

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
STAFFORD COUNTY, VIRGINIA
MINUTES
JOINT BOARD OF SUPERVISORS AND SCHOOL BOARD WORK SESSION
FEBRUARY 27, 2024

CALL TO ORDER – A joint work session of the Stafford County Board of Supervisors and the Stafford County School Board was called to order by Meg Bohmke, Chairman, at 4:00 p.m. on Thursday, February 27, 2024 in Room A of the Courthouse Community Center, 29 Stafford Avenue, Stafford VA 22554.

ROLL CALL – The following members were present: Meg Bohmke, Chairman; Tinesha Allen, Vice Chairman (*arrived at 4:02 p.m.*); Deuntay T. Diggs; Darrell E. English; Monica L. Gary; Crystal L. Vanuch; Dr. Pamela Yeung.

Ms. Vanuch motioned, seconded by Dr. Yeung, to allow Ms. Gary to participate in the meeting remotely.

Ms. Bohmke confirmed that the motion passed unanimously by voice vote (6-0).

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

WORK SESSION AGENDA ITEM

FY25 SCHOOL BOARD BUDGET PRESENTATION

Ms. Siegmund said that she would like to express her appreciation for the opportunity to share many of the successes that they achieved this year, as well as some of their challenges. She said that they had asked their Superintendent, Dr. Taylor, and their Deputy Superintendent, Mr. Fulmer, to present the budget that they recently approved and explain how it would help them better serve the children of Stafford County. She said that they eagerly anticipated continuing to do great things for their community. She said that their support and collaboration were vital to their progress, and they were excited to see what they could achieve together.

Dr. Taylor said that due to a recent game of rock, paper, scissors, he would be presenting today. He said that he would like to express their gratitude for Madam Chair, as they had achieved significant accomplishments in Stafford County in recent years. He said that despite facing state budget challenges last year, they managed to overcome them, just like the year before. He said that these challenges allowed them to establish a solid foundation for positive changes in their schools' resources and their utilization. He said that today, they could celebrate some of these successes and discuss future collaborations.

Dr. Taylor said that as he mentioned earlier, they had recently readopted their budget, which brings exciting news regarding state revenue. He said that this has led to a reduction in their original ask presented to the County Administrator. He said that he looked forward to sharing these updates with everyone. He said that in their green folder, everyone would find a copy of the presentation for easier reference, including full-size pictures of facts, figures, and charts that may be difficult to see on the screen. He said that everyone would find their School Board-approved operating budget and budget summary tabs with their respective exhibits. He said that for those who required a larger version of the budget summary, Mr. Fulmer could provide them upon request.

Dr. Taylor said that what they aimed to communicate today included some crucial messages. He said that these were their goals, the details of their request, why they make these requests, successes from their collaborative efforts, areas for improvement, and their appreciation for their partnership in enhancing Stafford County. He said that he acknowledged everyone's numerous priorities that require balancing. He said that they understand that their part in their budget was not the entirety of Stafford County's budget, and any changes they make must be incremental. He said that the story of Stafford was being written today.

Dr. Taylor said that despite its 300-year history, they had much work ahead. He said that this was his third collaboration on a budget during their time together. He said that the image on the screen served to convey that they had more chapters to write together and much work left to do incrementally. He said that they could be proud of significant progress in capital improvement, but there was still catching up and making up to do. He said that the Board of Supervisors challenged the School Board and him when he joined Stafford to think in five-year terms and plan ahead.

Dr. Taylor said that there was some disparity between the County's five-year plan and the school's five-year plan, but it was a significant step in the correct direction that they were looking ahead and that it was not merely done one year at a time or in isolation. He said that from the very beginning of these boards coming together with this group of elected officials, there had been some buy-in and focus on how they could phase into improvements in salary.

Dr. Taylor said that they could gradually progress toward a more competitive rate of pay and benefits for their staff. He said that this was a substantial step in the correct direction. He noted that an essential move for them on the school side was ensuring that they treated their schools fairly and that they accounted for staff with position control, that they had robust financial internal controls in place, and they had established staffing standards so that schools received equitable resources and obtained the resources they needed to be successful.

Dr. Taylor said that they should all be very proud of how Stafford had avoided the fiscal cliff. He explained that the financial cliff that was approaching from the reduction in ESSER funds could

have been dramatic in Stafford County. He said that thinking ahead, planning ahead, and gradually moving toward a little financial freedom was a wise decision for Stafford County. He added that it was a collaborative project that they should all be very proud of.

Dr. Taylor said that they had made numerous low or no-cost improvements to their programming and some of their processes, and he was eager to showcase these for them. He said that there was still much work to be done. He said that they knew that there was much ground that they needed to cover in terms of attracting and retaining high-quality staff to teach and serve their children. He said that adjusting for a rapidly changing labor market had been a challenge both on the County side and on the school side, and this was something that they needed to work on together.

Dr. Taylor said that managing their rapid growth was another significant challenge since they were the fastest growing school division in Virginia and one of the fastest growing communities in Virginia. He added that maintaining their aging infrastructure was another unique set of challenges. He said that some of the exciting projects they got to work on was how they could position their children for bright futures and successful lives, providing them with opportunities to make Stafford County a great place to live, work, and learn for generations.

Dr. Taylor said that he would emphasize addressing the unique needs of their students and schools since they continued to evolve. He said that one of the advantages of the budget season was that it allowed them to reassess their goals, mission, and vision while refocusing on their priorities. He said that their purpose in the room and their community was to elevate Stafford County Schools and Stafford County as a whole, recognizing that schools played a crucial role in this endeavor. He said that he was grateful for the opportunity to share his thoughts that night.

Dr. Taylor said that he would introduce Amanda Collette, this year's Teacher of the Year at North Stafford High School, who was an exceptional biology teacher in their STAT Biomed program and would be one of the leaders launching their specialty center in health and medical sciences for Stafford County Public Schools. He said that Ms. Collette as an outstanding leader who had been with the County for a long time. He said that retaining talented educators like her was crucial; they must find ways to compensate them fairly and keep them engaged in their work.

Dr. Taylor said that they took pride in the fact that 72% of their workforce lived in Stafford County, which was not typical for Northern Virginia communities due to affordability issues. He said that their school system was composed of people, not just things; they invested in their staff members to ensure their organization ran smoothly. He said that there were numerous challenges posed by the pandemic that students faced upon returning to school, resulting in one of the highest turnover rates in public education history. He said that in Stafford County, this rate reached 18.2%. He said

that through targeted efforts, they had managed to reduce this figure to 13.2%, demonstrating that their strategies were effective. He said they should be proud of these achievements.

Dr. Taylor said that one area of concern was the increasing number of provisionally licensed teachers. He said that the state average for such teachers was 9.5%, whereas 25 years ago, this figure was less than 1%. He said that in Stafford County, this percentage had risen to 12.5%. He said that this trend posed challenges for recruiting and retaining qualified teachers with proper training. He said that to address this issue, they had focused on offering competitive wages. He said that while they had made progress compared to their neighboring County, Spotsylvania, they still faced competition from Prince William County.

Dr. Taylor said that although their salary differential was substantial, they must compete with other entities in terms of structure. He said that over the past few years, they had adjusted their salary scales to align more closely with Prince William's structure. He said that the dotted yellow line at the top of the current graph represented Prince William County's proposed teacher salary scale, likely around 5-8% increase, while the dotted blue line at the bottom showed Stafford's starting point just a couple of years ago. He said that in the middle, there was a slight sag due to salary compression resulting from raising the starting salary without increasing it along a step scale or merit scale based on successful years of service.

Dr. Taylor said that with the Board of Supervisors' assistance, they had successfully been bending that curve back up toward a step scale based on merit, mirroring Prince William County's system. He said that once they had fully achieved this goal, they could then discuss how to further close the gap with Prince William County in terms of pricing. He said that the process was lengthy and time-consuming, and would take many years to complete. He said that their efforts over the past three years had been fruitful, with the first two years yielding positive results.

Dr. Taylor said that the issue raised concerns regarding their relationship with Prince William County. He said that new graduates, with zero years of teaching experience, could receive the same salary as more experienced teachers due to a \$9,000 price difference. He said that it was challenging for their staff. He said that however, after a 30-year career, the price difference increased to \$57,000 for the same job, which was difficult to accept. He said that they had addressed this issue at the right time because if they had delayed their actions further, they would be significantly behind.

Dr. Taylor said that if they had maintained flat percentage increases without making adjustments, the price difference at the top of the scale would be approximately \$70,000. He said that this would be untenable. He said that the Supervisors' collaboration with the School Board in implementing these incremental changes had made a significant difference, but there was still much work to be

done. He said that in Prince William County, working for 15 years could result in a salary of almost \$95,000, while in Stafford, one never reached that amount. He said that this was a substantial issue that they must address.

Dr. Taylor said that this was not their sole employee group. He said that over the past few months, numerous dedicated individuals in green shirts had attended meetings across the County. He said that these individuals came from various service scale member groups, such as nutrition workers, clerical staff, and paraprofessionals. He said that they too required predictability in their career progression and salary growth. He said that to address this need, they had initiated the first phase of a five-phase plan. He said that they discussed this idea last year, but had lacked the necessary funding to implement it. He said that there was considerable controversy surrounding state-related matters last year. He said that their primary objective was to rectify the service scale this year.

Dr. Taylor said that one of their main goals is to improve performance within Stafford schools. He said that while not everything as perfect, there had been several positive developments worth celebrating. He said that they had implemented numerous systems, structures, and processes to transform their school system into a high-performing one. He said that parents should be proud of the education their children receive in their elementary, middle, and high schools, because they were led by exceptional principals who strive for excellence in their staff and teaching methods. He said that however, these principals had been working independently without unifying systems and structures to support their efforts, which had been a significant challenge over the past couple of years.

