BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
STAFFORD COUNTY, VIRGINIA
MINUTES
BUDGET WORK SESSION
MARCH 9, 2023

CALL TO ORDER – A work session of the Stafford County Board of Supervisors was called to order by Dr. Pamela Yeung, Chairman, at 4:00 p.m. on Thursday, March 9, 2023, in Conference Room ABC, George L. Gordon, Jr. Government Center, 1300 Courthouse Road, Stafford, VA.

ROLL CALL – The following members were present: Dr. Pamela Yeung, Chairman; Thomas C. Coen, Vice Chairman; Tinesha O. Allen (participated remotely); Meg Bohmke; Darrell E. English; Monica L. Gary; Crystal L. Vanuch

Also in attendance were Randal E. Vosburg, County Administrator; Rysheda McClendon, County Attorney; Cheryl Giles, Deputy Clerk; various staff members; and other interested parties.

Mr. Coen motioned, seconded by Ms. Gary, to allow Ms. Allen to participate in the meeting remotely. The motion carried unanimously.

GENERAL FUND REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE REVIEW
Ms. Andrea Light, Chief Director of Finance, stated that a budget work session schedule was provided to the Board.

Ms. Yeung asked whether any supervisor had conflicts with the meeting times for the work sessions.

Ms. Vanuch stated that she would not be in attendance for the March 6 meeting. She said that the Board should cancel the March 23 meeting so the staff and Board could attend Mr. Jeff Harvey's retirement.

Ms. Bohmke said that she would update the Chair about conflicts after the meeting when she had access to her calendar.

Mr. English noted that there were two 1 p.m. meetings.

Ms. Vanuch responded that those were Board days.

Ms. Light said that they would begin by reviewing General Fund, Revenue, and Expenditures. She said that on March 21, they would review all other Funds, including the Utilities, Transportation, Tourism, Service Districts, and Fire Levy funds. She said that on March 21, the School Board was planning to provide a presentation on their budget request. She said that on March 28, they would review the CIP.

Ms. Light stated that they would be reviewing the General Fund, Revenues, and Expenditures, and if there were questions that were unable to be answered, then responses would be brought back to the Board the following week as information became available.

Ms. Yeung asked what information staff was seeking.

Ms. Light clarified that the work session was for the Board and for the citizens. She said that SCPS was about 47% of all County expenditures. She said that the SCPS expenditures saw a $17.5M increase. She said that 51.6% of new, undesignated revenue would support schools in the proposed budget. She said that just over $11.7M in operating transfers were proposed, which was an 8.3% increase. She said that there was an increase in public day school at 31.1%, because it added an additional teacher.

Ms. Light said that nearly $5M in debt service was proposed, and a $1M was dedicated to capital. She said that the $1M would help to reduce borrowing and would save the County approximately $80K a year in debt service.

Ms. Bohmke asked what project contributed to the 14.8% increase in debt service.

Ms. Light responded that High School #6 had been recently borrowed, and the 3R project was recently borrowed. She said that the School Board had requested approximately a $49.2M increase, which included $3.75M for the VDOE error. She said that the increase was equivalent to an approximately $0.168 increase on the already proposed tax rate of $0.94. She said that the median bill would be increased by approximately $650 per year.

Ms. Light said that the School Board would appear before the Board on March 21 to discuss their requests and needs.

Ms. Yeung clarified the information regarding the VDOE error.

Ms. Light responded that the request for $49.2M, and the VDOE error was $3.75M. She said that had VDOE error funds were included as part of the $49.2M

Ms. Yeung clarified that the governor was going to provide funds back to the County.

Ms. Light said that it could have been a timing issue. She said that sometimes, the timing of information was not as quick as was needed. She said that the School Board would be able to address Ms. Yeung's questions at the March 21 meeting.

Ms. Light said that the operating transfers from the Board since 2015 had increased by $42M, or about 38%. She said that student enrollment had increased over the same period by over 4,000, or 15%. She said that the Board's per pupil funding had increased over the past 10 years.

Ms. Bohmke said that in 2009, the state performed a massive adjustment to education, and they never had recovered in the County.

Ms. Light noted that the information only reviewed the Board's commitment to funding, and it did not include state or federal funding. She said that there was continued support from the Board for education. She said that they were starting with a $2.6M commitment because of FY23 mid-year allocations.

Ms. Light said that in comparison to comparable jurisdictions in terms of pay, SCPS was at 7.72% for non-instructional employees, and general government was at 8% in the County Administrator's proposed budget. She said that SCPS teachers were at 8.5% as part of the School Board proposed budget.

Ms. Light said that the comparable localities were across the Board. She noted that Albemarle was at 4% while Prince William County was at 9%. She said that the Social Security Administration was at 8.7%. She said that SCSO pay was similar to Prince William's County, which provided deputies a 17.5% raise, and a step raise was proposed in FY 24. She said that the raise provided to SCSO first sergeants and below caused compression issues, so a pay scale adjustment of 8% was proposed with an additional step increase of 2.75%.

