

October 26, 2020

To: Monique O'Grady and the APS School Board

From: Melanie Bowen and the APS Budget Advisory Council

Dear Chair O'Grady,

Thank you for the opportunity to review the School Board's FY 2022 Budget Direction to provide input from the Budget Advisory Council. We value the opportunity to work with the School Board and recognize that the Board and the APS leadership team are operating in a set of circumstances without precedent in recent times. We thank you for your leadership and understand the importance of the flexibility you have intentionally built into this year's guidance for the Superintendent.

We were pleased to see that the Board directs the Superintendent to consider the recommendations from the BAC's 2019-20 End of Year Report, and want to especially emphasize the benefit of providing as much transparency as possible, as early as possible, about larger decisions in order to give the community time for adequate discussion and input. It will also be important to provide the community with clear and consistent information about all proposed budget cuts. Given the projected budget gap, we know we will have to make changes to get through this difficult time. Giving the community time to understand and provide input around those changes will make it easier for the community to accept them and ultimately easier for the APS team to implement them.

In addition to our recommendations in our 2019-20 Year End Report, we had the following additional suggestions on the Budget Direction for your consideration before the document is finalized.

- Approach the FY 2022 budget using the zero-based budgeting approach, rather than simply as a budget reduction exercise, to ensure that all programs and expenses are furthering APS mission and goals today.
- Evaluate whether (and how) the reduction in overall student population could lead to consolidation of any classes and a corresponding reduction in staff (or at least help to mitigate the need for staff increases with the opening of new school programs), especially if such consolidation could help to fund some type of salary increase for the rest of the staff.
- Reduce the size of the transportation budget by maximizing the sizes of the walk zones around the schools, and work to zone the entirety of those walk zones to the proximate schools during the current and ongoing school boundary process.
- Even with the needs based budget, ensure the path to a balanced budget is clear and realistic, given the lack of reserve funds and economic challenges facing the County (ideally without recreating the 100+ cuts scenario of the 2018-19 budget). One approach to help with this is to prioritize needs along a spectrum during the budgeting process as outlined in the BAC Year End Report.
- Explore options for a slower phase in of the DOJ settlement requirements to provide greater flexibility to APS leadership to address current budget challenges.

Thank you again for the opportunity to share our input. We look forward to continuing to share our thoughts and recommendations regarding the FY 2021 and the FY2022 budgets as the year progresses.

Sincerely,

Melanie Bowen

Chair, Budget Advisory Council

Members of the Council: Chuck Rush (Vice Chair), Bob Ramsey (Chair Emeritus), Lisa Blackwell, Nellie Carr, Katherine Christiansen, Dedra Curteman, Julie Davis, Cristina Diaz-Torres, Juan Gordon Sr., Sean Miller, Valerie Smith, Erik Sullivan, Jennifer Wagener