Dr. Taylor said that introducing a continuous improvement process had not been expensive but has been highly meaningful. He said that implementing employee appraisal systems, establishing staffing standards and position control, and other measures have led to reliable systems, structures, and processes that will ultimately contribute to improved performance. He said that they have received numerous awards and recognitions over the past few years, which should also be sources of pride for their community. He said that these accolades ranged from partnership awards with their fire department for having one of the best fire department preparation programs for students in the state.

Dr. Taylor said that Stafford County Public Schools had achieved several notable accomplishments in recent years, such as being the first school system in Virginia to establish a volunteer income tax assistance program for low-income families. He said that accounting students collaborated with the IRS to assist in tax preparation for these families in Stafford County, enabling them to file their taxes. He said that this initiative demonstrated the commitment of the school system to help those in need become responsible citizens and successfully complete their tax filings.

Dr. Taylor said that another significant achievement was being recognized by Stafford Magazine as the best place to work in Stafford County. He said that this recognition reflected the pride and dedication of their staff in providing quality education to students. He said that Dr. Yeung played a crucial role in establishing the Reflect Stafford Cohort Partnership with the Stafford Education Foundation. He said that through a donation secured from the Silver Foundation, financial support was provided for paraprofessionals seeking to become fully licensed teachers.

Dr. Taylor said that Stafford County Schools offered additional coaching, mentorship, and support to these individuals throughout their journey, ensuring they had access to resources and job placement opportunities within the County. He said that the school system had received a multi-million dollar grant award from the JED Foundation to address mental health needs in Stafford County. He said that they were one of 18 school systems in the country selected for this cross-school division program, mental health services were provided to children struggling with mental health issues.

Dr. Taylor said that there was concern regarding the decline in test performance over the past decade. He said that Stafford County was ranked 15th in SOL scores in Virginia just 10 years ago; however, the school system recognized the importance of these scores as a measure of performance and was actively working to address this issue. He said that while there may have been minor dips in certain areas from year to year, these fluctuations had accumulated over a decade, causing their school system to decline from the top 10 percentile in the state to the bottom half.

Dr. Taylor said that they were not achieving the level of performance they should or could be. He said that consequently, something else had changed during this period. He said that their average per pupil costs had shifted from being average within their state to being among the lowest. He said that they were now one of the poorest funded school systems in Virginia. He said that while correlation did not imply causation, there was a strong correlation between their declining performance and their lack of resources. He said that with adequate resources, they could reverse this trend.

Dr. Taylor said that another challenge they faced was rapid growth in their student population. He said that competing demands for resources within the County may affect their budget; however, their County's share of their budget had continued to decrease over time. He said that the state had room for improvement in addressing their unique labor market situation. He said that while the state currently contributed a significant portion of their budget, their revenues continued to rise while their County's share continued to fall.

Dr. Taylor said that they must address some significant issues within their school system that they must own because they negatively impacted their climate and culture. He said that student

behaviors had become increasingly challenging in recent years, making it difficult for educators to help them succeed academically. He said that parental support for addressing these behaviors had also diminished. He said that they had seen an increase in extreme behaviors from some students that law enforcement cannot manage alone. He said that something needed to happen at the school level because they were not necessarily crimes that were taking place, although crimes did occur. He said that they needed assistance in addressing this issue.

Dr. Taylor said that the issues they faced with students' mental health and chronic absenteeism were also at an all-time high for the division. He said that if they were serious about campus safety, they would need to invest in some more high-technology countermeasures to make sure they were keeping their kids, visitors, parents, and staff safe while on campus. He said that the world was changing very rapidly, and those countermeasures were not cheap. He said that as many benefits as there were from the changes in technology, they also came with a disproportionate amount of challenges.

Dr. Taylor said that the kids of today were dealing with a very different landscape than even just a decade ago. He said that the challenges their kids were facing in terms of navigating the landscape of social media, bullying, and friend dynamics was very different than seen a few decades ago. He said that as they considered investing in their students' economic opportunities after high school, they must also prioritize staff training and professional development to keep up with current trends and technologies. He said that the teacher in the background of the current picture was Jenny McCall, North Stafford High School's Teacher of the Year last year, and the Stafford County Public Schools Teacher of the Year, in addition to Northern Virginia Magazine's Teacher of the Year.

Dr. Taylor said that the student she was hugging, Paola, was a remarkable student. He said that she had not spoken English when she arrived in Stafford County, but graduated at the top of her class with above a 4.0 GPA. He said that on her graduation cap's back, it read, "If you knew my story, you would be proud." He said that indeed, she had an extraordinary tale; however, she was not alone. He said that many students shared similar remarkable stories. He said that their English Language Learner population was just one segment of their community, yet it was growing rapidly. He said that 13.3% of their students or 4,216 students were ELLs, and they came from diverse English proficiency levels.

Dr. Taylor said that it was intriguing because they had heard public comments about newcomers in their community. He said that they had a moral and legal obligation to educate everyone under 18 and over 5 years old who resided in their County, regardless of their status. He said that they fulfilled this responsibility willingly but faced unique challenges and needs. He said that most ELLs arrived with limited or no English proficiency, which presented significant challenges for

both teaching and learning. He said that addressing these challenges was crucial; otherwise, it would become an expensive problem to solve in the future.

Dr. Taylor said that the House and Senate had proposed budget riders to address this issue from a Standards of Quality perspective; however, these would require local matches and address local needs as well. He said that as a school superintendent, he was often asked about specific solutions for various issues. He said that his response was that all these solutions came with costs attached. He said that as they assessed their needs for improvement in areas such as college and career readiness, academic performance, literacy, mathematics, and student behavior, all required investments. He said that they fully recognized that the proposed balanced budget presented to the Board of Supervisors included unfunded requests.

Dr. Taylor said that each unfunded request in the budget had a story behind it, representing a process improvement that they should have made in the past. He said that in their budget handout, there was a budget summary on one side, while the back detailed areas that remained unfunded and required consideration for investment. He said that one of the significant challenges facing their community was ensuring a safe and welcoming environment in their schools, particularly when hallways and classrooms became crowded. He said that last year, they had projected 392 students in September,; however, they had 154 more students than anticipated.

Dr. Taylor said that this budget accounted for these additional students, as well as the 619 more they expected next year. He said that their rapid growth meant accommodating trailers and fixing issues more frequently due to overtaxed facilities. He said that they were aware of these challenges and were actively addressing them. He said that their revenue forecast was positive, with a projected \$30.3 million in additional state aid, aligning with the County Administrator's budget of \$15 million in local revenue, in addition to previous contributions. He said that the total budget was nearly \$460 million. He said that in creating this budget, they made difficult decisions regarding proposed expenditures, which he would discuss further. He said that over the past two years, he had been able to present cuts to the base budget for their consideration.

Dr. Taylor said that last year they were unable to fulfill certain budgetary requirements due to insufficient funds. He said that they had accounted for mid-year adjustments made to the base budget after the state adopted its budget. He said that their primary focus had been on meeting non-discretionary expenses, which covered essential operational costs. He said that these expenses did not meet all of their needs. He said that they would highlight the areas where they fell short. He said that to accommodate 773 more students, they had increased their budget by \$16.6 million for additional buses, fuel, utilities, capacity, and staffing. He said that these expenses represented their bare minimum requirements for maintaining the same level of service as last year.

Dr. Taylor said that on the discretionary side, they had several choices that required funding. He said that one such choice was continuing their phased approach to improve teacher salaries. He said that they were currently in phase three of five, which would result in an average 6.5% increase in salary, with a minimum of 4%. He said that this option would cost \$14.7 million. He said that another choice was adjusting supplements with a flat 3% increase across the board, which would cost \$7 million and result in a minimum of 3% and an average of 8.7% increase in service scale. He said that the instructional support scale applied to the paraprofessionals who required a drastic market adjustment, which would cost \$1.95M.

Dr. Taylor said that concessions involved increasing class size by one student in grades 4, 5, middle school, and high school. He said that this decision was difficult because future costs would exceed today's expenses due to growth. He said that deferred staffing standard implementation was also part of fiscal responsibility. He said that adjusting class size was painful but necessary. He said that if additional revenue became available, they should allocate it first to this issue before addressing other requests. He said that the other unfunded requests included various expenses such as employee groups seeking a two-pay period cycle per month, which cost \$600,000.

Dr. Taylor said that ensuring technology staff was present without overtime charges during summer months also had a price tag. He said that the list of unfunded requests was extensive but recognized the need for bare-bones funding. He said that the future of Stafford's school system depended on community investment for improved returns. He said that they believed their community received a great return on its investment but could achieve even better results with more support.

Ms. Bohmke thanked Dr. Taylor for the excellent presentation. She said that Dr. Taylor mentioned that this was truly a partnership, and they all shared a connection since 74% of their teachers and professionals working in the building lived in Stafford County. She said they all loved living there. She said that she truly appreciated the work that went into the budget presentation by Mr. Fulmer and his staff, as well as the entire School Board. She said she would open the floor to their Board members for their questions so that they could initiate a dialogue about the budget.

Mr. English asked if all the maintenance staff had been removed from the schools.

Dr. Taylor said no, they had plenty of maintenance staff in the schools.

Mr. English said that he was informed that maintenance staff had been assigned to a location behind the school bus garage.

Dr. Taylor said that they had some specialized maintenance personnel who worked together to clear work orders in specific areas. He said that when there was a buildup of work orders, they collaborated to address them efficiently and cost-effectively. He said that these personnel included plumbers, painters, carpenters, and others. He said that they tackled multiple work orders simultaneously in schools.