Ms. Light said that a market study showed that the County was 8% behind for Fire and Rescue, so the proposed budget had an 8% pay scale budget and the step increase.

Ms. Yeung asked for clarification.

Ms. Light responded that the proposal moved the scale, and an employee hired next year would be paid at an 8% higher scale.

Ms. Yeung asked whether the SAFER Program would already embed the 8% increase.

Mr. Joseph Grainger, Assistant Fire Chief, explained that when they made the application to FEMA for the SAFER Program, they had to use present-day dollars and the current pay scale. He said that it was a reimbursement grant during the performance period. He said that at the end of each six-month period, they would send information to FEMA, and the County would be reimbursed on actuals. He said that if the scale moved, and their request was below the original request, they would be able to receive the money if they had a letter of award.

Ms. Yeung clarified that overtime was not counted.

Mr. Grainger responded that the SAFER Program was specific in what it allowed to be included in the request. He said that Fair Labor Standards Act overtime, so scheduled overtime based on the work schedule—about three hours per week—was allowed to be included in the request. He said that specialized overtime was ineligible according to the grant guidelines.

Ms. Yeung asked if there was an estimate of how much specialized overtime there would be.

Mr. Grainger responded that they used an aggregate of $13,800 per employee in specialized overtime when performing the budget submission for the general fund. He said that there was a variance between what was eligible through the SAFER Program and what was ineligible.

Ms. Yeung asked whether it was included in the budget.

Mr. Grainger responded that it was included in the budget. He said that the budget request was higher because it was included.

Ms. Light said that in terms of general government salary initiatives, there was a proposed 8% raise for general government employees. She said that Fire and Rescue and SCSO had civilian employees who were included in the 8% raise. She said a market study was being conducted for general government, and it would not be completed before the budget period. She said that the proposed budget set aside $475K to implement the market study once it came back before the Board.

Ms. Light stated that the Department of Social Services (DSS) had undergone a market study that was recently completed. She said that the study reviewed 13 different positions, and there was an average increase of approximately 10% to the pay scale. She said that the proposal would help reduce or eliminate compression issues.

Ms. Light said that they had included $200K for promotions and reclassifications for any eligible County employee. She said that they had used vacancy savings in prior years. She said that the

Board was asked to designate the funding so HR would know it was available. She said that the fund would be used to continue to award and promote employees.

Ms. Bohmke asked whether they would receive information related to what the market study funding would apply to. She noted that not one project on the 2019 bond issue had been completed. She said that she wanted to review where the hard-to-hire positions were. She said that they were unable to complete projects because they did not have the right personnel.

Mr. Vosburg responded that the transportation positions were included in the study. He said that when they received the results, they would share them. He said that they selected the positions by reviewing vacancies and issues with hiring.

Ms. Bohmke asked for detailed information.

Ms. Light clarified that the study would not be complete until after the budget was adopted.

Mr. English clarified whether there was an idea as to the scope that was needed.

Ms. Donna Krauss, Deputy County Administrator, responded that the consultant was completing the analysis, and it took several months for it to be completed because it was a survey-based model. She said that the consultant would have to synthesize the data, and it would not be available before April 16.

Mr. Coen asked whether they had anecdotal information about hiring needs.

Ms. Bohmke said that she wanted to see more statistical data. She said that she wanted to be educated on where the County was having problems.

Ms. Krauss responded that staff reviewed the status frequently across the organization, and they were aware of various areas, including transportation, utilities, public works, cybersecurity, and IT. She noted that there were pockets of areas of struggle, such as in social services, where they were not receiving qualified applicants. She said that they reviewed vacancy reports monthly, and they were strategizing how to address the multiple issues. She said that staff could share a summary of their findings, where they were, and demonstrate the work they were doing.

Ms. Light said that in the budget, they had overtime of about $2.3M, or $0.01 on the tax rate. She said that the general government was reducing overtime by $150K due to the return of comp-time. She said that social services had $48K of overtime which was 100% offset by federal revenue. She said that the SCSO was at $1.2M, and some of the funding was attributed to the 15% raise, and there was $106K for new positions. She said that there was $375K of additional overtime for the SCSO.

Ms. Light said that Fire and Rescue had almost $1.2M in new overtime. She said that some of the funding was FLSA required overtime, funding for specialized overtime, and then new positions. She said that vacancy savings were a negative expenditure in the budget. She said that the whole payroll was reduced by the vacancy savings. She said that the vacancy savings had been reduced which caused expenditures to increase. She said that they went from $2.3M to $1.9M.

Ms. Bohmke asked whether the specialized positions for Fire and Rescue were highlighted in the budget book. She noted that Fire and Rescue included $544K for specialized.

Ms. Light responded that the item was for specialized overtime for the department, such as leave coverage, training, or other types of operations which created additional overtime.

Ms. Light said that the budget requested increased Board support related to pay. She said that the request would increase the Chair's pay to $22K and $20K for each Board member, and the total impact would be $148K a year. She said that the pay increase would be effective on January 1, 2024.

Ms. Vanuch requested that the item be clarified so that the public did not mistakenly perceive that the Board was going to increase its pay to $148K.

