

MVCCA Resolution Regarding the Fairfax County Advertised FY2024 Budget and the Included School Transfer (MVCCA Joint resolution 2023-01)

WHEREAS on February 21, 2023, the Fairfax County FY2024 Advertised Budget (FY24 County Budget) was released including recommendations for funding County functions and Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) as well as revenue projections and suggested real property tax rates; and

WHEREAS on February 23, 2023, the Fairfax County School Board approved its FY2024 Advertised Budget (FY24 School Budget) totaling about \$3.5B, a net increase of \$249.6M (7.6%) over FY2023 which requires for full funding an increase of \$159.6M (7%) in funding from Fairfax County (School Transfer); and

WHEREAS salaries of school staff comprise 85% of the overall FY24 School Budget so that the bulk of the School Transfer increase relates to salary enhancements totaling 6.2% for most staff (3%MSA plus average step of 2.2% plus retention bonus of 1%) seen as critical to attracting and retaining excellent staff while preventing further decline in market position; and

WHEREAS the FY24 School Budget also includes funds for expanded Pre-K which has long been a critical need to assure school readiness, funds to adopt science-based reading programs relying heavily on phonics instruction, funds to begin athletic programs in middle schools, and funds to improve security through ongoing background checks and other means; and

WHEREAS the FY24 County Budget proposes fully funding the School Transfer except for the retention bonus, which if deleted, would reduce most teacher salary increases to 5.2%, well below inflation and surrounding competitors' salary scales; and

WHEREAS the County has established a Stormwater Tax, but that revenue is not sufficient to address historical and evolving needs for use of the Stormwater Tax, including serious flooding risks from sea level rise, aging infrastructure, infill development, and other problems that need funding from the Stormwater Tax; and

WHEREAS the FY2024 Budget proposes funding for the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District which has been adjusted only for inflation, impeding its ability to assist homeowners to address many issues, including flood mitigation; and

WHEREAS the FY24 Budget does not include funding to attract and maintain increased staffing for trash collection and operation of the wastewater treatment plant, which are operating at unsustainable staff shortages; and

WHEREAS climate related activities are a priority for the county but yet the budget for this work has not been incorporated into the main budget as a recurring line item along with other important recognized County needs; and

WHEREAS with increased urbanization and climate change issues, maintenance of Park infrastructure, protection of trees and plants, removal of invasive plants, safety and policing issues have become of even more critical importance to the health, welfare and future of citizens but the FY24 Budget underfunds Park Authority needs by a significant amount; and

WHEREAS the FY2024 County Budget assumes no change in real property tax rate, which, at the funding levels proposed would result in a \$90M discretionary fund which the Board of Supervisors could use to reduce the tax rate alleviating taxpayer burdens and/or enhance funding for critical County services,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Mount Vernon Council of Citizens Associations (MVCCA) recommends that the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors should adopt the FY24 County Budget as its Adopted FY2024 Budget, including the School Transfer, with the following recommendations:

- (1) If the Board of Supervisors should decide to reduce the property tax rate to provide citizen tax relief, the amount of that revenue reduction should come from the \$90M discretionary fund (Discretionary Fund); and
- (2) The Board of Supervisors, to the extent practicable, should provide additional funding from the Discretionary fund to the Park Authority particularly but not limited to: (a) \$1,072,202 to establish a Park Ranger program as an addition/alternative to police response; (b) \$164,700 to replace gas-powered equipment with cleaner electric equipment; (c) \$552,642 for bamboo removal on parkland, (d) complete the forestry request with an additional \$682,463 and should further consider additional funds for infrastructure, tree and plant management; and
- (3) Because the Board of Supervisors did not advertise an increase to the Stormwater Tax for 2024, none can be provided but an increase will be urgently needed in 2025 to meet current needs as well as to provide additional funding to fund flood mitigation; and
- (4) The Board of Supervisors should, from the Discretionary Fund or otherwise, provide funds to attract and maintain adequate staffing of trash collection and wastewater treatment activities; and
- (5) The Board of Supervisors should consider restoring the FCPS teacher retention bonus from the Discretionary Fund to avoid further erosion of market position,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the MVCCA recommends incorporating climate related funding into the base budget as with other recurring needs of the County; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the MVCCA respectfully urges the Board of Supervisors to reduce reliance on residential property tax revenue by seeking alternative revenue streams, by utilizing all other taxing authority to the maximum legal extent, and by continuing to promote fairer distribution and return of Commonwealth funds to the jurisdictions, including Fairfax County, generating Commonwealth revenue without fair benefit.

Approved by the MVCCA General Council and Joint Committees on March 22, 2023