Mr. English said that in 2023, 13 vehicles were purchased for a total cost of over \$320,000 for maintenance purposes. He asked for more information about these transactions. He also said that prior to that, in 2022, \$230,000 was spent on vehicles.

Dr. Taylor said that they likely spent significantly more than that amount.

Mr. English said that this was not counting buses.

Mr. Fulmer said that similar to County staff, they had replacement cycles and some expansion as well. He said that these cycles involved their maintenance trucks, plows, and other maintenance vehicles as part of their cyclic replacement cycle.

Mr. English asked how much they spent on buses.

Mr. Fulmer said that 10 buses were bought in FY 24. He said that in the proposed budget, this number was set to increase to 13 buses. He said that the cyclic replacement rate suggested that they should aim for between 20 and 25 buses annually. He said that gradually working toward a minimum of 20 buses per year was their objective. He said that by reaching 20 buses, they should be at 25 buses. He said that each bus cost approximately \$155,000.

Mr. English asked how many they purchased.

Mr. Fulmer said that they purchased 10 buses in FY 24.

Dr. Taylor said that bus lifespans typically lasted around 10 years or reached 300,000 miles. He said that if a vehicle had managed 300,000 miles, it was running efficiently. He said that if they operated 250 buses on the road, that equated to approximately 20 buses annually. He said that this figure was conservative since buses would reach 300,000 miles within 8 to 10 years. He said that the replacement cycle would need to speed up sooner than later.

Mr. English asked how many employees were in Stafford County Schools.

Dr. Taylor said that they had over 4,500 employees.

Mr. English asked how many of those employees were teachers.

Dr. Taylor said that there were over 2,800 teachers.

Mr. English asked if he could have a breakdown of information for anyone making over \$100,000 in the school system.

Ms. Allen said that her first question was regarding the state adjustment Dr. Taylor presented. She asked if that monetary number was included in the information Dr. Taylor shared prior to the presentation.

Dr. Taylor said yes. He said that it included that the School Board convened at 3:00 p.m. today in order to update its state revenue figure. He said that they did this to increase state revenue while decreasing its local request to the County.

Ms. Allen asked if the 15% was the decrease.

Dr. Taylor said yes.

Ms. Allen said that she had another question regarding the discretionary slide mentioned in Dr. Taylor's presentation. She said that the slide discussed adjusting staffing standards to accommodate the projected 770 enrollment for the upcoming academic year. She asked whether there were plans to modify class teaching time in addition to staffing adjustments.

Dr. Taylor said no, the school division was not planning to adjust the schedule in order to accommodate changes. He said that they were uncertain if such changes would significantly alter the financial mix as much as the numbers of students per classroom per class section. He said that each level, elementary, middle, and high school, had its own approach to distributing teaching assignments throughout instructional time. He said that elementary teachers generally did not receive breaks during the day; they taught continuously, except for brief periods when students attended elective classes such as art, music, or physical education.

Dr. Taylor said that this limited break time represented a small portion of the day. He said that middle school teachers taught for six out of eight periods daily, but these periods were shorter in duration compared to those at the elementary level. He said that students spent less time facing teachers during these periods. He said that high school teachers also taught six out of eight periods, but these periods were longer in duration, allowing for more direct instruction time.

Ms. Allen asked what the average class size was.

Dr. Taylor said that there was one student for every 23 at every level. He said that consequently, they had a student-to-teacher ratio of 23:1 at the elementary level and 24:1 and 25:1 at the secondary level.

Ms. Allen asked where they had noticed the most adverse behavior in grade levels so far this school year.

Dr. Taylor said that it was their secondary level, and indeed, this had caused them significant pain. He said that candidly, they found themselves in a challenging situation due to the necessity of making difficult choices regarding staffing. He said that they must prioritize staffing in terms of the number of people or having a body present in the classroom. He said that this was because, according to exit surveys, the primary reason people left their organization beyond relocation was compensation.

Dr. Taylor said that if they did not invest in compensation, they would not have a body in place to teach in the first place. He said that this was their main challenge, as they had begun the school year with over 100 vacancies in the last two years. He said that 100 classrooms lacked a teacher at the front of the classroom, requiring substitutes or combined classes until they could fill these vacancies. He said that to address this issue, they prioritized compensation over additional staff members, ensuring that they would have at least one person in each classroom.

Ms. Allen asked if, during the previous school year, long-term substitute teachers who took on additional periods were tracked in terms of their correlation and causation with SOL standards. She said that she referred to her child's experience with a long-term substitute English teacher. She said that despite not having strong expectations due to the situation, her daughter had performed well in her English class. She said that she attributed this to her insistence on her daughter's reading at home but was curious about the effectiveness of long-term substitute teachers in teaching English subjects. She said that this was not meant as criticism toward the substitute teacher; she was merely seeking insight into this particular scenario.

Dr. Taylor said he understood Ms. Allen's concern. He said that acknowledging those substitutes' efforts was well-deserved for those who accepted low-wage positions with added responsibilities, such as grading for classrooms. He said that it was undoubtedly challenging because these individuals worked without compensation equal to that of certified teachers, who also faced low wages. He said that this situation presented a significant hurdle for schools.

Dr. Taylor said that certified teachers occasionally took on additional sections, such as a math teacher covering extra algebra classes, which could be preferable to having substitutes because of their experience and qualifications. He said that however, this additional workload could lead to

burnout over time, even though they received compensation. He said that long-term substitutes had performed relatively better than expected; however, they still did not meet the level of performance required.

Mr. English asked what they paid the substitute teachers. He asked if they received different rates based on their educational background.

Dr. Taylor said that they had a long-term substitute rate, which was slightly less than their first-year teacher pay. He said that they had a daily substitute rate for building subs, which was based on the number of faculty members in the building. He said that these subs received a slightly lower rate than long-term substitutes. He said that they had gig economy subs who worked on a flexible schedule, selecting jobs based on their availability. He said that they received a lower rate of pay than other substitutes.

Mr. English asked what that rate was.

Dr. Taylor said that the pay was approximately \$120 per day for gig economy subs.

Mr. English asked if that was the average.

Dr. Taylor said no, that was the wage earned by those substitutes that chose their own assignments.

Ms. Allen asked how the substitute wages compared to other localities in the region.

Dr. Taylor said that compensation levels were low across all departments, but they could not pay their substitute teachers more than their certified teachers' salaries. He said that they were almost at the limit of this disparity, so addressing this issue required implementing a sliding scale for payments.

Dr. Yeung said that one of the issues discussed in their meetings was the decrease in certified teachers in their County. She said that they aimed to address this issue by getting them certified. She said that she did not know if that had a correlation with the quality of teaching, but they needed to say what the impact was so it could be addressed. She said that she knew what this County was 10 years ago because she had been living there for 30 years. She said that she made a note that they talked about the increase in students that did not speak English. She asked whether these students were included in the SOL numbers when they counted them.

Dr. Taylor said that if they were enrolled in an SOL course, then yes.

Dr. Yeung said that she collaborated with the superintendent on developing a program in which the School Board established an after-school initiative. She said that this program was designed specifically for English learners in Moncure and Widewater. She asked if this was a part of the elementary school programs included in the budget.

Mr. Fulmer said that some of those programs received funding from federal sources. He said that as federal funding has decreased, they have decided to relocate those successful programs into their operating budget. He said that they had a similar after-school program for all students, not just English language learners, at Drew Middle School.

Dr. Yeung said that she knew that this was something they needed to fund and should not be cut. She said that they discussed funding for improvements and the importance of linking their objectives to the five-year strategic plan. She asked about the connection between their objectives and the plan's impact on various aspects such as discipline, math grades, and reading levels. She asked how they were tying it in.

Dr. Taylor said that he could provide both an overly simplified version and a more detailed version for Dr. Yeung's reference. He said that the overly simplified version was based on one of their handouts, which featured icons representing their four primary goals: creating meaningful post-secondary outcomes for students, maintaining high expectations, ensuring a safe environment, and supporting their staff. He said that each budget initiative was marked with corresponding checkmarks to indicate its relevance to these goals, although not all initiatives related to each goal. He said that this visual representation directly connected their strategic plan to their budget.

Dr. Yeung said that for example, one objective was to ensure meaningful post-secondary outcomes for every student to prepare for life after graduation. She asked where this objective tied in.

Dr. Taylor said that was the objective. He said that they aimed to enhance their academic program space by providing high school programming opportunities that supported post-secondary outcomes. He said that by staffing classrooms with qualified professionals, they created a safe environment conducive to learning for their students while also supporting staff members. He said that this approach covered all essential aspects of their strategic plan in a direct manner.

Dr. Taylor said that in terms of health benefits, although costs had increased, their well-managed fund ensured that they did not pass these expenses on to their employees. He said that this decision prevented the need to offset raises with healthcare costs, maintaining fairness for their staff. He said that while this focus primarily benefited their support staff, its narrow scope ensured that resources were allocated efficiently within their strategic plan.

Dr. Yeung said that if she had been on the School Board, she would have focused on connecting those aspects for individuals who were not. She said that she no longer had children in school to see where their tax money was being allocated. She said that another question she had was regarding the past step increases that transitioned to a scale system. She asked if they had returned to step increases or if they were still using the scale system. She asked if they were losing progress because of the constant switching between systems.

Dr. Taylor said that they were certainly not losing ground. He said that seven years ago, Stafford schools changed their approach to salary determination. He said that they shifted from a step scale that was based on years of successful service to a rate of pay system. He said that if an employee served successfully for five years in Stafford County, they would be at step five in their career progression.

Dr. Yeung asked if that applied to both teachers and staff.