Ms. Light noted that clarity was key.

Mr. Coen asked whether the $204K included other employment benefits.

Ms. Light responded that they were all part-time positions to support the Board, and they were anticipated to be 28 hours a week or less. She said that there was no funding for any of the fringe benefits outside of FICA.

Ms. Vanuch asked that staff include the salary for each employee in the case they wanted to increase the per-district expenditure to hire a consultant rather than hire a part-time employee. She said that a consultant may be more cost-effective than a part-time employee.

Ms. Yeung stated that they had a difficult time finding employees, and finding seven administrative support staff would be difficult. She recommended that they start with one or two support staff.

Ms. Vanuch said that they had to do all or nothing. She said that they could not take a position dedicated for one Board member and share tasks among all Board members.

Ms. Yeung suggested that they hire two full-time positions to support the entire Board.

Ms. Vanuch said that would be adding to staff and not serving the intent of the proposal. She said that the proposal would allow the support staff to attend meetings on behalf of the supervisor. She said that she would not be comfortable sharing a support staff member with another supervisor because there would be too many conflicts. She noted that the intent was that the employee would serve at the pleasure of each individual Board member.

Ms. Bohmke said that she did not support the administrative support staff proposal. She noted that the County already had administrative staff. She said that each supervisor knew what the position entailed.

Ms. Gary stated that she supported the proposed support staff. She said that the County would be better served if each supervisor was served by a dedicated support staff. She said that all seven positions were needed.

Mr. English said that the positions were not needed. He said that he did not support the proposal. He said that he did not support the $10K proposed for each district.

Mr. Coen asked whether the dedicated support staff would follow the County policies or the policies set by each supervisor. He asked whether the employees would represent the County or the supervisor. He asked whether he was able to arbitrarily fire the dedicated support staff. He said that often, people stated that it was hard to fill part-time positions. He asked what would happen if a supervisor was unable to fill a position.

Ms. Light said that there was an increase for audit fees, public notification, apparel, dues, and mileage in the budget, and the total cost was $30,500. She said that public notifications was the largest expenditure of approximately $15K.

Ms. Bohmke asked what audit fees were.

Ms. Light responded that audit fees were the cost of the audit, and they had a contractual increase of $6K.

Ms. Bohmke clarified that the item was the annual audit.

Ms. Light said that under new personnel for general government, there were five positions. She said that the cybersecurity engineer position would provide a second cybersecurity position to support risk reduction. She said that all general government requests were scored. She said that at the recent bond agency rating reviews for the issuance of the standalone VPSA bond borrow, two out of the three rating agencies asked how the County was mitigating cybersecurity risks.

Ms. Light said that there was a planning and zoning long-range planner who would provide additional support. She said that another IT position for a desktop support analyst was proposed. She said that a Deputy Clerk I clerk of the Circuit Court position would assist in probates process, and it would add a second person to the office.

Ms. Vanuch clarified whether the deputy clerk position would be eligible for funding for vacancies in constitutional officer positions. She requested that if the position did not qualify, staff provide a reason as to why the Circuit Court believed it needed the position when the state's growth projections did not.

Ms. Allen said that, on the matter of sharing dedicated support staff, it was not feasible. She said that the staff was already overworked. She said that they passed a bylaw that prevented supervisors from directing staff to perform requests not approved by the entire Board.

Ms. Light said that there would be a building maintenance mechanic. She said that the position would help the County get closer to the industry standard of one staff member for every 45,000 square feet of office space. She said that the position would put the County at one staff member per 65,523 square feet. She said that there would be a parks maintenance worker paid from the tourism fund. She said that the fund would be used to pay for sports and other tourism activities.

Ms. Light said that social services had eight positions proposed in the budget, and all eight were eligible for federal and state revenues at 84.5% She said that the County's budget had attributed $64,375 of local funds to support the positions. She said that they assumed five of the eight positions would be supported through the funds, and the remaining three would be funded through vacancy savings.

Ms. Vanuch clarified that there would be vacancy savings for the first year. She asked how the positions would be funded in the following years, and she noted that the turnover would likely decrease as caseloads stabilized and more employees were hired. She asked what the long-term cost would be. She asked whether there was a sliding scale for federal and state aid.

Ms. Light responded that the County would have to provide about $10K to $15K for each position if the vacancy savings were removed. She said that they did not anticipate the savings to be removed in FY24.

Mr. Coen requested information regarding the caseload. He asked whether the pandemic had impacts.

Ms. Yeung noted that the number of people living in and working in the County increased during the pandemic. She said that they had to know detailed figures about the increase in people working in the County.

Mr. Michael Muse, Director of Social Services, stated that he was unsure of the vacancy savings. He said that the positions would use vacancy savings in FY24 and into the future.

Ms. Light responded that as they continued to see vacancy savings in social services, they could capture the savings and not overbudget salaries. She said that social services had about $750K in vacancy savings. She said that she was confident the amount would be able to cover the positions.

Mr. Muse said that the 84.5% rate was constant, and it was not a sliding scale.

Ms. Vanuch asked how many positions had been added over the last 10 years.

