

**EDUC-2009-03:**

**Resolution re Fairfax County FY2010 Advertised Budget Plan**

**1. WHEREAS** the Fairfax County School Board (School Board) has approved a School Board's Advertised Budget for Fiscal Year 2010 ( FY2010 School Budget ) which requires a 3.5% increase in fund transfer from Fairfax County (Requested Transfer); and

**2. WHEREAS** the Fairfax County FY 2010 Advertised Budget Plan (County Advertised Budget), presented to the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors (BOS) on February 23, 2009, proposes no fund transfer increase (Proposed Flat Transfer) which would under fund the FY2010 School Budget by approximately \$60 million (Schools Shortfall); and

**3. WHEREAS** Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) for the second year in a row, and on top of those reductions already taken in FY2008 and 2009, has taken extraordinary measures to reduce its operational costs and Requested Transfer in light of County revenue projections and guidelines including, but not limited to:

- (1) Eliminating all teacher and staff step increases and market scale adjustments (MSA);
- (2) Cutting central administration by an additional 10% on top of 5% prior midyear reductions, for a total of 15% in cuts, reducing budget share to less than 1%, lowest in the region;
- (3) Cutting school accounts by 5%;
- (4) Increasing class size;
- (5) Eliminating summer school and reducing funding for programs aimed at diverse populations, including Young Scholars, Project Excel and Focus Schools;

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(6) Reducing staffing of psychologists, counselors and social workers;

(7) Holding all baseline budgets to FY2007 levels, except for mandatory change; and

**4. WHEREAS** the FY2010 School Budget total is \$10 million less than the FY2009 Approved School Budget, even though it must provide for the opening of two new schools and an expected enrollment increase of at least 5000 students (on top of the unexpected and unbudgeted increases of 1400 students in FY2008 and 3000 in FY2009); and

**5. WHEREAS** the FY2010 School Budget actually reduces by about \$1000 the County's share of per capita student cost compared to FY2009 and is less than per capita cost in FY2008, which was already only in the mid-range of local jurisdictions according to the Washington Area Boards of Education FY2008 Report (WABE Report) and continues to reduce both the ratio of non-school to school-based personnel, and the already low percentage of administrative costs (less than 1%) as compared locally in the WABE Report and nationally in other publications; and

**6. WHEREAS** the Requested Transfer seeks only to compensate for the unavoidable costs of population growth (2.5% of the increase) and some of the reduction in funding expected from sources such as the Commonwealth of Virginia (1%); and

**7. WHEREAS** in recognition of the looming budget crisis, the County and FCPS in the fall of 2008 conducted a number of County-wide citizen dialogues (Dialogues) to provide input to FCPS and the BOS as to the expectations of citizens as to the budget priorities and the appropriate balance of services to property tax burden; and

**8. WHEREAS** the Dialogues as reported on school and county websites clearly indicated that maintaining the service levels and quality of schools was a top priority and that citizens recognized that tax rates and revenue would need to rise to preserve schools and other services; and

**9. WHEREAS** if school service levels were to be maintained at the FY2009 per capita level a transfer increase in excess of \$170,000,000 would be needed; and

**10. WHEREAS** with the Requested Transfer increase of \$60,000,000, FCPS will not be able to maintain service levels and provide students with the same quality of education as in the past, but will be able to assure an adequate educational experience in the short term and to recover within a few years; and

**11. WHEREAS** the Proposed Flat Transfer is functionally a substantial reduction in service level funding due to population growth, the cumulative effect of cuts already made in FY2008 and 2009, and loss of outside revenue, and would require actions which

would diminish the services and value of FCPS to the community for decades to come and limit the educational opportunities available to current and future students such as:

(1) Further class size increases which will likely cause not only very large classes at all levels but more "split grade" classes and the cancellation (or section reductions with limited availability) of specialized and high level middle and high school classes avoid accreditation issues based on excess class size;

(2) Cancellation/reduction of non-SOL curricula including general electives, band, music, art, high level or specialized courses, career-training and after school activities such as theatre, sports and clubs;

(3) Re- imposition of fees for IB and AP classes and new fees for extracurricular participation which will disproportionately affect and limit opportunity both for individual students and for all students in schools with highly diverse populations;

(4) Elimination/reduction of necessary maintenance and improvements of technology needed to prepare students to compete in the world; and

(5) Permanent rollback of efforts to address achievement gap, including full day kindergarten, instructional coaches and improved teacher training;

(6) Permanent erosion of efforts to attract and retain highly qualified individuals to the profession of teaching generally and to FCPS specifically; and