Dr. Taylor said that the compensation model was applicable for all staff members. He said that approximately seven years ago, they had shifted from the previous model to a flat percentage system, a scale, or a range. He said that the flat percentage system created compression in salaries. He said that while he acknowledged that there were advantages to this approach, such as cost-effectiveness, it did not pay experienced staff members adequately. He said that their organization had been transitioning toward a step scale approach. He said that this new philosophy rewarded long-term employees and acknowledged the correlation between years of experience and quality outputs in education.

Dr. Yeung said that in the past few years, she remembered the cleaning staff being discussed due to their desire to change management. She said that there were bus drivers whose situation was addressed by the administrative staff before she left the School Board. She said that these situations involved pockets of individuals within the organization that were not on the same scale. She asked why everyone was not on the first step at this point if they had been doing this for a while.

Dr. Taylor said that they had not been. He said that the best they had done was the past two years of correction, and that was just for teachers. He said that the other 45% of the workforce did not receive that. He said that with 4,500 employees in the organization, addressing this issue all at once would be too expensive and could lead to increased tax burdens or difficult budget decisions. He said that the approach has been to make incremental changes in phases so they can afford to provide fair compensation without causing financial strain.

He said that if they considered phase five of this plan, they still may not have reached the ideal situation. He said that Stafford schools faced competition from neighboring districts and could

further optimize its compensation structure by tying service scale to license scale. He said that this would ensure that all employees experienced similar growth or declines in pay based on economic conditions.

He said that currently, due to the size of Stafford schools and limited resources, the organization must treat different employee groups as separate entities for compensation purposes. He said that the ultimate goal should be to unify these groups under one system, ensuring they progress together at the same pace. He said that the approach had not benefited Stafford schools or its employees when they raised the starting salary for all employees groups and add a percentage. He said that it meant that someone who came in and was brand new would come in at a similar salary and had not worked 10 years. He said that the aim was to correct this disparity in pay based on years of service.

Dr. Yeung said that she had thought the percentage was 75%, but it was actually 72%.

Dr. Taylor said that it was 72%. He said that 75% was aspirational.

Dr. Yeung said that when considering raising taxes, she wondered if they should because these individuals were already paying property taxes. She said that they said they wanted a raise, but did not know where that was going.

Dr. Taylor said that the Board of Supervisors had a challenging job.

Dr. Yeung said that their paycheck had that money taken right back out to pay property taxes and be able to live. She said that this story should be told.

Dr. Taylor said that living in Stafford County was a significant challenge for school staff. He said that he meant this by referring to the chart showing their first-year teacher, average teacher salary, paraprofessionals, and bus drivers. He said that the salaries of paraprofessionals and bus drivers were average. He said that the table displayed their annual salary, monthly salary, Virginia Retirement Systems deduction, health insurance costs, taxes for state and federal, and rent in Stafford County at 80% of the average.

Dr. Taylor said that with phone, utility, and other ancillary household expenses, and average car payments for Stafford County were also considered. He said that as a result, first-year teachers' leftover living expenses were minimal. He said that they could learn from this that first-year teachers could not afford to live independently in Stafford County; they required some form of co-dependency. He said that the same applied to paraprofessionals and bus drivers. He said that to

maintain their workforce, the community must consider adjusting its tax rate, even if it was painful to contemplate. He said that if not, they risked not having enough staff, which was a dire situation.

Dr. Yeung said that she saw \$15 million on the screen. She asked about the lowest threshold for consideration if they were to request a minimum amount. She said that she was not referring to a bare-bones scenario but rather seeking their specific figure. She said that their range started at \$9 million, and \$15 million was also present. She asked for the lowest acceptable amount for their request.

Ms. Healy said that Dr. Taylor and Mr. Fulmer were making this presentation on their behalf; however, this was the School Board budget, not the superintendent's budget. She said that therefore, the School Board must convene and deliberate upon the costs and benefits of any potential cuts.

Ms. Siegmund said that this was a needs-based budget, so \$15 million was for the needs-based budget.

Dr. Taylor said that he could answer that question in a different way that would not position the School Board in any decision-making capacity. He said that he would simply state that the discretionary funds were entirely for compensation purposes. He said that any reductions in their budget resulted in a reduction in compensation.

Ms. Allen said that the question arose from Dr. Yeung's inquiry, as she had frequently received similar inquiries. She said that when presented with a budget from the schools, they had competing needs that raised this question. She asked why the superintendent presented a budget, and why there were two competing budgets from the school side. She said that when the Board asked for clarification, they received responses suggesting that there was no harm intended; it was merely for their benefit and for those who observed. She said that there were two budgets originating from the schools, leaving them uncertain about which one to choose.

Ms. Siegmund said that it was required for the superintendent to present a budget to the School Board.

Dr. Taylor said that it was similar to the County Administrator presenting a proposed budget versus the final budget adopted by the Board of Supervisors.

Ms. Allen said that they had one budget from Mr. Vosburg.

Dr. Taylor said that if they accepted Mr. Vosburg's budget, then they were good to go. He said that it was the same scenario. He said that it was how the state set up this system. He said that the superintendent was required to present a needs-based budget to the School Board. He said that the School Board, acting as representatives of the community, evaluated the superintendent's proposal and made changes if necessary before submitting an approved budget to the Supervisors. He said that only one budget was provided, which was the School Board's approved budget. He said that was the one they would consider. He said that this year, they happened to be the same.

Dr. Taylor said that from a process standpoint, this system worked similarly to how County government operated, with an additional layer of having another elected body involved in the process. He said that they received a budget proposal from the County Administrator, assessed the needs proposed, and made changes based on their constituency's representation. He said that he understood the confusion and miscommunication surrounding this issue. He said that it could be perplexing for community members trying to discern which budget they should be examining. He said that the School Board had spent approximately six weeks reacting to the budget proposal they received, adopted a budget, received updated revenue projections, made amendments to their budget, and sent one budget for consideration.

Ms. Bohmke said that she believed that was probably the first time she could remember where it was one budget. She said that typically, there were separate budgets, such as the School Board's budget or the superintendent's budget, followed by the School Board's revision.

Ms. Randall said that in previous years, when their budgets were prepared, they incorporated comments from the Board of Supervisors into their budget planning process. She said that typically, they heard that the superintendent's budget was cheaper than the School Board's budget, which included additional expenses. She said that this year, they made sure to work diligently from their November retreat until today to create the budget they desired.

Ms. Vanuch said that she had a few questions regarding the state funding aspect. She said that she understood that both the state and federal government provided funding for each student. She said that they offered supplementary compensation for various student classifications. She said that if they did not have this information readily available, that was perfectly acceptable. She asked if they could provide details about the funding provided by both the federal and state governments over the past four years. She said that it would be helpful to see how these amounts had been combined and scaled over time.

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Dr. Taylor said that there had been a shift toward implementing a weighted student funding formula in Virginia, which was followed by 39 other states in the U.S. He said that Virginia had retained its antiquated model for the past 40 years, making it one of the second or third oldest funding models in the country. He said that usually funding models are updated every 20 years or so; however, Virginia had not updated its model.

Dr. Taylor said that one of the significant findings in the JLARC report on public education funding was that Virginia did not use a student weighted funding formula. He said that instead, the state funded schools based on the Standards of Quality (SOQ), which was a state staffing standards model. He said that this model provides direct basic aid on a sliding scale based on the Local Composite Index (LCI), which was a wealth calculation that was widely criticized in Virginia.

Dr. Taylor said that the federal government had unique funding mechanisms in place. He said that they consider student populations but also allocated funds for specific programs like the Carl D. Perkins Fund for career and technical education, Title funds for low-income student populations and English language learners, which was Title III, and Title funds for professional development for principals and teachers, which was Title II.

Dr. Taylor said that the direct basic aid formulation for Stafford County was disproportionately unfavorable due to the required local match. He said that this was an issue that Stafford County faced last year, as not meeting the local match could result in losing both incentive money and direct aid. He said that this formula was not friendly for the County.

Ms. Vanuch said that she had a question regarding public comments at their Board meetings and the emails and phone calls they received during budget time concerning raises. She asked if Dr. Taylor could provide a four or five-year historical breakdown of where that funding had been allocated. She said that when discussing 5% or 7% raises, she would like to know if that was going all to staff or fix teacher scales in certain areas. She said that she understood they had previously passed a resolution mid-cycle to provide \$1.2 million for bus driver hiring and retention. She asked if everyone received that same percentage, moved up on their scale, and if central office received those raises.

Dr. Taylor said that Ms. Vanuch's question was insightful because it was like the drama they were living out right now. He said that he could directly address the last two budgets prior to this one

since this was his third budget with them. He said that they were in their third phase of adjusting the teacher scale. He said that the adjustments did not involve flat percentages; instead, they bent the scale to accommodate for experience. He said that teachers with more experience benefited more, but they had also gone without raises for longer periods and faced challenges staying with them.

Dr. Taylor said that now, those with less experience received predictable increases every year, such as step increases or 3% differentials. He said that however, beyond step 15, which was a significant improvement from zero to 15, adjustments occurred, and teachers started feeling the effects more. He said that for service scale employees, they had received flat percentage increases, which had contributed to their compression issues over time. He said that this was why they also required a correction to their scale and a restructuring. He said that flat percentage increases did not promote growth or fairness based on experience levels.

Ms. Vanuch asked if she had understood correctly that every individual within the system advanced their position on the scale annually.

Dr. Taylor said not yet.

Ms. Vanuch asked if everyone received a predictable 3% raise in the last couple of years.

Dr. Taylor said not yet.

Ms. Vanuch asked what was meant when it was said that the service employees moved up on that scale.

Dr. Taylor said that they had not. He said that the service employees just got a flat percentage increase.

