



McLean Citizens Association Resolution Fairfax County Advertised FY 2024 Budget Plan April 6, 2023

Whereas, for all County funds combined, the Fairfax County FY 2024 Advertised Budget recommends total revenues of \$10.4 billion and total expenditures of \$9.9 billion;¹ and

Whereas, the largest County fund is the General Fund, with recommended revenues of \$5.131 billion and recommended disbursements of \$5.049 billion;² and

Whereas, median home prices in February 2023 fell for the first time in eleven years³ and bank failures and takeovers have increased concerns about a potential recession⁴; and

Whereas, the County has little ability to control expenditure growth for public transit subsidies,⁵ defined benefit pension plans, and interest on County debt, and collective bargaining likely will result in larger future compensation increases; and

Whereas, “[a] significant increase in capital construction funding is needed . . . to meet the County’s backlog of requirements, primarily infrastructure upgrades and replacement”;⁶ and

Whereas, the County Executive “anticipate[s] a troubling revenue picture and tight budget for FY 2025,” given the “slowdown of the housing market in 2023⁷,” inflation, and a potential recession with declining tax revenues⁸; and

Whereas, “[b]alancing the FY 2025 budget will require difficult decisions regarding which priorities to fund, which to exclude or delay, and whether programmatic reductions should be made in other areas or revenue enhancements should be considered”⁹; and

¹ FY 2024 Advertised Budget Plan (Overview) (“FY 2024 Overview”), pp. 27, 34-35.

² FY 2024 Overview, p. 12, 32.

³ <https://www.wsj.com/articles/home-prices-fell-in-february-for-first-time-in-11-years-73df0107>

⁴ <https://www.wsj.com/articles/banking-turmoil-tests-the-american-consumer-377d4c1b>

⁵ FY 2024 Overview, p. 49. City of Falls Church Proposed Budget FY 2024, p. CM-7 (“WMATA will be a significant budget issue in FY 2025 as it transitions off the federal funding that buttressed its finances during the pandemic”).

⁶ FY 2024 Overview, pp. 44, 142.

⁷ The Northern Virginia Association of Realtors projects average home prices in 2023 will increase by 0.4%. Fairfax County Department of Tax Administration, Real Estate Division, 2023 Assessment Briefing Dranesville District.

⁸ FY 2024 Overview, pp. 8, 37-38.

⁹ FY 2024 Overview, pp. 37-38, 42, 49-50.

County General Fund

Whereas, the FY 2024 Advertised Budget recommends General Fund expenditures be split 52.2% for \$2.635 Billion in operating costs, debt service and capital costs of Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS)¹⁰ and 47.8% for other General Fund expenditures, which include:

- Public Safety (12.0%),
- Health and Welfare (11.4%),
- Fringe Benefits (9.4%),
- Community Development & Transportation (3.4%),
- County Debt (2.8%), and
- Parks and Libraries (1.3% combined);¹¹ and

Whereas, in addition to the recommended \$2.635 billion (52.2%) for FCPS operating costs, debt service on school bonds and FCPS capital costs,¹² the County spends \$144.1 million on school-related services through other County departments,¹³ and total recommended County spending on all school-related services totals \$2.779 billion, or 55.04% of the General Fund; and

Whereas, in addition to the recommended \$2.779 billion (55.04% of the General Fund) on school-related services, the County recommends spending an additional \$58.0 million on county-funded programs for general youth services (non-school)¹⁴ totaling \$2.837 billion on school and non-school related youth services, or 56.2% of the General Fund; and

Whereas, FCPS enrollment as a percentage of the County's total population decreased from 16.5% in FY 2014 to 15.2% in FY 2022;¹⁵ and

Public Safety – Fairfax County Police Department (FCPD)

Whereas, as of April 6, 2023, the FCPD had 1492 authorized positions for sworn officers, of which 206 (14%) were vacant;¹⁶ and

Whereas, the number of employed sworn officers as of June 30 rose from 1,237 in 2013 to 1,382 in 2019, then declined to 1,353 in 2020, 1,335 in 2021 and 1,299 on June 30, 2022;¹⁷ and

Whereas, between FY 2008 and FY 2022, the number of County residents per FCPD officer increased from 771 to 903, and the number of households per FCPD officer increased from 281 to 322, due in large part to rising FCPD officer vacancy rates; and

¹⁰ This includes \$2.42 billion to the School Operating Fund, \$200 million on school bond debt service, and \$15.6 million for extra FCPS capital expenditures. FY 2024 Overview, p. 33.