**12. WHEREAS** in addition to the cost of overall membership growth and loss of outside funding, the FY2010 School Budget must also provide for those year to year cost increases which are largely outside the control of FCPS including (1) the continued growth in the percentage of students requiring additional staffing and/or services mandated by state and federal programs (especially non-English speaking, Special Education and/or economically disadvantaged) where the cost to educate averages at least \$3000 to \$7000 more per capita than other students, (2) increased Virginia Retirement System and other contributions as mandated by the Commonwealth and changes in accounting practices, (3) increased general insurance and health insurance costs as are being experienced nation-wide by both public and private employers; and

**13. WHEREAS** in addition to failing to provide funds to maintain school services at even the levels in the Requested Transfer, let alone the levels supported by citizens in the Dialogues, the County Advertised Budget also effectively shifts a number of County functions to the schools, thus further impacting the ability of schools to maintain services including, for example, reducing clinic room aides, school resource and education officers, adolescent after school programs, Head Start classrooms and day care teachers; and

**14. WHEREAS** the FY2010 School Budget and the taxpayers of Fairfax County continue to be affected by under-funded mandates of the federal government [among them the No Child Left Behind

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Act (NCLBA), and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)] wherein the cost of implementation and compliance far exceeds the assistance provided, particularly in view of steadily rising performance expectations; and

**15. WHEREAS** the FY2010 School Budget and the taxpayers of Fairfax County continue to be affected by the failure of the Commonwealth of Virginia to provide and fairly distribute adequate funding of its own Standards of Quality (SOQ) mandates and to fairly distribute sales tax revenue intended to be dedicated to education on a per student basis, with the result that FCPS will receive state funding for only about 18% of its needs (compared with a 45% statewide average) leaving County taxpayers to provide about 76% of school funding (compared with a local funding average of about 49% statewide); and

**16. WHEREAS** FCPS may receive some relief from the United States through improved funding of its mandates under NCLB and IDEA and/or increased Title I funding, as well as through the Stimulus program, given that children's educational futures are at stake, it would not be prudent at this time to assume receipt of such funds for budgetary purposes, and some of such increased funding will be funneled through the Commonwealth and thus potentially subject to the continued inequities of Commonwealth funding formulae as well as possible restrictions on use; and

**17. WHEREAS** caution should also be taken so that any one-time increase in federal or state funding is not applied in such a way as to create an on-going expectation or obligation of the operating budget of either FCPS or the County; and

**18. WHEREAS** public education (along with public safety) is the priority core mission of local government, the BOS has recognized that obligation in its historically strong support of the schools and citizens have reiterated that primary core mission status in the strong support for schools voiced in the Dialogues; and

**19. WHEREAS** the BOS and Fairfax citizens in the Dialogues have also recognized that the nationally-known quality of FCPS is a critical asset of taxpayers and a major contributor to the County's economic health and quality of life and to expectations for continued progress in the future including job creation and any recovery from the current real property value downturn; and

**20. WHEREAS** schools in the area represented by the MVCCA are among those most at risk, most heavily affected by the growth in population of students who require additional services and staffing consideration, most likely to suffer from school service reductions and whose progress toward fulfilling community expectations in addressing achievement gap and meeting mandated benchmarks is most fragile;

**A. NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Mount Vernon Council of Citizens Associations, in consideration of all of the

above, and recognizing that although FCPS has made extraordinary efforts to reduce operating costs to arrive at the 3.5% Transfer Request severe budgetary issues may make that amount unavailable in view of all County needs, urges the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors in adopting a Budget for FY 2010 to:

(1) Provide a transfer to Fairfax County Public Schools which is no less than \$42million over the transfer suggested in the County's Advertised Budget, in order to at a minimum compensate for the cost of unavoidable growth, subject to subsequent modification, if any, by the FCPS Superintendent of Schools or the Fairfax County School Board in light of on-going budget development; and

(2) Provide such transfer without offset against operating needs of any potential but unrealized funding increase from federal or state sources, subject to ongoing examination of the timing, certainty, restricted uses and continuation of such increase as a funding stream; and

(3) Provide such transfer without offset against operating needs of any potential onetime so-called stimulus since such payments (on both school and County side) should be used for one-time or durable needs such as deferred major maintenance or equipment purchases, such as computers; and

(4) Restore funding to County agencies of those items which would likely otherwise become a charge against the school budget but are equally consistent with County public obligations including school resource and education officers, adolescent after school programs, day care and Head Start programs, and public health clinic aides; and

**B. BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Mount Vernon Council of Citizens Associations urges that the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, consistent with the expressed will of citizens in the budget dialogue process and with the stewardship obligations of the Board of Supervisors to maintain current quality of life, protect important County assets and preserve hope for the future, establish a tax rate for FY2010 which is adequate to accomplish these stewardship responsibilities, up to the maximum allowed by law, and to actively seek out and employ other revenue enhancement opportunities available by law.