Mr. Muse said that he would provide specific caseload data to Ms. Light. He said that they were significantly behind the other localities. He said that the staff was handling 40 to 50 more cases per person than the County's closest competitor, Spotsylvania.

Ms. Vanuch requested information about the number of new claims being received.

Ms. Yeung asked if they performed exit interviews. She asked whether they were losing employees to work-from-home positions.

Mr. Muse said that they could provide that information. He said that anecdotally, they typically lost employees to other localities. He said that some positions, such as benefit specialists, which were able to telework, saw employee turnover. He noted that social workers were not able to telework because they had to be in the field.

Ms. Vanuch asked how many benefit specialists worked in the County.

Mr. Muse said that there were approximately 28.

Ms. Vanuch asked how often they were able to work remotely.

Mr. Muse said that they worked remotely 2 days per week based on the County policy.

Ms. Vanuch noted that if they were able to work full-time remotely in Fairfax and only two days in the County, then Fairfax was a bigger draw.

Ms. Bohmke noted that the benefit specialists had an easier workday to track and measure. She asked whether they found that the benefit specialists were accountable when teleworking.

Mr. Muse answered that yes, they were accountable to the work, because the benefits must still be processed in a timely and accurate way, so they knew as folks applied that that was happening. He said that there was a necessity to have people in the office as well, and he did not think they could be 100% teleworking because they had people who came into the offices to do business in-person, but there were opportunities for more telework than the current policy provided.

Mr. English said that telework was not a good idea for those people because they dealt with the public every day, and if they were teleworking they could not do that job as they should be.

Mr. Muse said that it varied by position. He said that social workers who were doing CPS investigations, adult protective service investigations, could not telework. He stated that other staff were able to telework and do a good job doing that. He stated that yes, they had to have people present to see people who visited the office.

Ms. Yeung said that the caseload numbers prior to COVID-19 could be measured against those after to see if there was an increase. She said it was difficult to compare departments to each other when each serve such varying functions, and there may be other impacts that require assessment.

Ms. Andrea Light said that this budget proposed six School Protection Officers, which would go to Conway, Moncure, and Widewater, where they currently had three School Protection Officers currently deployed, but they were overfill, so this would budget for that overfill. She said that the other three would go to Falmouth, Kate Waller Barrett, and Anthony Burns.

Ms. Light stated that there was a Juvenile Services Sergeant in this budget, which was to help with the increase in School Protection Officers so that there was adequate management. She said that there was four field ops, and two field ops specific to supporting the unfunded state mandate for the MARCUS Alert mental health issues. She said that there was an Investigator I conversion from part-time to full-time. She stated that the total for these Sheriff positions were $2,776,788.

Ms. Light said that there were two positions to help continue support of the body-worn camera initiative, the first being a Records Specialist for the Sheriff, and the second was an Assistant Commonwealth Attorney. She said that they did not anticipate being over 150 issued body cameras in FY24, but if they went over 150, they would have to add an additional person in the Commonwealth Attorney's Office.

Ms. Bohmke asked Ms. Light to review the six protection officer positions. She said that Ms. Light mentioned Conway and Widewater.

Ms. Light said that the third school was Moncure. She said that they were currently at those three schools as overfills. She said that the other three would go to Falmouth, Kate Waller Barrett, and Anthony Burns.

Ms. Bohmke asked how many of the elementary schools had School Protection Officers.

Ms. Light said that she believed there were three.

Ms. Bohmke said that one was Ferry Farm.

Mr. English said that it was Ferry Farm, Hartwood Elementary School, and Conway.

Ms. Vanuch said that the Sheriff moved positions around and over-hired to get three School Protection Officers.

Ms. Bohmke asked if that was why these positions were in the budget now.

Ms. Vanuch said yes, and that was why the Sheriff needed them to be fully-funded, because they over-hired through vacancy savings or another avenue to get them into the elementary schools.

Mr. English said that they were part-time currently.

Ms. Vanuch said that they were part-time. She said that these would be full-time positions.

Ms. Bohmke asked if the goal was to have a deputy in every elementary school.

Ms. Vanuch said that that was what the Sheriff wanted to do.

Ms. Bohmke said that there were 18. She asked how many would be filled now.

Ms. Yeung said that there were 17.

Ms. Bohmke said that she was including HeadStart.

Ms. Yeung said that it would be 19 in that case, because there were two HeadStarts.

Ms. Light said that she would return with more information in a Q&A. She said that there were three that were already out there from a previous budget, three that were in these schools now that were unfunded and in as overfills, so being funded in the FY24 budget, and then an additional three, for a total of nine. She reiterated that they would follow up with the Sheriff and confirm that.

Ms. Vanuch noted that the Sheriff had eight deputy patrol positions last year, and four of them were used as School Resource Officers rather than as patrol positions, so now every middle school and high school had an SRO. She said that the overfill positions were adjusted with those existing staff as there was an uptick in school threats and bomb threats. She said that there had been over 25 school threats since the beginning of school.

Mr. English said that that was not counting fights.

Ms. Vanuch confirmed that was only including shooting and bomb threats.