¹¹ FY 2024 Overview, p. 43.

¹² FY 2024 Overview, p. 19.

¹³ FY 2024 Overview, p. 224-25.

¹⁴ FY 2024 Overview, p. 226.

¹⁵ FCPS actual enrollment from FCPS Budgets, and County population data from County Demographic Reports.

¹⁶ FY 2022 Police Officers Retirement System (PORS) Actuarial Valuation, p. 29. The McLean District Station (which covers Merrifield, Dunn Loring, Falls Church, Tysons, Great Falls and McLean) had a 30% vacancy rate.

¹⁷ FY 2022 PORS ACFR, p. 79.

Whereas, due to the vacancies, police officers are required to work overtime and longer shifts, which increases the risk of injury, illness and human error due to lack of sleep;¹⁸ and

Whereas, the County’s “Safety and Security” Strategic Plan Goal aspires for “all people [to] feel safe at home, school, work and in the community;” but crime is increasing in Fairfax County, causing many residents to feel unsafe, and causing some to feel compelled to take matters into their own hands by installing home security systems, paying for license-plate reading cameras that feed data to the Police Department, and even hiring private security patrols:

- During the first 9 weeks of 2023 versus the first 9 weeks of 2022, assaults rose 26% and burglaries rose 7%, and
- From calendar year 2021 to 2022, assaults rose 38%, and burglaries rose 43%,¹⁹
- Crimes against persons offenses per 100,000 county residents increased from 703 in FY 2020 to 725 in FY 2021 to 807 in FY 2022²⁰; and

Whereas, in the Arlington County Manager’s Budget Presentation on March 23, 2023, the FY 2023 first year salary for FCPD officers was the third lowest for 13 area employers;²¹ and

Whereas, Fairfax County’s FY 2024 Advertised Budget recommends:

- giving sworn police officers a 2% Market Rate Adjustment (MRA)²², and
- no change in police officers’ salary scale based on a County FY 24 Public Safety Survey (Survey), which would set Fairfax police officer FY 2024 salaries at or below FY 2023 starting salaries for competing public safety employers; and

Whereas, Fairfax County has the lowest recommended FY 2024 starting salary in the region, of public safety employers that posted FY 2024 recommended salaries as of April 1, 2023:

- Town of Herndon (FY 2024 recommended): \$67,356
- Arlington County (FY 2024 recommended): \$66,375
- City of Falls Church (FY 2024 recommended): \$65,616
- Leesburg (FY 2024 recommended): \$65,000
- Town of Vienna (FY 2024 recommended): \$64,575
- Fairfax City (FY 2024 recommended): \$63,827
- Prince George’s County (FY 2024 recommended): \$62,911
- Prince William County (FY 2024 recommended): \$62,000
- Alexandria City (FY 2024 recommended): \$61,503
- Stafford County (FY 2024 recommended): \$60,323
- Loudoun County (FY 2024 recommended): \$58,411
- Fairfax County (FY 2024 recommended): \$57,830

¹⁸ <https://www.osha.gov/worker-fatigue/hazards>

¹⁹ <https://majorcitieschiefs.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/MCCA-Violent-Crime-Report-2022-and-2021-Year-End.pdf>, p. 2.

²⁰ FY 2024 Overview, p. 80.

²¹ https://arlington.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=2&event_id=1892&meta_id=217572, p. 9.

²² FY 2024 Overview, p. 13.

Whereas, Fairfax County’s recommended FY 2024 starting salary is lower than the actual FY 2023 starting salaries for other competing public safety employers in the region:

- U.S. Capitol Police (FY 2023): \$73,852
- CIA Police (FY 2023): \$68,615
- DC Metropolitan Police (FY 2023): \$66,419
- Virginia State Police in NOVA (FY 2023): \$65,958
- Manassas Park (FY 2023): \$63,749
- MWAA Police (FY 2023): \$63,263
- Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (FY 2023): \$62,888
- US Park Police (2022 depending on location): \$62,446 - \$67,769
- Montgomery County (FY 2023): \$60,265
- Fairfax County (FY 2024 recommended): \$57,830

Whereas, Fairfax County police officer salaries are specified in the County’s Pay Plan O;²³ and

Whereas, if Fairfax County gave police officers an across-the-board 15% raise in FY 2024, the FY 2024 starting salary for FCPD officers would be \$65,201, which might be enough to mitigate Fairfax County’s lack of fringe benefits such as the right to drive cruisers home, free service apartments, and financial subsidies to buy homes in the County; and

