

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
STAFFORD, VIRGINIA
MINUTES
JOINT BUDGET WORK SESSION WITH THE SCHOOL BOARD
March 9, 2021

Call to Order A joint meeting of the Stafford County Board of Supervisors and the Stafford County School Board was called to order by Chairman Crystal Vanuch, at 2:02 p.m., on Tuesday, March 9, 2021 at the University of Mary Washington Stafford Campus, 125 University Blvd., Fredericksburg, VA 22406 .

Roll Call The following members were present: Crystal Vanuch, Chairman; Cindy C. Shelton, Vice Chairman; Tinesha O. Allen; Thomas C. Coen; L. Mark Dudenhefer; and Gary F. Snellings.

Ms. Bohmke motioned, seconded by Ms. Shelton to permit Mr. Dudenhefer to participate remotely in the joint work session. The motion passed unanimously.

Also, in attendance were: Frederick J. Presley, County Administrator; Mike Smith, Deputy County Administrator; Donna Krauss, Deputy County Administrator; Rysheda McClendon, County Attorney; Andrea Light, Budget Division Director; Cheryl Giles, Deputy Clerk; Julia Holmes, Assistant Deputy Clerk; and associated staff and other interested parties.

Attending from the School Board was Ms. Holly Hazard, Chairman; Ms. Susan Randall, Vice Chairman; Dr. Sarah Chase; Ms. Patricia Healy; Dr. Elizabeth Warner; Ms. R. Pamela Yeung. School staff included Dr. Scott Kizner, Superintendent; Chris Fulmer; Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Administration; John Anderson, Executive Director of Facilities and Maintenance; Missy Hall, Clerk of the School Board; associated staff and other interested parties

Ms. Andrea Light, Budget Director began the meeting by stating that the purpose of the work session was to provide the School Board and School staff the opportunity to present the assumptions, goals and needs of the School system that supported the School Board's FY2022 Budget Request.

Ms. Light stated the State Budget Conference reported a 5% salary increase for teachers. There would be a "no loss" payment for School divisions and staff did not anticipate an impact to funding teacher's retirement.

Ms. Light stated that the County Administrator's Proposed Budget included about \$7.8M in increased funding for the School district. It included about \$250,000 for the Public Day School and an increase to funding for the memorandum of up to what the limit was supposed to be.

Ms. Light concluded her presentation with an overview of the upcoming Budget work sessions dates.

Chairman Vanuch requested the Boards allow Dr. Warner to complete her presentation before asking questions or making comments.

Dr. Warner thanked the Board for allowing the School Board to present their FY22 funding request. Dr. Warner remarked about the impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on schools.

Dr. Warner presented details about the following topics:

- ❖ Division Accomplishments
- ❖ Goals and Budget Priorities
 - Support all students to ensure they receive an excellent education
 - Allow Schools to attract and retain the best talent
 - Accommodate the continuing growth of the Schools
- ❖ Virginia's Portrait of a Graduate
- ❖ Stafford County Schools by the numbers:
 - 1,840 kindergarteners begin their school careers
 - 2021 graduating class will host 2,247 graduates
 - Schools offer over 70 CTE programs in addition to dual enrollment, IB, AP, and the Governor's School
 - Every week buses drive 68,000 miles
 - Every week Schools served 65,000 meals; 1.5 million meals to students and families
- ❖ Addressing the Challenges of COVID
- ❖ Considerations in Addressing Goals
 - Students
 - Turnover of Licensed Staff
 - Compensation
- ❖ School Board Expenditure Request
- ❖ Proposed FY22 Teacher Scale
- ❖ Proposed Investments in Staff Education
- ❖ Proposed FY22 Service Sector Scale
- ❖ Requested Staff Additions
- ❖ Operations Funding
 - Per Pupil Expenditures for Operations
 - State Funding Share of the Budget
 - Revenue Assumptions
- ❖ School Board Budget Summary

Dr. Warner thanked Mr. Fulmer, Dr. Towery, and others that assisted her in the development of the FY22 Budget.

Chairman Vanuch thanked Dr. Warner for the presentation and asked the Board members if they had any questions.