Ms. Bohmke asked if, when doing the schools' budget, to show what they were funding in total for SROs at elementary, middle and high schools as well as the costs associated with each.

Ms. Vanuch said that some schools paid for their own.

Ms. Light said that for new personnel in Fire & Rescue, there was one new engine crew, three lieutenants per shift as shift safety officers, one lieutenant for volunteer basic training as a part-time to full-time conversion, and Emergency Management Training Coordinator. She stated that the total Fire & Rescue positions was $2,383,717.

Ms. Vanuch asked if there were three battalion chiefs included in these documents.

Ms. Light said that was mid-year.

Ms. Vanuch asked if that could be included as part of the total cost.

Mr. Vosburg said that it was from the previous mid-year.

Ms. Vanuch said that that was confusing.

Ms. Bohmke asked if Mr. Joe Grainger could discuss the positions other than the engine crew.

Ms. Yeung asked if the $1,629,962 figure for the engine crew was correct.

Mr. Grainger said that the 12-person engine crew would assist in filling specifically in the eastern rural district where they had first due areas that were not covered by full-time engine company staff. He said that the shift safety officer would be a company officer, or a lieutenant's position, with one per shift, or one person on duty every 24 hours per day to monitor safety operations of their personnel.

Mr. Grainger stated that in emergency operations, this person would be on the scene of highway calls, hazmat incidents, building fires, with an eye to safety, and outside of that, shift safety officers would work on health and wellness of personnel and to take care of administrative tasks such as accident and injury reporting that was currently not done in a uniform fashion, so a challenge was with comprehensive data collection. He said that they looked to decrease the risk of their personnel with the presence of a shift safety officer.

Mr. Grainger stated that currently, they ran volunteer fire academies consistently throughout the year on a night and weekend schedule, with a part-time employee who did that work. He stated that the workload to support the volunteer basic training process exceeded what the part-time position can accomplish, so they have requested that conversion to a full-time position. He said that the Emergency Management Training Coordinator would work with Katie Carpenter, the Emergency Management Coordinator, specifically with an eye to training and exercise, such as community tornado drills.

Mr. Grainger said that they should be performing such drills on a frequent basis to make sure their community was as safe as possible, and in a holistic approach, they would make sure the community was safe and well-prepared, that County employees were safe and well-prepared. The Emergency Management Training Coordinator would run training operations in the emergency operations center, NIMS compliance, and those sort of pieces of work within the emergency management position.

Ms. Bohmke asked if an example could be provided for when a shift safety manager was not on a particular scene within the last three months and how it impacted that scene.

Mr. Grainger said that a safety officer would not be dispatched to an immediately dangerous life hazard (IDLH) environments currently. He said that they assigned two command officers, and normally one of those command officers had to function as a command officer and safety officer. This person, when they arrived on the scene, there would be no question as to who was responsible to ensuring the safety of that operation.

Mr. Grainger said that a command officer's job was to make sure that the operational crews were suppressing the fire as quickly as possible or extricating the patient from being entrapped in a vehicle as quickly as possible, or mitigating a hazmat on the highway as quickly and effective as possible. He said that they did not necessarily have an eye to safe operations, and the safety officer would be looking at it from a different perspective, and would be able to do an all-stop. He said that normally, only the on-site commander could call an all-stop on an operation, but the safety officer was empowered to call an all-stop if they identified something that would cause injury or death, and that would be their function during such emergency operations.

Mr. Grainger added that the safety officer's responsibility in non-operational activities, because this would fall under administrative services and under his own command, would give the ability to have more purpose in their data collection to decrease the risk of injury to their personnel. He said that this person would be an on-duty resource in regard to health and wellness for personnel as well.

Ms. Light said that ARPA allocations included in this budget were $5,103,428 for replacement radios for both the Sheriff and Fire & Rescue, but it was a Sheriff-run initiative. She stated that the current radios were over 10 years old and no longer being serviced, so as they went out of service, they were unable to be replaced, and it was important for all of public safety to have all of the same equipment.

Ms. Vanuch asked if the Grant Accountant position on the slide was the position that Mr. Toigo took over.

Ms. Light said that no, that position was within the accounting department, and that position currently did all of the ARPA reporting and all of their various grants.

Ms. Yeung said that the radio replacements and body-worn cameras were one-time fees, and the pay raise and the Grant Accountant were ongoing expenses. She asked if they knew how much must be allocated. She asked when ARPA ended.

Ms. Light said that it ended in 2025. She said that the Grant Accountant would be approximately $100,000 per year as they transitioned from ARPA into the general fund. She said that the hope was that as their grant program began to increase, that position would still be able to charge a portion, if not all of their time to the different grants they were serving on. She said that the body-worn camera costs were ongoing.

Ms. Light said that as part of the initiative to get body-worn cameras going, the Board used ARPA funding, and they had a four-year ramp-up to what would be put into the general fund, so in FY24, it was $406,000, in FY25, they would only use another $125,000 or $160,000 approximately of ARPA funding, and the remainder of that would be in the general fund, so they were slowly moving this to be able to use general fund dollars.