Dr. Taylor said that one challenge was that while teachers now had a salary scale providing predictability in their pay, service staff did not enjoy this same benefit. He said that in the coming years, they must be mindful of this disparity and consider potential solutions. He said that the group that was actually falling furthest behind in the market was school leaders, administrators, principals, and assistant principals, who were just north of the six-figure salary range.

Dr. Taylor said that the issue they faced was that individuals could leave being a 12-month principal in order to become a 10-month teacher in Prince William County, with less responsibility and higher pay. He said that this was their current situation. He said that this was the group they must examine closely after addressing the needs of their service scale, which was long overdue.

Ms. Vanuch said that she understood they did the phased scale. She said that she was trying to figure out what the percentage raise for any average employee was over the past year.

Dr. Taylor said that last year, there was a 5% flat increase that matched the state's budget proposal. He said that they did a mid-year adjustment of 2%, but it was truly only a 1% raise because it occurred halfway through the year. He said that they must acknowledge that a 5% raise to a low-wage employee was not a noticeable adjustment; it was nothing.

Ms. Vanuch said that she was trying to get the facts so she was educated to answer that. She said that many people came to her asking about implementing pay scales, similar to what the Sheriff's Office had done in the past. She said that their office had worked on pay scales and pay increases; however, they often faced challenges in allocating funds for these purposes. She said that understanding the outcomes of previous pay scale implementations was helpful in determining where funds should be allocated.

Dr. Taylor said that Mr. Fulmer would hand out last year's budget sheet for their reference. He said that if they failed to follow through on their commitments, it would be easy for others to point it out. He said that over the past two budgets, they had increased service scale by 12% in total: 5% in Fiscal Year 23 and 5% in Fiscal Year 24, along with a mid-year adjustment of 2%. He said that a 12% increase in wages could be challenging for employees to accept since it did not directly reflect their take-home paycheck after taxes and VRS deductions. He said that this increment equated to just one night of dining at Chick-fil-A for one person. He said that providing structure and process was crucial for their team's growth and development, which they all had witnessed.

Ms. Vanuch said that she agreed and did not want to diminish that. She said that she wanted to better understand so she could answer questions.

Ms. Siegmund said that she agreed. She said that they did come and do a presentation where they said what their plan was, then they received funding and reconciled. She said that sometimes they had to defer items to be included in the budget, and this was lost in the reconciliation process. She asked if there were things they had to defer in terms of salary.

Dr. Taylor said that three-quarters of the way down the Healy-sized document, they would find discretionary expenses. He said that the top line indicated a \$9.9 million increase, which was a 5% increase across the board. He said that the fully funded Phase 2 initially required \$16.8 million; however, they managed to close the gap during the year. He said that consequently, Phase 2 was fully funded. He said that moving down two more lines, they would see \$4.8 million, representing a 5% increase across the board for non-licensed service staff. He said that if they had financed

Phase 1, it would have been \$6.8 million. He said that they were unable to finance the full Phase 1 last year. He said that they had been waiting patiently.

Ms. Gary thanked Dr. Taylor and Mr. Fulmer for preparing this presentation. She said that although there had been recent issues regarding trust and hiccups she had personally experienced, she believed this presentation was helping to restore some of that trust. She said they had done an excellent job and she appreciated the thorough presentation.

Mr. English said that he would like to see ensuring that everyone's needs are met. He said that listed were teachers and paraprofessionals, but he would like to know what support staff were making.

Dr. Taylor said that the last two categories consisted of support staff positions.

Mr. English asked if paraprofessionals and bus drivers were support staff.

Dr. Taylor said yes, those were two examples. He said that there were two dozen types of support staff, so there were about 30 different scales for the 30 types of positions. He said that the two provided were examples.

Mr. English asked if it included cafeteria workers.

Dr. Taylor said that they were not listed on the provided spreadsheet, but they were included in their data.

Ms. Bohmke asked if it included administrative people at all schools.

Dr. Taylor said yes.

Ms. Bohmke said that regarding the health benefits, in the past five or six years, the decision was made to combine health benefits for both the school division and the County due to a significant difference between them. She said that it was recognized that this would be a gradual process taking approximately three to five years to align them more closely. She asked if anyone could provide an update on where they currently stood in this process.

Mr. Fulmer said that they aligned their benefit packages for health and dental coverage for both school staff and County staff. He said that there remained a discrepancy in the employee premium contributions, with school staff usually paying higher premiums than County staff. He said that they aimed to eventually align these premium contributions for both sides in the long term.

Ms. Bohmke asked if that was currently listed as an unfunded item in the document or if it was not even being considered at that time.

Mr. Fulmer said that it was not. He said that in their five-year plan, they addressed the growing health insurance demands and needs, including the increasing costs. He said that part of this involved examining the possibility of raising employee premiums, which would consequently increase the cost for the school division. He said that while they would like to implement this change, it would require several million dollars to close the gap.

Ms. Bohmke asked if it was accurate that there was a decision to remove the International Baccalaureate (IB) program at Brooke Point High School.

Dr. Taylor said that last year they decided to consolidate some programs at Brooke Point, particularly in health and medical sciences. He said that simultaneously, they encountered under-enrollment issues in numerous programs, which affected their cost-effectiveness. He said that to address these challenges, they aimed to consolidate their programs more efficiently.

Ms. Bohmke asked if they examined Mountain View's program costs per student, in addition to CGS. She asked if they had considered these options.

Dr. Taylor said extensively.

Ms. Allen said that she would like to return to the topic of increasing classroom staff size. She said that earlier, they had discussed that rather than having more bodies in front of students, it was preferable to have more qualified bodies in front of students. She said that it seemed that the issue of staff size was not going away. She asked if there was a plan in place to address this. She said that if the solution would take several years to implement in terms of compensation and making teaching positions more competitive, she wanted to know what the strategy was for ensuring that class sizes remained manageable. She said that as a parent, she was concerned about this issue.

Ms. Allen said that her child complained about the large class size and how even the current number was disruptive. She said that when she came home from school, her child would say she did not like being in school because there were too many kids, and the teacher had difficulty controlling them. She said that even one additional student would be concerning for her child. She said that she could only imagine what it would be like for other children. She said that as a parent, she was curious about the plan for addressing this issue in the next few years when classrooms were not expected to expand, and how budgeting would factor into this solution.

Dr. Taylor said that for the low price of \$3.8 million, Ms. Allen could solve that problem. He said that this was the same dilemma that they faced with competing priorities and attempting to develop a strategy applicable to this situation. He said that adjusting class sizes could not be done again for several reasons. He said that classrooms may not have enough physical space to accommodate more students. He said that if one could fit 30 students in a classroom in some spaces, they physically could not fit due to room constraints.

Dr. Taylor said that there were also limitations based on state expectations. He said that Richmond did not make this easier; they had distinct staffing expectations for English classrooms, CTE classrooms, and music programs like chorus, band, and orchestra. He said that they must adhere to all these guidelines simultaneously. He said that this created a challenging juggling act. He said that moving forward, this was essentially the upper threshold. He said that further adjustments to class sizes without altering other significant aspects would be difficult.

Ms. Allen asked if the \$3.8 million was in the budget.

Dr. Taylor said that no, that was a credit because they had increased class size. He said that they had reduced staff numbers to create a \$3.8 million savings, resulting in a balanced budget.

Ms. Allen asked if they would have to put it back in.

Dr. Taylor said that if they wanted to put it back in, they would take it.

Ms. Bohmke said that it was \$0.125 on the tax rate.

Ms. Allen said that regarding the adjustment in programming at Brooke Point, focusing on health and sciences, while other schools received different subjects, she would like to know how it was impacting staffing in terms of having qualified individuals to teach these subjects.

Dr. Taylor said that they had a lot of qualified staff right now who were working to that end. He said that offering programming was one of the best low-cost things they could do. He said that they did have to find mechanisms to support it with ancillary benefits. He said that last year, they received a \$500,000 grant from the Claude Moore Foundation. He said that the sole purpose of this grant was to finance health and medical science programs at high schools, specifically benefiting Brooke Point High School with half a million dollars for biomedical programs.

Dr. Taylor said that they must use this grant for its intended purpose; they could not spend it on anything else. He said that this grant represented a low-cost solution for improving the learning landscape at their schools. He said that in an eight-period day, students would be in classes based

on staffing allocation, so staff numbers would not dramatically increase or decrease unless strict class caps or other radical adjustments were made. He said that they could easily accommodate one freshman elective in any new programming they introduced, requiring minimal effort and process.

Ms. Bohmke said that it was great news about the grant. She said that this made her recall the VAST grant they received some years ago.

Dr. Taylor said that it was not his favorite.

Ms. Bohmke said that it was not hers either, and she wished she had never voted on it. She asked if the grant for Brooke Point to have a biomedical program would be for one or two years, and if the school division would pick it up in perpetuity if the program continued.

Dr. Taylor said that the smart approach likely involved allocating funds to some extent toward personnel but primarily focusing on absorbing or eliminating these costs within the two-year grant window. He said that the grant was renewable, allowing them to apply for additional funding beyond this period. He said that the success rate of renewable Claude Moore grants was 9 out of 10, which was good. He said that the most strategic use of funds was investing in materials or capital improvements.

Dr. Taylor said that this was how one-time grants should be approached, by viewing them through this lens. He said that for instance, they received a \$250,000 grant for HVAC and plumbing equipment at Stafford High School. He said that this was excellent news. He said that the grant was specifically for equipment, which would be transformative for their school. He said that they should utilize one-time financial injections for one-time expenses, rather than making personnel-related expenditures overly dependent on these funds.

Dr. Chase said that regarding the Claude Moore grant, during their tour of various programs, they learned that acquiring a medical dummy for student training cost \$100,000. She said that consequently, the \$500,000 allocated for such resources would be expended quickly. She said that therefore, they could expect these funds to be utilized primarily for expenses like these.