Ms. Bohmke thanked the School Board for all the work they had accomplished during the COVID pandemic and stated she had a few questions to ask. Ms. Bohmke asked the following questions:

1. If the remaining employees who had not received the vaccine would receive the vaccine? Dr. Warner stated that the school division was not mandating that employees receive the vaccine. Dr. Kizner then explained that approximately two-thirds of all SCPS staff have asked to receive the vaccine. Around 85% of those have received both of the doses. Dr. Kizner stated that the other one-third of employees were electing to not receive the vaccine for personal reasons.
2. How much of the CARES Act funds that had been received had not been allocated? Mr. Fulmer stated that Congress passed two separate pandemic stimulus funding legislations during the past year. The first was the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, and the second was the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act. Of the CARES Act funding, approximately \$1M was immediately set aside to use toward remediation of learning loss during the current school year. Much of that \$1M had been spent over the past several months, and the remainder would be used during the coming summer. The school division received \$6.3M through the CRRSA Act, the majority of which had been allocated for expenses related to the pandemic, such as air filters and purifiers and additional technology.

Chairman Vanuch asked if there were operating funds that were not allocated. Mr. Fulmer responded that the \$343M that was currently budgeted for the operating fund had all been allocated.

3. How much funding does the Schools expect to receive from the package that Congress was getting ready to pass and how would it be applied? Are there any strings from Congress attached to it? Dr. Warner stated that she was reluctant to make any commitments regarding the new stimulus funds that might be forthcoming from the pending new legislation that was currently being debated by the U.S. Congress. She said there was no way to know at this point how much it might be or what strings might be attached to the funding.
4. How does the percentage of teachers that are not in the system relate to other localities in the Commonwealth? Ms. Hazard stated that Dr. Kizner and his staff would gather the data and send it to the Supervisors after this meeting.
5. With regards to the Projected Seat Availability graph in the presentation, how many elementary schools and middle schools would be at a certain capacity? Dr. Warner explained that the dark green areas represented school zones that would be below 90% of their designed capacities. The yellow and orange areas were projected to be between 91% and 104% of their designed capacities. The red areas indicated school zones that would be at or above 105% of their designed capacities. She said there were several elementary schools that were expected to be above 95% capacity in the 2024-2025 school year, and around half of the middle schools would be in the same situation. Dr. Warner added that all five of the high schools would be at extremely high capacities by 2024-2025.

Ms. Allen asked if the School Board's proposed FY22 budget included any funding to address current overcrowding in some of the schools. Dr. Warner remarked that it does not.

Ms. Allen asked if there were a targeted number of mental health professionals that the School Board planned to hire for the 2021-2022 school year to address the expected increase in mental and behavioral health issues coming out of the pandemic. Dr. Warner stated that the budget included one new psychologist and eight new school counselor positions. She said that some of the counselor positions were mandated by the new Virginia Standards of Quality (SOQs). The rest are to ensure that we have enough positions to provide dedicated counseling staff for each school. In addition, she stated that the school board was adding 6.6 new social worker positions to help students and their families.

Ms. Allen asked if those numbers would provide a sufficient level of staffing. Dr. Kizner stated that when the school principals presented their funding requests to him, they all asked for more of the mental health positions than was ultimately approved in the final budget. He stated that this was the number one request from all schools, to provide support for kids' social and emotional health.

Ms. Allen asked what was the projected teacher to student ratio for 2021-2022. Mr. Fulmer stated that the ratios would be approximately the same as last school year.

Ms. Allen asked County staff to provide information to show what the tax rate level would have to be in order to get to the State average on PPE.

With regards to the "Requested Staff Additions" slide, Ms. Shelton asked how many new behavioral support specialist positions would be added. Dr. Chase stated that it would be two. Ms. Shelton questioned whether that would be sufficient. Dr. Warner explained that there were already some behavioral support specialist positions within the school system, so the two new ones would simply be additional. She added that it was always difficult to juggle the many competing needs in the budget. She said staff had not been able to fully assess what the students' needs might be because they have not been able to meet with many of them face-to-face due to the pandemic.

Dr. Kizner reported that projections indicated that enrollment would increase by about 750 students in the 2021-2022 school year, which was more than the Average Daily Membership (ADM) figure. He stated that on the instructional side, most of the proposed new positions were tied into the State requirements.

Mr. Coen requested larger printed copies of the maps, since the text was too small to read in the current copies. With respect to the eight new counselor positions, he asked if they would be career counselors or mental health counselors. Dr. Kizner stated that they would be licensed K-12 school counselors and explained that in Virginia the license was the same for both career and mental health school counseling. Candidates for the high school positions would be expected to have greater experience with career counseling, along with experience in mental health. The candidates for the elementary and middle school posts would be expected to be geared more toward mental and social/emotional health.