Whereas, FCPD officers can easily leave for jobs with higher salaries, the ability to drive their police cruisers home and/or a location that is closer to where they live, given that they have been trained at the Northern Virginia Criminal Justice Academy;²⁴ and

Whereas, as of March 15, 2022, 41 newly-hired Fairfax police officers had received \$15,000 signing bonuses, but low FY 2024 salaries could result in higher future vacancy rates – including the loss of these new officers - due to even greater police attrition; and

Whereas, raising salaries for all Fairfax sworn officer positions (assuming zero vacancies and including the cost of fringe benefits) by 15% on top of the 2% MRA would cost \$33 million and bring the FY 2024 starting salary to \$65,201; and

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the McLean Citizens Association (MCA) urges the Board of Supervisors to:

- Request a current police salary and benefits survey with FY 2024 recommended salaries and benefits for competing public safety employers in the region,
- Increase Pay Plan O salaries by an additional 15%, to reduce attrition and expedite filling all vacant positions for sworn officers, and
- Obtain and analyze data on trends in the number of police officers leaving FCPD before they are eligible to receive pension payments, and their new or future jobs; and

²³ <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/hr/fy-compensation-plan>

²⁴ Roughly 80% of FCPD sworn officers live outside Fairfax County, which does not offer housing benefits to police.

Fairfax County Park Authority Forestry Management Expenses

Whereas, the Fairfax County Park Authority (Park Authority) budgeted \$326,000 in FY 2023 for a contractor to remove large high-risk dead and dying trees, which pose safety and/or liability risks because they are near playgrounds, high use trails, significant cultural or historical resources, major roads, or moderate to high value properties;²⁵

Whereas, actual contractor costs to remove trees exceeded budgeted amounts every year, and these excess costs have been paid using funds initially designated for other Park Authority projects, which has resulted in extensive and growing deferred park maintenance; and

Whereas, the Park Authority requested an additional \$358,000 for tree removal recurring costs in its FY 2023 Budget, and \$50,000 was funded in the County's FY 2023 Adopted Budget; and

Whereas, the Park Authority proposed and the County Executive recommended one-time funding of \$500,000 from the County's FY 2023 3rd quarter budget review, to cover skyrocketing high-risk large tree removal costs;²⁶ and

Whereas, the Park Authority proposed an increase of \$739,000 in forestry management funds in its FY 2024 Budget, which would be used to pay for \$358,000 for a tree removal contractor, \$293,463 to hire three forestry management staff, and \$88,000 to buy vehicles; and

Whereas, the County Executive recommended funding \$57,000 of this \$739,463 request for additional recurring forestry management costs in the FY 2024 Advertised Budget;²⁷ and

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the MCA urges the Board of Supervisors to increase the County FY 2024 transfer to the Park Authority's General Fund by \$682,463, to fully cover the remaining requested funds for forestry management; and

County General Obligation Bonds For Active Transportation Projects Near Schools

Whereas, the Board of Supervisors has kept County debt within prudent financial limits;²⁸ and

²⁵ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qaUQMAp7sXg&list=PLOU0sKqaLTIV5DI_AV55xbNKR9Rnd6i1T&index=2.

For example, although the Park Authority removes 2,000 trees per year, large trees have fallen on the Providence Rec Center, the Frying Pan Park electrical system, and the Stratford Landing Park tennis court walls and fencing.

²⁶ <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/budget/sites/budget/files/assets/documents/fy2023/third-quarter/fy-2023-tq-package-final.pdf>;

https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/budget/sites/budget/files/assets/documents/budget%20committee%20meeting/2023/mar-28/2023_mar_28_budgetcomm_fy2023thirdquarter.pdf.

²⁷ <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/sites/parks/files/assets/documents/partnerships/friends/federation-of-friends-meeting-2023-03-14.pdf>, p. 69

²⁸ As of June 30, 2022, debt service was 7% (less than the 10% recommended maximum) of General Fund disbursements, and net debt as a percentage of total assessed values was 1% (less than the 3% recommended maximum). FY 2024 Overview, p. 143.