Ms. Bohmke said that in light of their increasing ESL population, which was notably different from when she served on the School Board, she requested that they please explain the current educational approach for these students. She asked if they were integrated into general education classrooms while also receiving pull-out sessions with ESL teachers. She asked for details on this process, as the growing number of students was significant.

Dr. Taylor said that it truly depended on the child's level of English proficiency and their level of schooling, whether it was elementary, middle, or high school. He said that for instance, a high school student with minimal English proficiency would have very few classes in the general population for understandable reasons. He said that they would have a separate class specifically designed for ESOL students. He said that for students with higher English proficiency levels would receive pull-out or push-in services at the secondary level. He said that at the elementary level, most students, regardless of their English proficiency, would be in general education classes for the majority of their day since they were learning the alphabet, reading, and various strategies. He said that they would also receive push-in or pull-out support.

Dr. Taylor said that one of the smart strategies they had championed in Stafford was working with state legislators to adjust staffing standards at the state level for financing ESL or ESOL classes. He said that both the House and Senate had budget amendments in their budgets this year that adopted their model showcased in their legislative agenda for the past two years. He said that the new staffing standard for ESOL had significantly improved since the previous ratio of 54 students to one ESOL teacher.

Dr. Taylor said that the updated ratio of 45 students to one teacher was still insufficient. He said that to address this issue, they had been advocating for a sliding scale based on students' English proficiency levels. He said that this approach accounted for the differentiated level of support needed by newcomers who spoke little or no English compared to those with two or three years of English proficiency. He said that by implementing this strategy, their students had shown remarkable progress in their English proficiency levels, surpassing their pre-pandemic rates.

Ms. Bohmke said she would like to work with Ms. Light on this matter if possible, and she was unsure if they had any information readily available. She said that she believed it was crucial for the public to understand their current position as a Board of Supervisors. She said that during the presentation of Scott Mayausky, Commissioner of Revenue, at their last Tuesday meeting, they had discussed the significant increase in assessments across the County.

Ms. Bohmke said that some assessments had increased by up to \$100,000. She said that their effective rate with these assessments was \$0.84. She said that the County had generated \$28 million in new revenue due to these assessments. She said that to illustrate their financial situation, they were building from this \$0.84. She said that if they did not raise taxes, they would maintain the effective rate at \$0.84, which meant no additional revenue for the County or schools.

Ms. Bohmke said that they had what they called "have-tos," which were essential expenses they must cover. She said that this included net service for High School 6, the new minimum wage requirement, jails, juvenile detention center, and some portion of the health department's request.

She said that they had partner agencies requesting funds. She said that to proceed, they must build from these necessary expenses. She said that for every penny added to the tax rate, they generated \$2.6 million in revenue. She asked Ms. Light if there was anything else to consider regarding the "have-tos" and ARPA funds for public safety.

Ms. Light said that they were concluding their utilization of ARPA funds, similar to the timing of schools finishing their ESSER fund usage. She said that the Board had allocated these funds for some ongoing public safety expenses, which had consequently affected their budget.

Ms. Bohmke said that they also had an additional requirement of \$1.7 million for the Comprehensive Services Act, specifically for the public day school at Drew Middle School. She said that there was \$2.2 million allocated for debt service. She asked if Ms. Light could clarify whether this funding was for County or school purposes.

Ms. Light said that it was for schools. She said that the County had a little bit of savings, about \$600,000.

Ms. Bohmke asked if Ms. Light recalled the \$800,000 increase.

Ms. Light said that it was probably from the jail. She said that the budget for the jail had increased by approximately \$800,000.

Ms. Bohmke said that the school district requested \$15 million in funding. She said that they had raised taxes \$0.09 last year. She said that as a Board, they must address mandated expenses and other requirements before determining community priorities. She said that their starting point was \$0.84, and they would build upon that figure. She said that she hoped that this information was helpful for everyone.

Dr. Taylor said that he hoped Ms. Bohmke would include the schools as a part of her "have-tos."

Ms. Bohmke said absolutely.

Ms. Randall said that while her husband did not usually watch the Board of Supervisors meetings, he said that he did watch the presentation that Mr. Vosburg made recently and was impressed by the work he did with Dr. Taylor regarding schools and addressing other County needs for his budget presentation. She said that he typically remained silent and did not comment on things, but he did comment specifically on Mr. Vosburg's budget.

Ms. Vanuch said that she would provide more context to what Ms. Bohmke just said. She said that last year, they increased taxes by an average of 10%. She said that the year prior, it was another 10% increase during an assessment year. She said that this year, with it being an assessment year, the proposed rate of \$0.94, including the fire levy, represented a 13% average tax increase. She said that this amounted to a 33% increase in taxes over three years. She said that this was significant and had been felt by residents. She said that the challenging situation they faced in raising taxes substantially, particularly in an assessment year, was that some assessments had increased by 8% while others, such as moderate-income homes, had experienced much higher increases.

Ms. Vanuch said that for instance, some residents in Rock Hill's Rose Hill Estates had reported assessments rising by \$125,000, which equated to a 30% to 35% increase. She said that if they left it at \$0.94, this would result in a 35% to 40% tax increase for these homeowners in just one year. She said that it was staggering. She said that she said this so the School Board understood the magnitude of their decisions regarding taxes, taking into account both real estate and personal property values. She said that in non-assessment years, raising taxes was somewhat easier because the impact was more evenly distributed among taxpayers.

Ms. Bohmke said that was just for their real estate holdings; their personal property was not included.

Ms. Vanuch said that in the assessment year, the range of assessments posed significant challenges. She said that when they returned with feedback from the community, they must explain that providing \$15 million for general funds and \$2 million for debt service required a minimum budget of \$0.94 per \$1.00, resulting in a 13% increase for most taxpayers but higher for others. She said that they had attended budget work sessions and understood that they could not lower the budget below \$0.94 to meet these financial requirements. She said that they needed their cooperation in finding solutions that worked for both parties. She said that the social media disputes had damaged trust between the boards and negatively impacted their working relationship. She said that they must act professionally and collaboratively to address these financial challenges for the benefit of their community.

Ms. Randall said that right before the public hearing for the taxes, three Supervisors fired off criticisms against schools, not just at 3:00 p.m. but also at 7:00 p.m. She said that while the Board was attending meetings for budget updates, she wrote a budget that granted schools a 2% increase. She said that all parties received identical emails from state sources, indicating shared knowledge of financial standing at the state level. She said that social media could be irritating; however, so can certain remarks like threatening to invoke the "nuclear option." She said that when voting 6-1, decisions were made collectively and should not be questioned. She said that they bore

responsibility for repairing public perception influenced by their comments during Board meetings. She said that arrows of criticism were directed both ways; this fact should be acknowledged.

Ms. Halstead said that regarding the social media issues, she had chosen to go to the public because the Board of Supervisors had suggested the School Board had not been transparent with the public or had meetings with them. She said that she did go to the public and would continue to do so, providing them with the facts they sought because they admitted they did not have time for meetings or debates. She said there were many gaps in their knowledge. She said that they had been given the truth about what was happening, so they did not have to search for it.

Ms. Halstead said that they were more than welcome to post their own content, but they asked for transparency and then dictated its form. She asked if transparency could occur solely at School Board meetings or could it reach where people were. She said that they did not go to meetings and they did not listen afterwards. She said that they had 37 viewers on a School Board meeting and asked how else she was supposed to share information transparently. She said that social media was where people gathered information. She said that the truth was where the truth was.

Ms. Halstead said that as their elected official, she could help guide them to understand their decision-making process or ask them to FOIA all day long. She said that she found no joy in this since its inception. She said that they were now talking about raising property taxes on families who could not afford it and then cutting the very same place where their kids spent the majority of their day, and not supporting the teachers who provided the care in their community. She said that the disadvantaged and ESOL students deserved to have the best of the best. She said that the School Board and Board of Supervisors had underfunded the school system for years, leading to the current situation.

Ms. Halstead said that this decision affected not just current residents but also future generations of kindergartners, first graders, and high school students in Stafford County. She said that it did go both ways. She said that regarding trust being shot, there was no way they could underplay what happened the other night. She said that where they may find it to be inappropriate, then she would ask for them to provide her with another way to be more transparent to the people. She said that she had held community meetings that drew maybe three or five people. She asked how else they could support transparency if they did not go where the people were.

Dr. Chase said that none of them could speak for the entire Board on social media; Dr. Taylor could post something on social media under the Board's direction, but individual posts reflected the individual poster, not the Board. She said that she would like to return to the topic they discussed at the beginning of this meeting. She said that she would like to thank the Board of

Supervisors for the 11% increase in their funding last year, as well as the 6% increase the year before that. She said that she looked forward to collaborating with all of them to secure as much funding as possible for next year because these people relied on their collective efforts.

Ms. Bohmke said that schools were a must-have for Stafford County's economic development and overall quality of life. She said that she would always be grateful for the school division's contributions. She said that she would not have wanted to be a teacher in the classroom or a para or many of the other jobs, as she believed it would have been challenging. She said that she always thanked the teachers she knew, both in Stafford and outside of it.

Ms. Gary said that she would like to address a few points that she believed were crucial. She said that discussing the tax rate now, she wanted to emphasize its significance since they were providing more context. She said that the context also came from their previous meeting where she inquired about their Board's intentions if they were writing this letter aiming to pressure the School Board into altering their policy regarding Elementary through 19. She asked this question multiple times for clarification. She said that she asked her question four times initially and then repeated herself before asking a fifth time while struggling to speak due to a weak voice, yet she never received an answer to her inquiry.

