

Federation Resolutions
on the
Fairfax County Fiscal Year 2019 Advertised Budget

Approved by the Federation Membership
April 5, 2018

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations (The Federation) is a 78-year old umbrella community organization representing over 40,000 Fairfax County residences in every magisterial district.

As homeowners, our members are acutely aware that about 65%¹ of the Fairfax County FY2019 Budget is dependent on real property taxes, primarily residential.

The Federation is also aware that changing demographics in the county—combined with failures by the Commonwealth of Virginia and the Federal Government to provide adequate funding of their various mandates and responsibilities—have multiplied costs and shifted the burden of maintaining our quality of life, infrastructure, and Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) to the county, and disproportionately to homeowners. This abdication of responsibility needs to be strongly addressed by all stakeholders in the county. But, while awaiting redress, the Federation cannot permit degradation of our essential services, including our schools, in order to support a diversified economy and a bright economic future.

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

Federation members recognize that our lifestyle comes at a cost, but continue to insist that the following critical needs are addressed by the budget and the Board of Supervisors in FY2019 and successive years:

- (a) continued excellence of FCPS, which serve as a magnet for growth and provide the underpinning of the county's economic health;
- (b) safe and secure communities with a reasonable safety net for residents and families with mental, physical, or substance abuse issues, or are homeless, or are living in poverty;
- (c) adequately maintained and staffed parks, recreational facilities, and libraries;
- (d) responsive, transparent and proactive governance, financial planning and oversight, including maintenance of the county's AAA bond rating;
- (e) improvement of environmental quality, recycling and pest management.

¹ Fairfax County Executive Budget Presentation on the FY 2019 Advertised Budget Plan, February 20, 2018, p. 14.

II. FINDINGS

A. Revenues

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

WHEREAS, under the “Dillon Rule”, counties in Virginia have limited authority to raise and collect revenue compared to rights granted to cities, but the Board of Supervisors has not fully implemented the authorities available to it, including (but not limited to): (1) adopting a zoning ordinance to assess and impose transportation impact fees on by-right commercial or mixed-use development to defray costs of reasonable road improvements, and (2) raising the Business Professional Occupational Licenses (BPOL) tax, while maintaining a rate competitive with surrounding jurisdictions; and

WHEREAS, the maximum advertised tax rate may be lowered but not raised, and a tax rate that is set too low can stifle the ability of citizens to discuss the proper balance of taxes and services, can remove the flexibility of the Board of Supervisors to respond to demonstrated needs, and may lead to precipitous tax raises in future years to address known needs such as FCPS, Metro, and other lines of business.

B. Compensation and Benefits

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

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

WHEREAS, the Board of Supervisors has appointed a committee to examine county employees’ compensation in a holistic manner, taking into account current and potential retirement and benefit plan options.

C. Public Safety

WHEREAS, the FY2019 Advertised Budget includes \$7.5M for Public Safety, which funds 32 positions; and

WHEREAS, these funds support staffing for the South County Police Station; the Diversion First Initiative; a police department reorganization, the county’s Gang Prevention Initiative; the replacement of expiring SAFER grant funds for fire and rescue; and the Volunteer Fire and Rescue Association.

D. Education Funding and School Transfer

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

WHEREAS, the FCPS Advertised FY 2019 Budget focuses on improving FCPS' market position with regard to teacher and staff compensation, which is vital in attracting and retaining the finest educational personnel; and

WHEREAS, even assuming these investments in FY 2019, FCPS teacher salaries will only reach the previous year's market average; 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 800 temporary classrooms, and under current Capital Improvement Plan cash flow utilizing bond funding of \$155M per year, school facilities are replaced or updated every 37 years on average; and

WHEREAS, FCPS Superintendent Scott Brabrand, County Executive Bryan Hill, and their respective staffs have expanded FCPS and County collaboration and cooperation admirably by jointly presenting a unified fiscal forecast presentation.