Whereas, bonds are issued to pay for capital projects of general benefit to the County, to ensure that current and future residents and users share in the cost of those improvements;²⁹ and

Whereas, on November 1, 2022, the Board of Supervisors approved \$5 million for new crosswalks, trail and sidewalk maintenance, speed display signs, and a local cash match for the Bush Hill ES Safe Routes to School Project;³⁰ and

Whereas, the Board of Supervisors is considering a proposal to build fourteen sidewalks and other “Active Transportation” projects, which were chosen from 2,800 unfunded projects;³¹ and

Whereas, although County staff hope to narrow the list of 2800 unfunded projects to about 400 projects, it would appear to take decades to complete 400 projects at the current pace; and

Whereas, Active Transportation projects have been funded using County bond proceeds;³² and

Whereas, under Fairfax County School Board Policy 8610.9:

- bus transportation is guaranteed to students who live more than one mile (elementary) or 1.5 miles (middle and high school) from their school, and
- FCPS may provide bus transportation service to students who otherwise would not be eligible for bus service if “unusual hazards make walking to school unsafe.”

Whereas, under FCPS Regulation 8610.11, FCPS encourages parents to “consider having their children walk and/or ride a bicycle to and from school” for health reasons, and will review walking or biking routes for “unusual hazards” and “collaborate with other agencies” in developing pedestrian and biking route enhancements and projects; and

Whereas, under FCPS Regulation 8617.11, “walking routes will follow sidewalks or approved pathways, and will cross streets only at the corners of roadway intersections free of unusual hazards” and FCPS will consider factors as walking surface, visibility, street crossing and special features in determining whether a walking route is “free of unusual safety hazards”; and

Whereas, building and repairing sidewalks, trails and other Active Transportation projects will increase the number of FCPS students who can safely walk or bicycle to and from school, which should reduce demand for FCPS bus drivers and buses; and

Whereas, MCA resolutions in January 2022 and January 2023³³ identified 27 high-priority Active Transportation projects in the McLean Planning District, which would enhance pedestrian

²⁹ <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/bond/bonds-frequently-asked-questions>

³⁰ <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/transportation/news/t23-22>

³¹ <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/transportation/sites/transportation/files/assets/documents/pdf/btc/march%2014,%202023/item%203%20-%20additional%20100m%20active%20transportation%20031023.pdf>. The County also is working on a new walkway assessment, which will be used to develop a multi-year walkway plan and prioritize required walkway improvements. FY 2024 Overview, p. 141.

³² https://historical.elections.virginia.gov/ballot_questions/view/2761/

³³ MCA resolutions are available in the documents library of the MCA web site. <https://mca-va.clubexpress.com>

safety, and in particular improve pedestrian and bicyclist access to schools and to public transit (especially the West Falls Church Metro Station), but the County to date has only identified potential funding for three of these 27 projects; and

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the MCA recommends that the Board of Supervisors:

- prioritize Active Transportation projects that reduce the number of students who use FCPS buses due to lack of safe walking or biking routes from their homes,³⁴ plus other Active Transportation projects that improve pedestrian and bicyclist safety and access to public transit,
- use FY 2023 Carryover Budget Review funds and FY 2024 budget review funds for high-priority Active Transportation projects, and
- explore the use of 2023 school bond proceeds to fund Active Transportation projects that reduce the number of students who use FCPS buses due to lack of safe walking or biking routes from their homes; and

Checking and Confirming FCPS Requested Transfer Assumptions

Whereas, U.S. Census data for Fairfax County shows that the number of school-aged County residents is likely to decline substantially over the next ten years³⁵, and

Whereas, despite declining student enrollment, FCPS added hundreds of new positions since FY 2019 for assistant principals, supervisors, and specialists³⁶ and total salaries for these FCPS administrators increased significantly, as a percentage of total student enrollment;³⁷ and

Whereas, FCPS overestimated the following year's student enrollment in nine of the past 11 years in computing its requested transfer from the County,³⁸ which resulted in larger transfers from the County to FCPS than would be warranted based on actual FCPS enrollment; and

Whereas, the County does not verify student enrollment, demographic and geographic distribution assumptions FCPS uses to calculate its requested transfer, before the Board of Supervisors votes on the amount of the FCPS transfer; and

Whereas, the County does not compare assumed to actual FCPS enrollment, demographic and geographic distribution assumptions FCPS used to compute its requested transfer; and

³⁴ See FCPS standards for providing bus transportation in School Board Policy 8610.9, FCPS Regulation 8610.11, and FCPS Regulation 8617.11.

³⁵ In 2020, Fairfax County had 69,382 children under age 5, 72,430 children between ages 5 and 9, and 81,186 between ages 10 and 14. As of February 2023, FCPS had about 13,000 students per grade in all elementary schools and about 15,000 per grade in all high schools.