Ms. Gary said that she did not want to hear that the schools should be considered a priority and a must-have while addressing tax rate, while no one responded to her question about this matter. She said that she emphasized that transitioning from one topic to another without acknowledging responsibility for increased revenue from taxpayers was inappropriate. She said that she wanted to clarify that social media was a useful tool for reaching people who may not attend meetings or watch online, but they should strive to keep their posts non-inflammatory despite their disagreements.

Ms. Gary said that the School Board lacked the communication resources that their Board possessed. She said that even if she did not agree with them, she had attempted to engage them respectfully through their posted content or via phone conversations. She said that she believed that maintaining open lines of communication had been productive, even in cases of disagreement with School Board members in the past. She said that she wanted to encourage both boards to continue this approach in addressing issues. She said that as adults, they should resolve disputes through communication rather than allowing them to escalate.

Ms. Gary said that her daughter, currently in seventh grade, experienced five different teachers in her first-grade year. She said that this issue was long-standing and detrimental to their children's education. She said that they must prioritize their students' needs. She said that being fiscally

conservative did not mean never raising taxes; instead, it involved using resources wisely. She said that she believed that recent Board decisions had not demonstrated this wisdom.

Ms. Gary said that if they truly cared about their children's education, they must allocate resources accordingly. She said that they had not done so, which reflected poorly on their commitment to their success. She said that some families relied heavily on access to quality education, as they could not afford alternatives like homeschooling or private schools. She said that by not providing this access, they are not only hindering their children's futures. She said that it was unacceptable. She said that they must reflect on their actions and work toward improving their educational system for all children.

Ms. Bohmke asked if Dr. Taylor could address one item mentioned by Ms. Gary. She asked if the school had a robust public information system.

Dr. Taylor said that he was uncertain if “robust” was the best word to describe it. He said that they had three hardworking people that made up their communications team, as well as a few clerical assistants.

Mr. Diggs said that he would like to express his gratitude to Dr. Taylor for delivering an exceptional presentation. He said that throughout the evening, he had listened to everyone speak, and he believed that parents who had children may view the situation from a personal perspective; however, they must consider the entire system. He said that he would go on record stating that he supported the schools and the support staff. He said that it was essential to recognize that they all played a crucial role in maintaining the cohesion of the school community.

Mr. Diggs said that when discussing the tax rate and making decisions about it, he recalled a constituent in a previous meeting saying that they kept kicking the can down the road. He said that for all of the years that they lowered taxes or equalized the tax rate, it was now coming due. He said that for those years that constituents celebrated that they lowered taxes, it was in fact not a forward-thinking or visionary approach. He said that now they found themselves in a situation where they must bear the brunt of that.

Mr. Diggs said that during conversations about federal and state funding for schools, he was contemplating their responsibility as Stafford for their students. He said that he did not want them to rely solely on what the state does or what funding the federal government would provide them. He said that they must focus on their commitment to their children and consider their role in shaping their futures. He said that the choices they made today would have lasting effects for generations to come. He said that he was stating this all to say that he supported the schools. He

said that they all supported schools. He said that another challenge they faced was that some constituents had nearly lost their homes due to tax increases they implemented.

Mr. Diggs said that this was concerning for him because they must find a balance between supporting schools and addressing these concerns. He said that he did not want anyone to be neglected; every student and staff member was important to him. He said that however, constituents struggling financially also required their attention. He said that they must make difficult decisions, which was why they ran for this office. He said that leaving here tonight, they should all collaborate effectively by setting aside personal egos and focusing on issues. He said that when they engaged with their community, they should present a united front regarding tax rates, rather than causing confusion. He said that if they worked together and presented a united stance, their constituents may be more likely to support their decisions.

Dr. Yeung said that she did not want anyone leaving the room under the impression that the Board of Supervisors did not believe that the school system was unimportant. She said that prior to anyone joining or moving into Stafford County, she was there advocating for the schools. She said that she participated in committees, attended field trips, and undertook all the tasks that parents typically do. She said that as Mr. Diggs mentioned she was not solely focused on her child. She said that it was about every child, each individual one. She said that she had always spoken for those who did not have a voice. She said that some of them had voices that they used very well. She said that they should not think that she did not read all the emails and social media messages sent to her; some of which can be quite painful.

Dr. Yeung said that she would go back a couple of years to thank Ms. Guy for standing up for her and Dr. Chase. She said that today, she was one of those who had been underserved. She said that she was one of those without a job. She said that she was one of those who relied on food stamps. She said that she was one of those who live on a fixed income. She said that she would still be considering every child and every taxpayer who might be in her situation. She said that instead of focusing on themselves individually, they should collectively make it work.

Dr. Yeung said that he wholeheartedly believed in achieving the impossible. He said that his life story was filled with overcoming challenges and embracing optimism. He said that with determination and teamwork, they could get it done. He said that they should work together as a team of 14 members to accomplish this mission.

Mr. English thanked Dr. Taylor and Mr. Fulmer. He thanked the School Board members. He said that they could achieve this goal. He said that they must work together. He said that he believed they should extend an olive branch. He said that he acknowledged support staff's concerns. He said that he would do his best to assist them because he understood that they attended every meeting

and likely lived paycheck to paycheck; his assessment increased by \$90,000, so he was aware of the situation. He said that they should collaborate and ensure they got them to where they needed to be.

Ms. Vanuch said that what she wished to convey earlier was that they needed to set aside all existing matters and start afresh. She said that they must collaborate closely during this budget year and collectively brainstorm potential solutions. She said that when they presented concrete data to others, acknowledging their own difficult decisions, they must put aside personal feelings and individual agendas in favor of working together.

Ms. Allen said that during her tenure on the Board, Ms. Vanuch could attest to her efforts in raising taxes. She said that her primary objective had been to fund schools, even when her child was not part of the system. She said that she was correct that over the past three years, there had been a substantial tax increase for residents. She said that she would like to share some personal experiences to help people understand her perspective. She said that this year she faced a difficult decision regarding her own finances due to the tax increase. She said that the County Administrator could confirm that she was usually more decisive in these matters. She said that this year she had to carefully consider her priorities and what she was willing to compromise on.

Ms. Allen said that similar to teachers, nurses in their region faced similar challenges in terms of pay and compensation. She said that as a personal example, she had not received a significant pay raise in the last two years. She said that her increase was only around 3%. She said that hospitals like Stafford Hospital and Mary Washington were also grappling with these issues. She said that she was about to leave for Prince William Hospital, which she reluctantly admitted was due to a significant pay difference that made it more affordable for her. She said that if she was willing to raise taxes, she must accept that she may have to make sacrifices such as finding employment elsewhere, which would require her to commute. She said that this was not an ideal situation for her, she preferred to live, play, and work in her community.

Ms. Allen said that she was addressing this issue because she was committed to improving their children's education. She said that it was demoralizing to work multiple jobs, and that was why she asked about teachers' conditions. She said that as a nurse, she understood that they were expected to take on more responsibilities without adequate pay raises, and she believed that the same situation existed in the school system. She said the support staff faced similar challenges in terms of compensation. She said that it was interesting that some people compared the competing industries for support staff to local Walmart or Target stores. She said that her mother, who worked in school nutrition services, decided to leave for a higher-paying job at Walmart.

Ms. Allen said that she said agreed with concerns about paychecks of those support staff, because she had seen that they struggled to make ends meet in Stafford without outside support. She said that addressing this issue was one of her top priorities. She said that she would fight to rectify the situation, even if she was unsure of how they could achieve it. She said that she wanted to share a story about her child's experience with technology in school. She said that when Dr. Taylor mentioned replacing technology due to causes, he cited a 1.3 rate. She said that her daughter started school in August, and by January, she had already gone through her fourth Chromebook due to defects. She said did not reveal her identity to school personnel because she believed every child should be treated equally.

Ms. Allen said that she became frustrated because her daughter's lack of a functional Chromebook caused her to fall behind in her classwork, which was particularly challenging for her due to attention deficit issues. She said that they faced many assignments during that time. She said that it took them approximately a month to get her back on track after she went a week without a Chromebook. She said that her daughter was a high-functioning student, typically achieving straight As; however, she occasionally received a B grade. She said that as her guardian, she questioned what other challenges the 30,000 students in Stafford County faced who did not have access to resources or possessed the necessary aptitude or connections to succeed. She said that she understood their struggles and empathized with their situation.

Ms. Allen said that her colleagues had mentioned that this budget year would be difficult because they must start at \$0.84 without meeting their needs. She said that many difficult decisions must be made to reach their current position. She said that she did not want the community to perceive that they were intentionally trying to harm schools or any aspect of their government by underfunding them. She said that many residents in Stafford County had fixed incomes and had lived there for generations, with no control over their assessments.

Ms. Allen said that they must balance protecting the most vulnerable members of their community, including both the elderly and students. She said that as they navigated this challenging budget cycle over the next four weeks, they must remain mindful of respecting the jobs and difficulties faced by both boards. She said that by setting a positive tone as the governing bodies of Stafford County, they could help the community better understand the decisions being made. She said that this clarity would reduce the community's anxiety and anger, as they recognized that these choices were difficult for both boards and not intended to harm each other.

Ms. Bohmke said that she believed her colleagues had effectively articulated their shared sentiments. She said that she wanted to clarify her reference to the \$0.84 statistic and provide insight into their budget-building process and decision-making. She said that this was not intended

to alarm anyone or cause offense. She said that it highlighted the challenging choices they all faced. She said that the seven of them were accountable for determining the final tax rate.

Ms. Bohmke said that she would like to conclude by mentioning that their next meeting was scheduled for March 7 at 4:00 p.m. in this same location. She said that for the three-on-three event, Missy and Cheryl, their wonderful clerks, had been discussing it via email. She said that however, she proposed that they focus on budget matters first and initiate the three-on-three once the budgets had been approved, due to their limited time beforehand.

