

MVCCA FY 2025 County Advertised Budget Resolution (Joint 2024-01)

WHEREAS the Fairfax County Executive's FY2025 Advertised Budget Plan, released on February 20, 2024, (County Budget) is based on a 4 penny increase in the FY2025 residential property tax, the first rate increase in six years, which would cost the average taxpayer about \$524, or about \$44 per month; and

WHEREAS although the County Executive suggested the 4-penny increase would not adequately fund County obligations the Board of Supervisors (BOS) adopted the 4 penny increase as the maximum rate for FY25 thus guaranteeing inadequate support for County obligations and curtailing the ability of citizens to make meaningful comments; and

WHEREAS the County Budget provided a funding increase (School Transfer) for Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) of \$165M compared to the \$254M requested by the Fairfax County School Board (School Budget) resulting in a discrepancy of about \$89M (School Shortfall); and

WHEREAS FCPS is recognized by the BOS as a critical County asset and the single most important contributor to the health of the County, and that a highly qualified and motivated school staff is the most critical asset of FCPS; and

WHEREAS the BOS has recognized the need for competitive teacher compensation to attract and maintain a highly qualified staff, to stem the loss of new and experienced staff to surrounding jurisdictions and to thereby protect FCPS' value as a critical County asset; and

WHEREAS the School Budget proposed to meet competitive pressures by providing a 6% compensation increase for all employees (93% of which are school-based professional staff) totaling about \$171M, and while the Commonwealth has proposed additional support for schools, including teacher salary raises, the details are not known; and

WHEREAS the School Budget is also driven by unavoidable costs such as: increases in Virginia Retirement System (VRS) required payments and health insurance rate changes (\$24M); inflationary pressures on fuel and supplies (\$12M); increasing enrollment particularly of children in need of additional services such as special education, economically disadvantaged and English learners (\$47M), and the Commonwealth's required match to the Commonwealth's previous salary adjustment (\$55M) and

WHEREAS the School Budget includes no new initiatives, and only small increases for important activities including fine arts, athletic trainers, preschool, academic interventions, multiyear environment initiatives, and continued roll out of middle school sports, collectively about \$7M; and

WHEREAS the proposed School Transfer is barely sufficient to fund even the unavoidable expenses (\$138M) and would permit at best a 2% raise in staff compensation, which is insufficient to meet inflationary pressures, protect market position and reflect the value of FCPS' professional teaching staff; and

WHEREAS while FCPS is recognized state and country-wide for its excellence, FCPS per pupil spending remains only in the mid-range of local jurisdictions and non-school central office) expenditures are lowest in the area; and

WHEREAS due in part to the longstanding egregious failure of the Commonwealth to provide adequate funding for schools, admitted in the Commonwealth's most recent report of the Joint Legislative Review and Audit Committee (JLARC), homeowners are forced to bear the burden of financing school and County services to preserve our quality of life, our continued economic growth and, significantly, the continued value of our homes; and

WHEREAS, as more particularly set forth in the "MVCCA Resolution on Environmental Budget Issues" (attached hereto and incorporated herein) the County Budget also does not provide adequate funding for stormwater management as businesses, homeowners, and environmental quality continues to suffer adverse effects, for continuation of the Community-wide Energy and Climate Action Plan (CECAP), for support of leaf and solid waste collection and also proposes a reorganization of animal services which will have a detrimental effect on wildlife management; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Mount Vernon Council of Citizens Associations (MVCCA), urges the BOS to adopt the maximum advertised rate as the tax rate for FY25 and respectfully suggests, as it has in the past, that in future the maximum tax rate should be set as the rate which if adopted would fully fund the County Budget and School Budget so that citizens may have a meaningful opportunity to provide comments and advice to the BOS on the proper balance of tax burden and services; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, to protect our institutions and encourage future growth, MVCCA urges the BOS, as its first priority, to provide FCPS with funds sufficient to maintain its standards of excellence, to meet the needs of all children, and to maintain market rate salary position, thereby assuring future economic health and preserving home values; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that MVCCA respectfully suggests that the BOS should make stormwater management a higher priority by raising the stormwater tax to better address issues in a timely manner; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the MVCCA respectfully suggests that County leaf collection via vacuum trucks be eliminated or a means whereby those households receiving that collection be charged an appropriate rate to fully cover program costs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that MVCCA does not support the proposed animal services consolidation because the "savings" do not outweigh the possible harm to a respected program; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that additional CECAP funding and expediting of projects beyond the pilot program are required to meet CEPAC goals, and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the BOS continue to actively search out alternative revenue sources, including a meals tax, and work with Commonwealth elected representatives, and other jurisdictions to establish a better funding stream for schools (pursuant to the JLARC report) and for County needs, and a fairer return on taxes paid to the Commonwealth by County residents.

Adopted by the MVCCA at the General Council meeting on March 27, 2024

Attachment: MVCCA ER committee resolution was also adopted March 27, 2024.

MVCCA Environmental and Recreation FY 2025 Budget Resolution

Whereas, the County Executive publishes a recommended budget for the consideration of the county Board of Supervisors, which the Board of Supervisors seeks comment before adopting a budget;

Whereas, many climate and energy projects that are needed to meet the county's Community-wide Energy and Climate Action Plan (CECAP), which was published in 2021, are only in a pilot phase;

Whereas, the county's stormwater tax rate has not been increased in years despite increasing needs for maintenance of infrastructure, stream stabilization, and flood risk reduction;

Whereas, despite the difficult budget year, the county provided an increase in funding for parks;

Whereas, the county's leaf collection program¹ funding rate is inadequate to fund the program;

Whereas, the county's leaf collection program generates 726 metric tons of carbon dioxide by burning the ultra-low sulfur diesel to fuel the equipment;

Whereas, the solid waste collection contractors/county employees, which support about 90 percent of the county, have leaf collection included in their trash collection fees;

Whereas, the proposed animal services consolidation will separate the wildlife management from the Animal Protection Police Officers (APPO), which together have been widely recognized as providing outstanding service for wildlife; and

Whereas, details of this reorganization are unclear, in part because the latest change was announced following the publication of the County Executive's recommended budget;

Therefore, be it resolved: the MVCCA recommends that the pilot work on CECAP projects be expedited and funded as the delays in undertaking this work diminished the chances that we will be able to meet CECAP goals;

Be it further resolved: that the county's vacuum truck leaf collection program be eliminated as it is an unnecessary convenience for approximately 5% of the county residents with a high carbon footprint; or that the fee be raised for those utilizing this service to cover the full cost;

Be it further resolved: that the MVCCA does not support the proposed animal services consolidation as it jeopardizes wildlife services;

Be it further resolved: that the county's rates for solid waste and recycling be set to fully cover the cost of these programs; and

Be it finally resolved that the stormwater tax clearly identify the needs and be increased by a quarter penny as needed to support the growing needs of the county.

Approved by MVCCA March 27, 2024