³⁶ Attachment A.

³⁷ Attachment B.

³⁸ Between FY 2013 and FY 2023, the assumed number of students used to compute the County transfer exceeded the actual number of FCPS students the subsequent fall in FY 2013 (277 students), FY 2014 (730 students), FY 2015 (871 students), FY 2016 (2,566 students), FY 2018 (619 students), FY 2019 (2,283 students), FY 2020 (59 students), FY 2021 (10,089 students), and FY 2022 (10,378 students).

Whereas, the County does not ask FCPS to return excess transfers attributable to inaccurate FCPS assumptions, or to subtract such amount from its transfer request the next year; and

Now therefore, be it resolved that the MCA urges the Board of Supervisors, starting with the FY 2025 budget, to:

- direct the Auditor to the Board of Supervisors to check and amend questionable FCPS enrollment assumptions and computations within one month after the FCPS Proposed Budget is released,
- adjust FCPS' transfer request annually for prior year inaccuracies in enrollment, demographic or geographic distribution assumptions that affected the requested FCPS transfer amount, and
- include Budget Guidance for FY 2025 that asks the County Executive to review the growth in FCPS administration positions since FY 2019; and

County Property Tax Rate

Whereas, real estate taxes generate 67% of the County's General Fund revenues, and an owner's property tax equals the assessed value of the property multiplied by the tax rate; and

Whereas, average residential assessments increased 9.6% in 2022 and 7% in 2023, and some residential assessments increased over 20% in 2023, including older homes owned by retirees on fixed incomes; and

Whereas, the Board of Supervisors increased the property tax rate from \$1.09 to \$1.13 in FY 2017, to \$1.15 in FY 2019, reduced it to \$1.14 in FY 2022 and to \$1.11 in FY 2023,³⁹ and voted on March 7, 2023 to cap the FY 2024 real estate tax rate at \$1.11 per \$100 of assessed value; and

Whereas, a 1 cent decrease in the property tax rate reduces FY 2024 revenues by \$31.4 million, a two cent decrease by \$62.8 million, and a 3 cent decrease by \$94.2 million; and

Whereas, the County FY 2024 Advertised Budget reserves \$90.2 million as an "available balance for board consideration," which can be used to reduce the real estate tax rate; and

Whereas, the County's FY 2024 Advertised Budget repeatedly expresses concerns about the potentially very large gap between FY 2025 revenues and expenditures; and

Whereas, in the FY 2023 3rd Quarter Review, staff recommended spending \$88.3 million on various programs and projects, using almost all of the \$58 million General Fund balance plus \$51 million from higher-than-budgeted General Fund revenues, which would result in a \$10.7 million General Fund balance;⁴⁰ and

Whereas, although some of the staff-recommended FY 2023 3rd Quarter spending would pay for cost overruns and other accrued costs, a substantial portion would accelerate capital projects and/or expand programs; and

³⁹ FY 20-24 Overview, p. 211.

⁴⁰ https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/budget/sites/budget/files/assets/documents/budget%20committee%20meeting/2023/mar-28/2023_mar_28_budgetcomm_fy2023thirdquarter.pdf

Whereas, during the March 28 meeting of the Budget Policy Committee, Supervisor Foust pointed out that the County was starting with over \$100 million, staff was recommending how the Supervisors should vote to spend it, but “it is all on the table”⁴¹; and

Whereas, the County would only have to find \$38 million (less than 1% of recommended FY 2024 General Fund Expenditures of \$5.05 million) in savings to increase police salaries by 15%, increase the Park Authority transfer to pay for the full requested amount for forestry management, and reduce the real estate tax rate by three pennies; and

Whereas, the Alexandria City Manager asked all departments to identify 1.5% to 2% budget reductions, which resulted in “savings with no significant service impacts”;⁴² and

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the McLean Citizens Association recommends that the Board of Supervisors ask the County Executive to identify substantial cost savings that can be implemented in FY 2024 and FY 2025, which take into account the declining ratio of FCPS students to total County residents and the growing number of FCPS administrative positions, and which also allow for the adoption of a:

- FY 2024 budget that raises police salaries by 15%, increases the Park Authority transfer to pay for forestry management, and reduces the property tax rate by at least 3 cents, and
- FY 2025 budget that funds public safety and other core government services without raising the property tax rate in FY 2025.