E. Public Works and Environment

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

WHEREAS, the County is expected to collect \$45.5M from the consumer utility tax in FY2019²; and

WHEREAS, the County has only identified \$300K in projects which pertain to greenhouse gas reduction and/or energy use improvements; and

WHEREAS, FCPS has saved over \$17M on expenditure of \$7.5M since February 2014 under their energy management program; and

² E-mail from Joe Mondoro to Flint Webb at C.Flint.Webb@Leidos.com on 26 February 2018. The e-mail shows that the County received \$45,204,598 from the Consumer Utility Tax in 2017 and estimates that they will receive \$45,533,608 in FY2019 in their Advertised Budget. The e-mail also identifies three projects related to GhG reductions totaling \$260,685 of expenditures. It should be noted the expenditures did not include funding of Kambiz Agazi's office.

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

WHEREAS the FY 2019 Advertised Budget includes funds for eradication of the native Fall Cankerworm and is not recommended by the County Urban Forestry Management Division and is opposed by many residents; and

WHEREAS, the Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA) has removed more than 4,000 trees over the past three years from its properties; and has oversight for 427 parks and over 20,000 acres and is the largest land owner of natural areas in Fairfax County³, and a goal of the Fairfax County Tree Action Plan is to increase the County's tree cover to 45% by the year 2037; and

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

WHEREAS, Fairfax County has 850 miles of perennial streams with almost 70% qualifying as fair to poor quality; and litter is threatening water quality which can be attributed to population growth and inefficient public outreach regarding litter and recycling⁴; and whereas plastic bottles and jugs are the only types of plastics required to be recycled in Fairfax County but are one of the largest contributors of litter found by residents in local streams during community clean-ups⁵; and

WHEREAS, one million-plus residents in Fairfax County account for an estimated annual use of 129,000,000 water bottles and an estimated 23-37% of those are recycled⁶.

F. Transportation

WHEREAS, a robust and affordable transportation system provides economic, health, and social benefits for county residents, businesses and visitors; and

³ Article of interest from the Fairfax County Park Authority, "Trees, Trees Everywhere, But None to Share" Scott Diffenderfer, <https://ourstoriesandperspectives.com/2018/03/14/the-wind-in-the-willows-and-oaks-and-pines-and/>.

⁴ <http://fergusonfoundation.org/trash-free-potomac-watershed-initiative/information-about-littering/>

⁵ <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/news2/bottles-beer-and-dirty-diapers-litter-leaves-little-to-like/>

⁶ Clean Fairfax Council: *Science Advances (journal)*, 2014 Eriksen M, Lebreton LCM, Carson HS, Thiel M, Moore CJ, Borerro JC, et al. (2014) *Plastic Pollution in the World's Oceans: More than 5 Trillion Plastic Pieces Weighing over 250,000 Tons Afloat at Sea. The New Plastics Economy: Rethinking the future of plastics*, World Economic Forum, January 2016 *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (journal)*, May 2017, www.terracycle.com, EPA, International Bottled Water Association, fairfaxcounty.gov—Demographic Report

WHEREAS, a financially feasible transportation plan with innovative, environmentally sensitive “smart growth” tools including mixed-use and transit-oriented development, walkable and bikeable corridors, and regional connectivity makes the county attractive to new residents and employers; and

WHEREAS, overhead utilities decreases the aesthetic and functional value of our 'Complete Streets network' by contributing to the degradation of the community's view shed, property values, and taking space from non-vehicular amenities; and

WHEREAS, strategic long-range plans that include a diversity of transportation improvement projects as small as sidewalk improvements and as large as rail expansions serve to enhance the natural environment, preserve the existing urban canopy, and protect high air and water quality.