Ms. Yeung asked if they could begin somewhere and say when they had to add it into the general fund. She asked how much in the tax rate would be considered. She asked if it was around one or two cents.

Ms. Light said yes. She said that it would be closer to 1.5 cents for the Sheriff pay, the body-worn camera, and the Grant Accountant position, if those were 100% funded through the general fund.

Ms. Vanuch said that that would be calculating for zero revenue growth, and with that logic, it would be an equalized tax rate, and those costs were not offset by any revenue growth.

Ms. Light said that this was finalizing the allocations, so this would be the remainder of all of the funding from ARPA with the exception of the body-worn camera costs in FY25. She said that in December, the Board directed staff to set aside about $1M-$1.2M for the Carl Lewis Center. She said that as proposed, this did not take that into consideration because of multiple challenges seen by staff, which would be brought to the Board's attention to receive their input during this budget process.

Ms. Light said that they did not include Carl Lewis partially because of the timing, because all funds must be encumbered by December 2025. She said that the concern was that with as slow as some of the construction was going, they may not be able to meet that timeframe, partially due to the economic recession being experienced. She said that the procurement for construction compared to a single purchase such as the radio replacement in comparison was much more difficult to do.

Ms. Light said that for construction, there was no cooperative procurement, and also with construction there may be multiple purchase orders that helped them get to a constructive building. She said that the County staff, both in procurement and in capital projects, would be doing a much more significant amount of effort to bring the Carl Lewis Center forward. She said that information was left with the Board for questions and considerations.

Ms. Light said that in regard to debt service, the fire levy would be discussed at the March 21 budget work session. She said that $2,777,645 of general fund debt had been moved into the fire levy to be supported by that levy, and if the Board chose not to do a fire levy, the $2.78M would have to go back into the general fund.

Ms. Light said that High School #6 and the 3R just sold in the 2023 VPSA standalone, they assumed, as they were putting the budget together, $4.7M in debt service. She said that the actual debt service that would be in FY24 was $4.4M, resulting in $344,612 in savings. She stated that staff recommended using the savings for a one-time expenditure in FY2024 to put toward the debt service increase from FY2024 to FY2025 of $2,898,487.

Ms. Light said that in the proposed budget, there was savings of $383,791. She said that a few years ago, 25% of merchants capital was set aside for economic development initiatives, which had been pulled back over the years and resulted in a remainder of $82, 405 that could be redistributed to other costs.

Ms. Light said that in FY2023, the general fund supported the E-Summons fund, which was a traffic ticket system for the Sheriff's Department, but the cost of the software and ongoing costs for that system were not anticipated for FY23 or FY24, so $48,220 was pulled back. She stated that County-wide training, treasurer administrative expense, human services, and miscellaneous decreases also resulted in these savings.

Ms. Light said that in other expenses, there was $110,000 to support contracting for federal grants. She said that there was funding set aside for tree lighting, $45,000 as an ongoing cost and $45,000 as a one-time cost for the artificial tree. She stated that there was $83,669 for increase in utilities, $60,000 for community events as a new initiative, and $18,500 for dog park operating costs beginning in FY23.

Ms. Bohmke asked if the dog parks were proposed in the Capital Improvement Plan document.

Ms. Light said that one was approved in FY23 at Mountain View, primarily through proffers and with some County funding. She said that the other was in Hampton Oaks, which was all proffer funding proposed in FY24 CIP.

Ms. Bohmke asked if the dog park at Mountain View was at the site of the old YMCA.

Mr. Morris said that it would be the opposite side of the elementary school if facing the building from the left instead of the right; in front of the baseball and softball fields.

Ms. Bohmke said alright. She asked where the Hampton Oaks dog park was located.

Ms. Light said that it was at the elementary school.

Ms. Bohmke asked what the community events that cost $60,000.

Ms. Light said that it would be set aside for what PRCF came to the Board with, or the Board had.

Ms. Vanuch asked if this included the 4th of July funding.

Ms. Light said that this was in addition.

Mr. Morris said that this was a new event, so the money was for if the Board chose to have a new event.

Ms. Bohmke said that on page 20, under debt service, it was indicated that a $1.6M master lease was issued. She asked what that master lease was for.

Ms. Light said that it would be for a number of Fire & Rescue apparatus. She said that she could provide the breakdown of each of those issuances, but those had already been issued.

Ms. Bohmke asked if this debt was currently outstanding because these were already issued, and would be put on the fire levy, and not new projects. She asked if all this debt would fall under the fire levy.

Ms. Light said that was correct.

Ms. Bohmke asked if the three cents would consume this money, or if more would be left over.

Ms. Light said that at three cents, they were just over $6M, so it would be sufficient in at least the five years to be able to support all debt service and the beginning of construction of three fire stations and the joint training center, as well as the debt service associated with that.

Ms. Bohmke asked where that was indicated in the documents.

Ms. Light said that it was not, and they would discuss it when they talked about the fire levy. She said that on OpenGov, looking under the fire levy would provide more detail.

Ms. Bohmke said that she knew how to view that document.

