



The Mount Vernon Council of Citizens Associations, Inc.

P.O. Box 203, Mount Vernon, VA 22121-9998

<http://www.mvcca.org>

March 24, 2022

Board of Supervisors, Fairfax County

County Executive, Fairfax County

Chairman of the School Board, Fairfax County

Ref: FY 2023 Advertised Budget Fairfax County – MVCCA Resolution and Comments

The Mount Vernon Council appreciated the opportunity to hear from and interact with the County's CFO, Executive and MV District and school boards representatives on March 23, 2022, regarding the Advertised County FY2023 Budget.

Our resolution regarding this Advertised budget is attached. Our 14,000 plus members appreciate you taking the time to consider our comments. We will be testifying at the public hearings as well.

Regards,

Katherine Ward

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MVCCA Cochair

Attached: MVCCA Joint (EDU, PS, Stormwater) 2022-01 RESOLUTION REGARDING THE FY2023 FAIRFAX COUNTY ADVERTISED BUDGET

MVCCA Joint (EDU, PS, Stormwater) 2022-01RESOLUTION REGARDING THE FY2023
FAIRFAX COUNTY ADVERTISED BUDGET

WHEREAS the Fairfax County Executive presented the FY2023 Advertised Budget on February 22, 2022, (County Budget) and the Fairfax County School Board adopted the Superintendent's Proposed FY2023 Budget as its FY2023 Advertised Budget on February 24, 2022 (School Budget); and

WHEREAS the Mount Vernon Council of Citizens Associations (MVCCA) has reviewed the County Budget and offers comments on proposed funding for schools (School Transfer), Public Safety, and stormwater management within the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services (DPWES) and revenue considerations; and

WHEREAS the County Budget fully funds the School Budget including a School Transfer increase of \$117M over FY2022 funding levels and provides for increases in bond funding by \$25M in FY2023 and an additional \$25M in FY2025 to help address longstanding school capital needs; and

WHEREAS 86% of the School Budget is spent on direct instructional needs, primarily teacher and school staff compensation, and includes salary enhancements for employees, particularly teachers, which are essential to addressing critical staffing needs, reducing market disparities, and recognizing that compensation was stagnant for several years during an extremely challenging—and continuing-- pandemic period; and

WHEREAS under the School Budget per pupil spending has moved from the middle to near the bottom in rank of surrounding jurisdictions, as determined by the Washington Area Boards of Education Guide (WABE guide); and

WHEREAS during the emergency impact of the pandemic, schools as part of a County effort to meet citizen needs in the most effective manner, shouldered some expenses and programs which were not historically part of its mission including massive meal provision, contact tracing and health testing and additional mental health and social services; going forward schools need to return to the core educational mission, and responsibility and recompense for these “extraordinary” programs need to be addressed by the County and Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS the County Budget, among other things, includes salary enhancements for County employees who have also seen some stagnation in salary (although market position is largely unaffected), some enhancements to critical social and mental health needs, and

WHEREAS although compensation increases are included for Fairfax County Police Department officers, because the department is experiencing an unparalleled level of staffing shortages and needs to double the number of new officers hired each year to offset attrition, additional funding should be considered to improve compensation, benefits and working conditions in order to attract and retain the most qualified police force in the region; and

WHEREAS serious and long-standing issues of stormwater management need to be addressed in Mount Vernon District and elsewhere, as set forth in the Resolution attached hereto and

incorporated herein, and reallocation of some tax revenue and funding for DPWES is needed for mitigation efforts; and

WHEREAS the County Budget revenue projections assume no change in real property tax rates but a significant increase in revenue as a result of increasing assessments, which climbed a County-wide average of over 9% so that the average homeowner would pay an additional \$666 per year or about \$55 per month, which may be significantly burdensome to some homeowners, particularly those not covered by enhanced County tax relief programs; and

WHEREAS the County Budget also provides \$80M in discretionary funds for use by the Board of Supervisors; and

WHEREAS the bulk of County revenue comes from homeowner property taxes, but the County and School Budgets are based in part on assumptions about revenue from sales taxes and various forms of direct support from the Commonwealth which are currently in turmoil and may result in significant losses of revenue as well as increased costs from shifting and/or increasing County and School requirements as the Commonwealth considers widely differing proposals for dealing with its “pandemic” windfall and other matters of policy change; and

WHEREAS in FY2023, each penny on the real estate tax represents about \$25M in revenue so that the \$80M in discretionary funds could be used to reduce the tax rate by 2 or 3 pennies (\$50-75M) without affecting the School Transfer or other County disbursements, and the tax rate can be lowered by the Board of Supervisors at any time once the full effect of Commonwealth budget actions are known; and

WHEREAS homeowners have long emphasized the critical importance of maintaining excellent schools and cost-effective services to support the quality of life we expect now and going forward, also recognizing that in balancing taxes and services both current conditions and long-term effects must be considered to avoid precipitous action which could cause future distress,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Mount Vernon Council of Citizens Associations (MVCCA) fully supports and recommends adoption of the FY2023 Advertised Budget with the following caveats:

- (1) Some homeowner tax relief is desirable but revenue reduction from lowering the assumed real property tax rate should not exceed the \$80M in discretionary funds provided; and
- (2) The School Transfer should be a first priority and held harmless from any revenue changes at the County or Commonwealth level;
- (3) Additional funding for the Fairfax County Police Department should be strongly considered to assist in recruitment and retention of highly qualified officers;
- (4) The line-item budget for the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services should be reallocated to provide funds for storm water mitigation in Mount Vernon District;
- (5) In this unique budgetary year, we suggest the Board of Supervisors should not make precipitous changes which could affect future years and should consider postponing significant tax rate changes until Commonwealth budget affects are known, recognizing it

has the authority to modify the tax rate (within the Advertised Maximum Rate) as circumstances unfold.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that MVCCA appreciates the ongoing collaboration among the Board of Supervisors, the School Board, and their respective staffs, suggests that an important area of future collaboration where the County might take a more comprehensive approach would include the most effective and holistic delivery of social and mental health services to students, their families and the larger community.

APPROVED BY THE MVCCA GENERAL COUNCIL MARCH 23, 2022