Ms. Hazard and Chairman Vanuch thanked Dr. Warner for doing a great job on the presentation.

Ms. Yeung commented that good schools fuel growth, and excellent schools make great and thriving communities. She said that as a School Board member, she wished for excellence for all students, whether they were rich or poor or have special needs, and regardless of their race. She stated that she voted to approve the proposed school budget because she wanted excellence in education and that it was attainable. She said that through the Board of Supervisor's planning, the County was growing and more schools were needed. She stated that people moved to Stafford for quality of life and for life balance, clean environment, and they expected an excellent education for their children. She said as a Staffordian for 26 years, she knew firsthand the value of a quality education. She said the citizens of Stafford expected the two Boards to manage the money and allocate funds to keep quality schools in their neighborhoods. She stated she hoped the Supervisors voted in favor of the School Board's funding request.

Ms. Bohmke commented that she recognized that this had been a challenging year and wondered if there were any plans to assess the loss of math and reading skills for students. Dr. Kizner stated that the State required three assessments of student literacy and math skills each year. On March 2, the School Board received a preliminary analysis of the two assessments that had been conducted since last fall. Dr. Kizner stated that staff continues to analyze the results. Dr. Kizner remarked that he and his staff would not wait until the summer to begin remediation. At the elementary level, schools have already started their remediation efforts for those students who have been identified as needing additional support. He said this year the Schools would have a much more robust summer learning program; and the planning for this program began several weeks ago. Dr. Kizner stated that the third of the three mandated assessments would be conducted in late spring. He stated some local assessments in addition to the three State-mandated ones have also been developed.

Ms. Bohmke asked, given that math teachers are so hard to find, how does the school division plan to provide math remediation for all of the students who needed it. Ms. Hazard praised Mr. Patrick Byrnett, SCPS Human Resources Executive Director for the amazing initiatives he and his staff had implemented during the pandemic to improve the teacher recruitment and retention efforts. She said two key initiatives were the existing tuition assistance program and the proposed new education loan support program. Ms. Hazard stated that she believed we were one of only a few school divisions that would be offering the two incentives next year to help new teachers. She remarked the Schools hoped it would help to attract potential new teachers to the school division. Mr. Byrnett stated that these two tools would indeed help to differentiate our school division from others in our region.

Dr. Kizner stated that the lack of math teachers was simply a supply and demand issue. He said he and Mr. Byrnett served on the Teacher Advisory Board of the University of Mary Washington, and that he also served an Advisory Board for George Mason University (GMU). He said there are fewer and fewer people entering the math teaching field each year. This was the main reason the School Board was seeking to make the school division's teacher salaries more competitive. He said GMU is the largest teaching college in Virginia and its graduates tended to accept employment offers north of Stafford

Dr. Kizner explained that when there are teaching vacancies, they have to be filled with substitutes or through other means.

Dr. Chase added that there are plenty of people getting college degrees in math, but most of them are not going into the teaching profession when they graduate. They can earn higher salaries in other fields.

Ms. Allen remarked that her husband is a math teacher, but that he worked for Fairfax Schools instead of Stafford Schools because of the large pay discrepancy. Ms. Allen then asked the following questions:

1. She asked if there would be an increase in the number of long-term substitutes in 2021-2022? Mr. Fulmer stated that the long-term substitute expenses would be up slightly in FY22 compared to previous years. He said that was partly due to the State-mandated 5% raise, which would increase the hourly rate for substitutes.
2. She asked if she could receive information about the projected new counselor-to-student ratio for the mental health positions that were being proposed to be hired? Mr. Fulmer stated that the Governor's new budget required a 1:325 ratio for school counselors. He stated that with the proposed school board budget, they would meet that requirement in all schools and would slightly exceed it in some instances.
3. She asked what was included in the proposed budget to address mental health needs of faculty and staff? Dr. Kizner stated that Mr. Byrnett and his Human Resources team had put together a wellness program for staff and faculty that targeted mental, emotional, and physical health. He said each school had a wellness ambassador who talked about wellness on a daily basis, and extra support was offered on a confidential basis for any employee who expressed a need for it.

Dr. Warner remarked that employee wellness is important to the members of the School Board. She said they recognized that virtual and concurrent teaching is extremely stressful for the teachers. Dr. Warner stated that she knew this from her own experience as a college professor, and could only imagine how much more difficult it must be for a Kindergarten teacher. She said she has tremendous respect and admiration for our teachers, who have essentially been forced during the pandemic to invent a brand new teaching paradigm.

