



## McLean Citizens Association Resolution

### Fairfax County Advertised FY 2018 Budget Plan

April 5, 2017

**Whereas**, Fairfax County has proposed an Advertised Budget for Fiscal Year 2018 which is balanced between General Fund revenues and disbursements of \$4.1 billion and represents an increase of \$88 million or 2.2% over the Fiscal Year 2017 Adopted Budget; and

**Whereas**, the proposed expenditures for Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 are

- \$2.2 billion, or 53% of the Budget, for Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) operations, infrastructure, and debt service, an increase of \$51 million or 2.4%, and
- \$1.9 billion, or 47% of the Budget, for Fairfax County (County) for public safety, construction, debt service, and other, an increase of \$45 million or 2.4%; and

**Whereas**, real estate taxes are the primary source of funds for the General Fund, and

- The real estate tax rate will not increase in FY 2018 and will not exceed the FY 2017 rate of \$1.13 per \$100 of assessed value, and
- Assessments on average County-wide will increase by 0.68% for residences, and a house assessed at the County average of \$533,000 will be taxed an additional \$41; and

#### FCPS

**Whereas**, after taking into account the projected impact of the FY 2018 state budget and the FCPS third quarter budget review, FCPS estimates a FY 2018 shortfall of approximately \$48 million; and

**Whereas**, according to the Washington Area Boards of Education's FY 2017 WABE Guide, FCPS classroom teachers generally

- earn lower salaries but higher pension benefits than teachers in several metropolitan Washington, D.C. school districts, such as Arlington County Public Schools,
- earn comparable salaries but higher pension benefits than teachers in other metropolitan Washington, D.C. school districts, such as Loudoun County Public Schools, and
- cited salary as a top reason for leaving FCPS in 2015 and 2016 exit surveys; and

**Whereas**, FCPS had about 180 unfilled teacher scale positions in September 2016; and

**Whereas**, the McLean Citizens Association passed a resolution on March 4, 2015, which

- summarized FCPS staffing formulas and programs that cause schools in McLean and certain other areas to have significantly larger class sizes than most FCPS schools, and
- urged the School Board to modify staffing formulas to reduce class size disparities; and

**Whereas**, McLean-area elementary, middle and high schools still have significantly larger class sizes, on average, than most other FCPS schools; and

**Whereas**, the School Board is considering proposals to balance the FY 2018 budget by increasing "standard" class sizes for elementary, middle and high schools by up to one student; and

**Whereas**, large class sizes contribute to teacher workload and burnout, two of the five most common reasons for leaving FCPS cited by teachers in their exit interviews; and

**Whereas**, the American Chemistry Society, National Science Teachers Association, and National Science Education Leadership Association recommend that science lab classes be capped at 24 students, given that lab accidents "rise dramatically as class enrollments exceed 24 students;" and

**Whereas**, average science class sizes at most FCPS middle and high schools, including McLean-area schools, exceeded 24 students as of October 31, 2016, and almost all science classes have at least one science lab during the school year; and

### **Public Safety**

**Whereas**, the Budget includes expenditures on Public Safety of \$488 million, including an increase of \$9 million or 1.9%; and

**Whereas**, County priorities not funded include the second tranche of funding for the Diversion First Program to decrease the use of arrest and detention of people experiencing mental health and/or substance abuse or other behavioral health crises, police positions regarding a Span of Control plan recommended by a police practices review, and continued implementation of a Public Safety Staffing Plan; and

### **Cost Saving: Pension Plans**

**Whereas**, the McLean Citizens Association issued resolutions earlier this year to note that the County and FCPS pension plans provide greater benefits than neighboring county and public school pension plans and include an early retirement benefit until the retiree qualifies for full Social Security benefits, and in some cases for life; and

**Whereas**, in FY 2016 alone, the County and FCPS made cash payments to their pension plans of \$531 million, and those payments increase each year and crowd out funding for education, public safety, infrastructure and other priorities; and

**Whereas**, in FY 2016, the County and FCPS increased their unfunded debt to the pension plans by \$552 million, and their unfunded debt to the plans now totals almost \$5 billion.

**Resolutions**

**Now, therefore, be it resolved** that the McLean Citizens Association commends the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors for its efforts to identify and fund budget priorities without an increase in the real estate tax rate; and

**Be it further resolved** that the McLean Citizens Association urges the School Board, in balancing the FCPS FY 2018 budget, to prioritize

- salary increases for classroom teachers to address teacher hiring and retention concerns,
- avoidance of class size increases at McLean-area and other schools that already have significantly larger classes than the FCPS averages for schools that serve students in the same grade levels, and
- allocation of sufficient teacher positions to each middle and high school to enable principals to cap all science lab classes at 24 students, to reduce the risk of lab accidents; and

**Be it further resolved** that the McLean Citizens Association urges the Board of Supervisors to provide additional funding, as available, from further cost savings, contingency funds, and other sources, to Public Safety for the Diversion First and other unfunded County priority programs; and

**Be it further resolved** that the McLean Citizens Association urges the Board of Supervisors and School Board to reduce the cost of their pension plans for new and non-vested employees, including the elimination of the early retirement benefits so that the cost of the County and FCPS pension plans are similar to the cost of the Virginia Retirement System hybrid pension plan for implementation by the beginning of fiscal year 2019.

*Approved by the MCA Board of Directors*

*April 5, 2017*

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McLean Citizens Association, P.O. Box 273, McLean, Virginia 22101

cc: John W. Foust, Dranesville District Supervisor  
Fairfax County Board of Supervisors  
Edward L. Long Jr., County Executive  
Jane Strauss, Vice Chair, Dranesville District Representative  
Fairfax County School Board  
Steve Lockard, Interim Division Superintendent