III. REQUESTED ACTIONS

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED based on all of the foregoing that the Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations urges the Board of Supervisors to take the following actions in adopting the FY 2019 Fairfax County Budget:

A. Revenues

(1) the Board of Supervisors should exercise all available authority to generate additional diversified revenue, including but not limited to: (a) ensuring the BPOL tax is competitive with surrounding jurisdictions, and (b) taking all necessary steps to collect impact fees and permitting fees; and

(2) the Board of Supervisors should pursue efforts to achieve city-county parity in taxing and other authorities, and should increase efforts, in concert with the FCPS School Board, to obtain an equitable share of funding from the Commonwealth and Federal government; and

B. Compensation and Benefits

(3) the Board of Supervisors should accept suggested employee compensation increases with the proviso that the Board of Supervisors publicly release the findings of its study on employee compensation and engage in a robust public discussion on the issue, with the purpose of ensuring our ability to retain and recruit a strong work force while maintaining financial sustainability; and

C. Public Safety

(4) the Board of Supervisors should adopt the increased Public Safety staffing and funding projections in the county's FY 2019 Advertised Budget; and

(5) the Board of Supervisors should restore second-year funds for the "Diversion First" program which promises to save both money and human life; and

D. Education Funding and School Transfer

(6) the Board of Supervisors should accept the County Executive's recommendation to fully fund FCPS' requested transfer, to the extent possible given the constraints of other spending priorities; and

(7) the Board of Supervisors should begin to address FCPS' capital needs, while maintaining the county's AAA bond rating, by increasing FCPS' bond funding by \$25M per year as recommended by the County Executive; and

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

E. Public Works and Environment

(9) the Board of Supervisors should prioritize the spending of the Consumer Utility Tax revenues on projects that reduce energy consumption in the county, including:

- (a) funding a Sustainability Office to assure goals are met and reports on energy use are issued;
- (b) funding energy projects with a less than 5-year payback period;
- (c) funding FCPS' energy management program;
- (d) the establishment of a revolving fund program for cost-effective energy projects for homeowners;
- (e) the establishment of a revolving fund program for cost-effective energy projects for small businesses; and

(10) the Board of Supervisors should not expend funds for Fall Cankerworm eradication but should use the budgetary savings for the control of non-native invasive forest pests and plants to improve the health of our forests and woodlands; and

(11) the Fairfax County Park Authority Board should direct FCPA staff to establish a robust Tree Replacement program for all FCPA properties; this program should include ecological restoration projects that include tree plantings, and

(12) Fairfax County should lead by example by

- (a) providing reusable water refilling stations that encourage the reduction of single bottle use, and
- (b) eliminating use and distribution of single use water bottles at all Fairfax County sponsored events; and

(13) the Board of Supervisors should review the distribution of trash and recycle bins throughout the county; and

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

F. Transportation

(15) the Board of Supervisors should prioritize the expansion of regional transit capacity along key corridors and activity centers, including:

- (a) Bus: Bus Rapid Transit and Fairfax Connector;
- (b) Rail: Virginia Railway Express and Metrorail;
- (c) Roadway: Route 1/Richmond Highway, Route 7, Route 28, Route 29, Route 50, and Route 237;
- (d) Emerging Activity Centers: Chantilly/Centreville, Reston, Tysons, and Dulles, and

(16) the Board of Supervisors should prioritize opportunities to expand the Silver and Orange lines to locations that maximize regional connection, by focusing on increasing transit capacity of the Rosslyn tunnel; and

(17) the Board of Supervisors should reduce the auto-centric environment in suburban and rural communities by prioritizing transportation improvement projects such as bus service, sidewalks, bike lanes, transportation demand management, signals, and trails; and

(18) the Board of Supervisors should consider potential negative impacts to the natural environment and air and water quality when approving transportation improvement projects, and

(19) the Board of Supervisors should pursue opportunities to bury utilities underground throughout the county, including along the Richmond Highway EMBARK project area.

G. FY 2020 Advertised Budget

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

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of Supervisors and the County Executive should, for FY 2020, continue to improve communication about fiscal priorities and adopt a maximum advertised tax rate which encourages citizen input on the proper balance of taxes and services and limit the Board of Supervisors' flexibility.