With respect to the "Percent Turnover of Licensed Staff" slide, Mr. Snellings noted that the 2020 turnover rate of licensed staff was 12.4%. He asked who qualified as "licensed staff." Dr. Warner remarked that the lower 2020 turnover rate was believed to be an aberration caused by

the fear of changing careers during the pandemic. Before 2020, the turnover rate was several points higher.

Mr. Fulmer explained that licensed staff are teachers, psychologists, counselors, social workers, and instructional specialists. Mr. Snellings asked to receive data showing the turnover rate for just the teacher positions. He also asked for a break-down of the reasons cited by teachers who were leaving SCPS. He remarked he would like to know how many were leaving for higher paying positions elsewhere, how many were leaving due to family relocations, how many were retiring, etc.

Ms. Allen asked if the school division planned to continue offering free meals to all families in the 2021-2022 school year. Mr. Fulmer explained that the free meals were paid for by federal funds, through a temporary program which would end on June 30, 2021.

Mr. Coen requested the cost difference for providing the State-mandated 5% raise for SOQ positions vs. the non-SOQ positions. Mr. Fulmer explained that he did not have that information yet because he was waiting for the State to release its figures. He said he expected to receive that information within the next few days.

Mr. Coen asked if the school division had received the results from the recent survey which asked staff and faculty whether they planned to remain in their current positions for the coming school year.

Mr. Byrnett stated that he glanced through the survey responses and there did seem to be an increase in the number of teachers and other staff who intended to leave the school division at the end of the current school year. He cautioned that they could not consider those responses to be binding until the employees actually submitted a Voluntary Termination of Employment form.

Dr. Kizner stated that it was important to recognize that the recruiting challenges were three-fold. In addition to the ongoing national teacher shortage and the rapid growth of the County's student population, there were now teachers who were seriously thinking of leaving the profession, due to the extreme stresses and difficulties that they had experienced during this year of COVID-19. He remarked it has become even more important for us to invest in a more robust recruitment and retention effort.

Mr. Coen asked if the proposed new education loan support program would be included in the annual salaries of the recipients and if it would be taxable. He also asked if the benefit would be available only to new hires or if all licensed staff would qualify for it. Mr. Byrnett stated that the

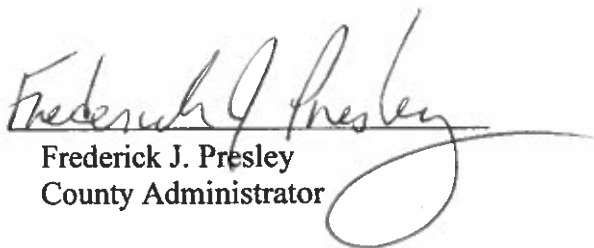
current tuition reimbursement program was limited to coursework that licensed staff wished to complete that was directly related to their current job responsibilities. The annual maximum allowance is \$1,500, which was roughly equivalent to one three-credit college course. Mr. Byrnett explained that the proposed new loan repayment program was not intended to be part of the new employee's salary; rather, it was meant to be an augmentation. He said it was intended to help SCPS be more competitive against the school divisions located north of Stafford.

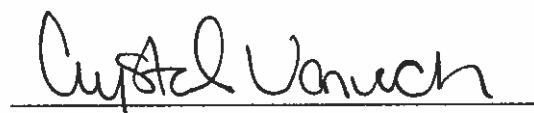
Dr. Kizner stated that his daughter, who is a teacher in Fairfax Schools, just received her proposed salary scale for the 2021-2022 school year. He said her new pay scale revealed that Stafford's teachers must have 29 years' of experience to earn what his daughter was earning as a 10-year teacher in Fairfax. Dr. Kizner stated that this was an important thing for the School Board and Board of Supervisor members to know. He remarked if they hoped to attract and retain folks, they would have to invest more in the salaries and other recruitment incentives.

Ms. Bohmke asked how many licensed staff were there in SCPS. Mr. Byrnett stated that there were roughly 2,100 of them. Ms. Bohmke asked how many of the positions were covered by the State SOQ. Mr. Fulmer stated that he would gather that data and forward it to the Supervisors within the next few days.

Chairman Vanuch thanked Dr. Warner, the School Board, and all staff members for making it a productive work session.

Adjournment At 3:17 p.m., Chairman Vanuch adjourned the March 9, 2021 Joint Work Session of the School Board and the Stafford County Board of Supervisors.


Frederick J. Presley
County Administrator


Crystal Vanuch
Chairman