*Submitted for Approved by the MCA Board of Directors
April 6, 2023*

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

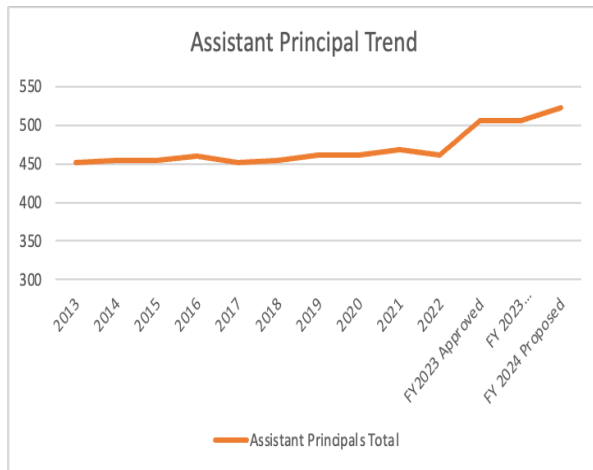
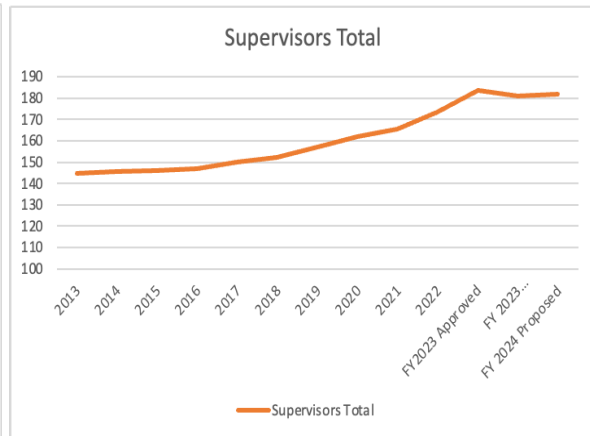
Copies to:

John Foust, Dranesville District Supervisor
Dalia Palchik, Providence District Supervisor
Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
Bryan Hill, Fairfax County Executive
Christina Jackson, Fairfax County Chief Financial Officer
Elaine Tholen, Dranesville District School Board Member
Karl Frisch, Providence District School Board Member
Fairfax County School Board
Dr. Reid, FCPS Superintendent
Leigh Burden, FCPS Assistant Superintendent, Department of Financial Services

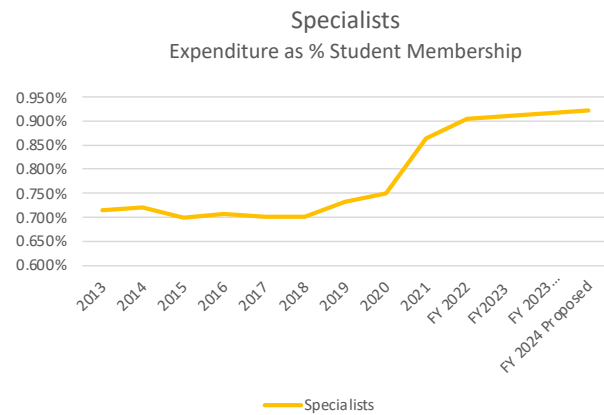
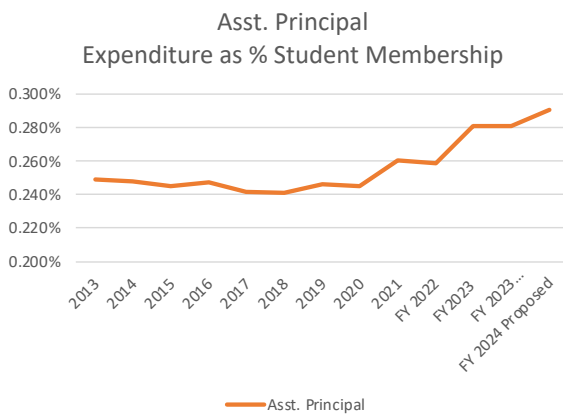
⁴¹https://video.fairfaxcounty.gov/player/clip/2808?view_id=9&redirect=true&h=34622a98b47492639fa29f081d2869b9

⁴² <https://www.alexandriava.gov/sites/default/files/2023-03/FY%202024%20Proposed%20Budget%20Presentation%20-%20FINAL.pdf>

Attachment A (Growth in Administrative Positions Since FY 2019)



Attachment B (FCPS administrator expenditure as percentage of FCPS enrollment)





Student Enrollment Trends

