: In September 2002 the County projected a revenue increase of 7% for FY 2004 but later revised that estimate to 5.3%.

3. Business Meeting.

- a. The minutes of the December 19, 2002 membership meeting were approved as published.
- b. A motion to accept the Treasurer’s report was approved.
- c. Proposed resolution on “Legislative Tax Code Study Committee” – A motion by C. Dane to defer consideration of this resolution until the February 20 meeting was approved.
- d. Proposed resolution on “Affordable Dwelling Units” – The Zoning Ordinance amendment addresses ADUs in mid-rise multifamily housing units. A motion by B. Hanks to approve the resolution passed unanimously.
- e. FCPS Budget Public Hearing – President Art Wells will testify at the public hearing on January 27 on factors that drive budget increases. The Federation position on the FCPS budget will be presented at the April 7-9 BOS budget public hearing and at the School Board’s May 12 public hearing.

4. The business meeting was shortened because of snow. The meeting was adjourned at 9:28 p.m.

Sally B. Ormsby
Recording Secretary *pro tem*