Ms. Light said that the five-year plan for the fire levy had that information under the five-year plan header. She said that there was a lot of information, and the five-year plan was included in the handout.

Mr. English asked if Ms. Light could explain the savings of $48,000 from E-Summons tickets.

Ms. Light said that in FY23, the Sheriff's Department assumed that they would be putting in a new software system that would have additional annual maintenance costs, but it was not coming to fruition, so the general fund did not have to provide that E-Summons fund.

Ms. Vanuch asked if the reason why that was not being funded could be found. She said that the software would make it easier to record tickets. She asked if the County made revenue on traffic tickets written and how much it would be on average.

Ms. Light said that budget commitments included $347,809 for the jail, primarily to help put the jail officers on something similar to a step, and would help with some of their compression issues. She said that the juvenile center had an increase of $174,671. She said that a state program had paid for 16 beds in the juvenile center and helped paid for much of the overhead, but changes in juvenile services had reduced the state contribution to eight, and they were not paying for nearly as much overhead as in the past. She said that the library had a $462,360 increase, including the 5% raise, computer items, and furniture.

Ms. Vanuch asked who the Library Board appointee was.

Ms. Gary stated that she was the appointee.

Ms. Vanuch asked if Ms. Gary had voted on the budget.

Ms. Gary said no.

Ms. Bohmke said that she voted on it, but she voted against it because they approved their budget so far in advance.

Ms. Vanuch said that it was different timing than the jail one. She said that there was also issue of that group not recording their meetings. She said that she would be opposed to any increase unless the Library Board recorded their meetings.

Ms. Gary said that at a recent meeting she attended, there was discussion about how to move forward with recording meetings, so that should be done very soon, however, she did not know when as of yet.

Ms. Bohmke asked if there was an upcoming meeting.

Ms. Gary said yes.

Ms. Bohmke asked if that was on the agenda.

Ms. Gary said no.

Ms. Bohmke said that if it was not on the agenda, it would not be addressed.

Ms. Gary thanked Ms. Bohmke for telling her this up front. She said that she would make sure that it would be included on the agenda if it was not already, as she had not seen it yet.

Mr. Coen said that he must excuse himself from the meeting as the extended length was interfering with multiple engagements he was due to attend.

Ms. Gary stated that she had to leave the meeting early as well. She said that she understood the issue of the step increases for their law enforcement was coming up, and she was approving of that so long as it did not mean pulling funding from schools, and she approved of the proposals for schools as presented. She said that she also was comfortable with the fire levy, and the transparency was good for something so necessary.

Ms. Light said that partner agencies as a whole had been an overall flat expense in FY23. She said that in FY2023, $38,211 of ARPA funding was allocated to the Bay Consortium, so there were no ARPA funds in any of the partner agencies. She said that there was a policy requirement for 3R funding, which was 3% of their expenditures, so that did increase.

Ms. Light said that there was an increase to $8,038,342 in transportation funding from the personal property tax. She said that this was an increase from what would have been funded by personal property tax by about $3M. She said that there was dedicated capital funding for school projects of $1M, saving $80,000 in future debt for the next 20 years. She said that a one-time list was provided in the Board binders and on OpenGov.

Ms. Light said that she would now discuss general fund revenues. She said that they were beginning to compile information regarding real estate. She said that Hanover, Henrico, and

Albemarle all had done reassessments this year and were maintaining a flat tax rate, and the chart on the slide showed what Stafford's increased tax rate would be at 94 cents with no reassessments compared to Hanover, Henrico, and Albemarle.

Ms. Light said that the budget increased by over $25.7M for real estate alone. She said that the median tax bill would increase by about $347 annually, or just under $175 for each bill.

Ms. Vanuch asked where the $200 figure came from. She asked Mr. Vosburg what was in his presentation. She asked if it was $347.

Mr. Vosburg said that he had $3,628 for the median tax bill.

Ms. Vanuch asked what the $260 increase from the budget assumption she saw online was. She said that that number should be confirmed and clarified. She said that she would like to see a slide of the median tax assessment along with other numbers to compare to in order to see those respective increases.

Mr. English said that that was with Mr. Vosburg's budget.

Ms. Vanuch said that it would be with the 12-cent increase. She said that it should be ensured that everything was together and inclusive of the fire levy so the total increase was known.

Ms. Bohmke said that she felt that the veteran's tax and elderly tax relief should not be shown together as they currently were. She said that they should be separate because the veteran's tax is such a big number for the County, and some people may think that the elderly are getting more than they really were. She said that if they increased the elderly exemption, she would like to know how many people that would impact. She said that she was unsure if it was necessary.

Ms. Yeung asked if Ms. Bohmke was asking about the increase.

Ms. Vanuch said that while she was uncertain, her recollection was that the previous assessment was far above what was calculated, and more people qualified, because there was no true way to know who qualified until it was increased and they claimed it. She said greater eligibility meant greater tax relief, and property taxes also impacted this tax exemption when house values were raised.

Ms. Yeung said that the tax relief program for the elderly, their income remained the same.

Ms. Light said that if they were receiving social security, there was a 7% increase.

