

## 2021-22 BUDGET ADVISORY COUNCIL

Wednesday, March 9, 2022

Virtual via Microsoft Teams

7:00 PM - 9:00 PM

The meeting started at 7:03pm.

1. Twelve members were present: Chuck Rush (Chair), Erik Sullivan (Vice-Chair) Melanie Bowen (Past-Chair), Julie Davis, Nellie Carr, Michael Lyons, Katherine Christensen, Bridget Obikoya, Sal Tajuddin, Andy Greenwood, Jennifer Wheelock, and Jennifer Wagener.
  - APS Assistant Superintendent Leslie Peterson, APS Board Chair Cristina Diaz-Torres
2. Public comment
  - Reg Goeke (Arlington Parents for Education)
    - Referenced letter sent to School Board
    - APE applauds increase in salaries for teachers
      - Believes this not enough due to changes other districts are making
    - Applauds decreasing class sizes
      - Believes this needs to go further because WABE benchmarks show Arlington has some of the largest classroom sizes (going back a few years)
    - Missing investment in learning loss recovery
      - Many neighboring districts are investing in tutoring and after school programs
        - Fairfax county allocating 1.6% of total budget into tutoring programs
    - Arlington highest in region in cost per student – APE believes if we aren't the highest in compensation and lowest in class size, we must be doing something incorrect
      - APS has more non-student facing positions – can these be shifted to student facing?
      - Use of more reserves should be considered
      - Is there additional support from the County?
  - Josh Folb (AEA)
    - Josh has thoroughly gone through the budget and is happy to spend time with any BAC member who has questions or wants to discuss further
    - Pleased to see investment in compensation but concerned the shelf life on the plan is short given the actions other jurisdictions are taking
    - Recommends two proposals for the budget going forward:
      - Automatically fund future Compensation Reserves with the portion of close-out funds that were from the lapse in compensation/turnover from prior year
      - Include annual cost of living adjustment in budget presentation – can be tied to social security or CPI or other agreed upon benchmark
3. The February minutes were approved.
4. School Board Update – Cristina Diaz-Torres

- Very different environment from previous years (on BAC and before)
- Glad to not be looking at tiers of budget cuts
- Some missing areas of investment
- Board knows compensation is going to require us to continuously look at it every year, not just making changes this year
- Advice to BAC members is to: 1) take time to reach the entire book; but minimally the beginning section and 2) apply an equity lens to make sure things aren't missing

#### 5. BAC Liaison Comments

- Special Education Advisory Committee (Jennifer Wheelock)
  - Ongoing challenges certain student groups are having and limited staffing to handle it this year (prior to staffing increases proposed for next year)
- Teaching & Learning Committee (Michael Lyons)
  - Strong support for reduction in class sizes, implementation of teams model in Middle Schools and math/reading coaches

#### 6. Round Robin Discussion – Member sharing Individual Views on Budget

- Common themes:
  - Support investments in compensation, lower class size, special education, English learning
  - Additional investments in student recovery (learning loss, social/emotional, trauma), COVID contingencies (masks, testing), teaching staff & students about effective use of technology
  - Sustainability – is the budget something that can be maintained over time?
    - Future years have deficits that look to be increasing
    - Work to phase in expenses has largely been done and many requests not funded at all
    - Was work still done to look for efficiencies across the budget - transportation, option schools?
    - Will future funding from the County stay at this year's level?
  - Surging cost per student – even recognizing that Arlington is an expensive area
  - Compensation - big increases are needed but concerns about it not being enough
  - Relationship between one-time Revenue and one-time Expenses
  - Reserves
    - How much is the “right” amount to use in a single year and maintain for the future?
  - Debt service – rising debt and rising interest rates
  - Equity disparities – ensure investments are being made in the areas most needed
    - The cost per staff (which represents teacher experience) seems to be lowest at our schools that have lower student achievement and/or the highest number of non-white students
    - Adding equity office positions at some schools that already have the highest student achievement
    - Adjustments to planning factors to account for achievement/demographics
  - Key measurements/benchmarks to gauge performance and operational efficiency

- Such as investment in HR systems that should yield efficiencies in the future

7. Budget Question Process - Leslie Peterson

- Questions collected from School Board members
- Questions researched and answered by Departments
- Answered questions posted each Friday after reviewed by Superintendent
- Large number of questions already so BAC questions will be put to the bottom of the list

8. Meeting Preview – Chuck Rush

- Meeting next Wednesday
  - Focus on our themes around the budget and the key points we want to raise in our work session
  - Encourage everyone to listen to the work session on Compensation prior to the next meeting
- April 5<sup>th</sup> 1-hour work session with the School Board
  - This is a departure from the past when our Chair typically just provided a short presentation

The meeting was adjourned at 8:59pm.