Ms. Vanuch said that VA benefits also had increased and was planned to rise the next year.

Mr. Vosburg said that the increase of $500 had an estimated $600,000 impact to revenue, equating to 1,200 people. He asked if that was correct.

Ms. Vanuch said that previously used had been a sliding scale based on income.

Ms. Yeung said that she recalled that as well.

Ms. Light said that this information could return to the Board at the March 21 meeting, when staff would request the Board to vote on the tax rates to be advertised. She said that it was helpful to get this type of information as to what the Board would be looking for in order to be able to vote on those advertisements.

Ms. Vanuch said that next year was an assessment year, meaning the County would perform a reassessment, but the fiscal year was from July to July, and occurred halfway through that assessment year. She asked if the assessments dropped next spring, what was the assumption calculated on this particular tax rate for next year's assessment.

Ms. Light said that they were calculating a 3.1% reassessment increase, so what was seen by looking at Fredericksburg area real estate was that the number of sales may have dwindled, but the prices for houses continued to increase. She said that they felt it was indicative of increased prices, and the reassessment would not drop. She said that they were assuming a flat tax rate through FY24, so a 3.1% increase in reassessments as assumed was a tax rate increase. She said that they assumed in the FY24 budget a tax rate increase for the June 2024 billing of 3.1%.

Ms. Vanuch said that there would be two tax increases, with one this year and then next year at 3.1%.

Ms. Yeung asked if it had been considered that they were going to be in a recession, especially in regard to housing.

Ms. Light said that they could only use the information they currently had to analyze that, and they did not see the housing prices dropping. She said that Stafford County was somewhat isolated from a lot of the pressures occurring due to recession because of the stable employment base of the federal government. She said that those dramatic shifts were not seen as they were in other parts of the country.

Ms. Yeung said that was good to know.

Ms. Light said that the slide displayed showed other property tax. She noted that for personal property, they were continuing to work with the Commissioner of the Revenue's office. She said that in Mr. Vosburg's presentation, he mentioned that they were assuming $4.99 for an effective rate of $2.50. She said that the Commissioner of Revenue's Office was still finalizing the personal property valuation, which could impact that rate to achieve the proposed revenue. She said that in FY23, the Board dropped that rate because valuations of cars went up exponentially, and they were now seeing that begin to level off. She said that when this information was before the Board on March 21, they may have a different tax rate to ask the Board to advertise.

Ms. Light said that the next slide listed consumption taxes. She stated that recordation tax was coming down significantly, which it generally did when they had an increase in interest rate. She said that not seen on the slide was the increase in interest of about $2.3M. She said that in the compensation board funding, their assumptions were that there was going to be funding for a 7% pay increase, and also were assuming that they did not have to give a 7% pay increase, because they were paying at least 7% above what the compensation board funding would be.

Ms. Vanuch asked if a slide could be compiled on that for the schools as well.

Ms. Light said yes.

Mr. English asked if the E-911 service was something on their phone bill.

Ms. Light confirmed Mr. English's question.

Mr. English asked if the amount could be increased.

Ms. Light said no. She said that it was state-funded. She continued that they were trying to fill out their comparative localities. She said that some of them had not yet proposed, or it was difficult to find their information. She said that Stafford County was projecting about 7.5% of their real estate tax as tax relief as compared to Spotsylvania, which was at 1% and Hanover at 1.2%.

Ms. Vanuch asked what Prince William was at.

Ms. Light said that she did not have that figure yet, but they would continue to gather information. She said that as they sent out Q&A's and updated the Board, they would continue to update the slide on comparative localities to provide that information for benchmark information. She said that March 16 was a follow-up meeting if necessary.

Ms. Vanuch proposed to cancel the March 16 meeting because there were not many questions remaining.

Ms. Yeung asked if Ms. Allen had any questions.

Ms. Allen said that she would direct her questions to Ms. Light via email.

Ms. Yeung said that she would also send Ms. Light her own questions. She asked if there were any further comments.

Mr. English asked if the March 21 meeting could have time allocated to follow up on this item. He asked if it would make a difference.

Ms. Yeung said that question would be sent out to Supervisors Gary and Coen, and they would let them know of the March 16 meeting.

Mr. Vosburg said that based on the recommendation of Supervisor Vanuch, the consensus was to cancel the March 16 meeting.

Ms. Yeung said that they should check in with Supervisors Gary and Coen.

Ms. Vanuch said that the remaining Board members could make that decision.

Ms. Yeung said that she would prefer to ask those absent members as well. She asked if the times worked for everyone else other than Supervisor Vanuch, who did not want to meet on the 16th.

Ms. Vanuch said that she would not attend on the 16th regardless.

Ms. Yeung said that Supervisors Gary and Coen should be asked about that meeting.

Mr. Vosburg said yes.

ADJOURNMENT
At 5:40 p.m., Chairman Yeung adjourned the March 9, 2023 Stafford County Board of Supervisor's Budget work session.

Randy Vosburg

Randal E. Vosburg
County Administrator

Dr. R. Pamela Yeung
Chairman