Ms. Gary said that she wanted to echo what Mr. Diggs was saying about believing in the impossible, which she had experienced many times in her life. She said that she did believe that they could find a path forward; they just needed a clear direction. She said that they had some promising developments ahead, such as economic growth and data centers. She said that they had opportunities here, and they were on the brink of something truly great. She said that she believed they could balance their actions effectively.

Ms. Gary said that she wanted to navigate this professionally but that they must all be honest. She said that if they disagreed on certain matters, that was acceptable, but they must be honest about their intentions and be respectful toward one another. She said that communication was key; they should pick up the phone and engage in dialogue. She said that working together in this manner might not be perfect, but they owed it to their constituents to at least try. She said that she understood that this had been challenging and acknowledged that fact. She closed on that statement.

Ms. Gary said that Peter and she often joked that she lost money doing this job; however, they continued because they were passionate about their work. She said that it was expensive to solely focus on this job without having another source of income to provide better financial stability. She said that she loved what she did, as she loved working with people and being of service in this capacity. She said that she wanted to express her gratitude to everyone involved in this presentation and conversation, including the public, School Board members, and school staff. She said that they were committed to finding all possible solutions.

Ms. Gary said that Ms. Bohmke and she recently visited Richmond to meet with legislators, she collaborated with Dr. Yeung and Ms. Vanuch on the legislative committee to secure state funding. She said that they had all been working diligently to explore alternatives that did not involve raising taxes. She said that as they navigated this situation, she wanted to emphasize that no one on this Board desired to burden taxpayers further. She said that living there was already challenging enough. She said that she hoped they could find a peaceful and honest resolution, which she believed was crucial for everyone's well-being.

Dr. Chase said that she would like to express her gratitude toward Dr. Taylor and Mr. Fulmer for their presentation, as well as the Board of Supervisors. She said that she would like to thank all of them for engaging in pleasant discussions

Ms. Randall said that she would also like to echo her gratitude to Dr. Taylor and Mr. Fulmer for preparing the presentation and providing Healy-sized documents. She said that this was helpful for their aging eyes. She said that she had been a citizen of Stafford County for 50 years, and in various capacities, as a student, teacher, and parent, she had witnessed the dedication of educators in their community. She said that her mother was a teacher, and her son also followed in her footsteps. She said that in some states, teachers received starting salaries of \$87,500; however, their schools faced financial challenges that led to closing schools despite retaining teachers.

Ms. Randall said that she was grateful that Stafford County had a process in place that ensured resources from state, federal, and County sources were utilized effectively to support growing student populations. She said that although there may be consequences for not meeting certain goals, they made it happen and appreciated the opportunity for additional meetings this year. She said that she truly appreciated their time and willingness to engage in dialogue with them. She said that the conversations she had had with each of them had been productive, allowing her to address her questions and concerns.

Ms. Halstead said that she would like to express her gratitude once again to Dr. Taylor and Mr. Fulmer for their dedication and hard work. She said that the attention to detail in the spreadsheet and line items was commendable. She said that dealing with the school system and its challenges could be overwhelming for anyone, especially parents. She said that daily reports and updates about student behavior and safety concerns could be distressing for anyone, especially parents.

Ms. Halstead said that the overcrowding in their schools, the continuous loss of teachers due to funding issues in Prince William County, and the increasing incidents of student harm were alarming. She said that as a concerned citizen, she understood the need for a passionate response to address these issues. She said that they had reached a critical point where inaction could lead to dire consequences for their students. She said that she acknowledged that Stafford County faced funding and tax challenges but said that they must recognize that 1,200 new homes would strain their existing educational infrastructure. She said that it was crucial that they start building new schools in the County to accommodate this growth.

Ms. Healy said that she appreciated this meeting and believed that effective communication was crucial in ensuring that everyone's perspectives were considered. She said that she was glad that they had listened attentively during their discussions, and she understood that their role involved representing the school system's needs and requirements.

Ms. Healy said that she acknowledged that the Board of Supervisors' role involved considering the needs of the entire County, which could be challenging due to varying demands from different areas. She said that she agreed that their dialogue had been healthy and productive, allowing them to identify their priorities and concerns. She said that the passionate discussions had been beneficial in highlighting what mattered most to them. She said that she thanked them for listening.

Ms. Healy said that it did not have to be today, but she would like the Board of Supervisors to review the letter sent from their administrator to the superintendent. She said that it gave certain directions, and that did not seem to be in the spirit of their dialogue today. She said that if that was something they wanted to keep on the record, then so be it. She said that if they had a change of heart, she suggested they address that, preferably before their meeting next Tuesday.

Ms. Healy said that they had a very collegial environment here and had a good candid discussion. She said that she believed they would leave here with some optimism that they would look forward to working together, but that directive did not go along the road they were trying to follow. She said that they were all elected officials with constituents they were accountable to, and their job was very difficult. She said that if they worked together, they could enhance what they were able to do for the County.

Ms. Siegmund said that she wanted to express gratitude to everyone involved in monitoring the situation in Richmond, which had enabled them to adapt quickly and make necessary changes right up until then. She said that this flexibility had been crucial in ensuring their success. She said that like Dr. Yeung, she was in her 30th year in Stafford, and every person in this room had chosen to be part of Stafford every day.

Ms. Siegmund said that they did not count down the days until they could leave or put their homes up for sale; instead, they actively chose to be there. She said that some of them were born there, some moved there for work, while others like herself were initially drawn to Stafford for its charm and eventually decided to make it their permanent home. She said that this shared commitment to their community was what allowed them to make progress together.

Ms. Siegmund said that she would also like to introduce their student representative, Jenny Odetogun from Mountain View High School. She said that Ms. Odetogun had been an invaluable asset to their Board and wanted to recognize her presence that day. She said that she did not wish to put Ms. Odetogun on the spot but wanted to take that opportunity to introduce her to the Board of Supervisors.

Ms. Odetogun said that she was speaking on behalf of her student representative, Joellaine Duku, who regrettably could not attend due to unforeseen circumstances, and the students of Stafford

County. She said that she would like to express their immense gratitude for all the efforts made in enhancing their community and improving their education system. She said that additionally, she personally felt honored to gain a deeper understanding of the various factors involved in decision-making processes. She said that initially she did not understand what all went into these components, but attending these meetings had significantly improved her understanding of them. She said that she would like to thank everyone very much and looked forward to collaborating with them in the future.

Ms. Guy said that sometimes she too did not understand all the components; therefore, she should not feel alone in that. She said that she appreciated what she had heard from the Board of Supervisors. She said that she hoped that their intentions were genuine, and that they could work together despite personal differences. She said that respecting the position held by others was crucial for her, and this was how she raised her children. She said that during her first year, she attended a Board of Supervisors meeting to advocate for their funding. She said that she misspoke and provided incorrect information.

Ms. Guy said that she only realized her mistake after being informed by Ms. Allen through a text message. She said that upon reviewing the meeting minutes again, she understood that she had misinterpreted the information presented. She said that she made this mistake because she cared deeply about the people in their community. She said that she moved to Stafford to distance herself from her husband's ex-wife and found a supportive environment that made her feel at home. She said that she knew that this was where she wanted to raise her children and fight for their education.

Ms. Guy said that she went to Ms. Vanuch and apologized for her mistake. She said that she was reassured that there was no need for a public apology, as she did not want her to feel uncomfortable. She said that her point was that they should all set aside their egos and respect the positions held by others for the sake of their children who were watching them closely. She said that the decisions they made today would have long-lasting consequences for their future.

Ms. Guy said that she wanted to emphasize that she understood and respected the competing interests that needed to be addressed by the Board of Supervisors. She said that many families in their community were struggling to keep their homes, and she acknowledged the challenges faced by everyone involved. She said that she wanted to highlight that she had five children who have either gone through or are currently attending their school system. She said that they must work together to ensure that they receive the best possible education and opportunities for their future success.

Ms. Guy said that her children had numerous friends due to their social interactions. She said that she had contacted the Sheriff's Office or taken action three times because a student has approached

her or her child, reporting an issue. She said that although she was not a mandated reporter by profession, if she were a teacher, she would be considered one. She said that she had had to fulfill that role in certain situations. She said the schools had been able to address these issues because they knew her, given her involvement as a parent volunteer and her relationships with educators. She said that the schools served as a safe haven for these children, providing support and guidance when needed.

Ms. Guy said that without this support system, these students might have fallen through the cracks. She said that it was crucial that they recognize the importance of schools in children's lives, even beyond their educational needs. She said that while they required homes, schools provided stability and continuity in their lives. She said that the public school system was a vital aspect of their country's infrastructure, supporting local economies and communities.

Ms. Guy said that during the COVID-19 pandemic, they saw the impact of school closures on their communities. She said that as a real estate agent, she understood that local school systems significantly influenced property values and market trends. She said that her mother, although elderly, was searching for another home and inquired about the local schools before making a decision. She said that the quality of education mattered, and she appreciated their efforts in making informed decisions for their children's future. She said that she thanked them for the opportunity to work together.

RECESS

The Board recessed at 6:33 p.m. and reconvened at 6:42 p.m.

CLOSED MEETING

At 6:42 p.m., Ms. Allen motioned, seconded by Dr. Yeung, to adopt Resolution CM24-05 to authorize closed session.

Ms. Bohmke confirmed that the motion passed unanimously by voice vote (7-0).

Resolution CM24-05 reads as follows:

A RESOLUTION TO AUTHORIZE CLOSED MEETING

WHEREAS, the Board desires to hold a Closed Meeting for (1) discussion of the performance and related employment matters of an employee of the Board; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Virginia Code § 2.2-3711, such discussions may occur in Closed Meeting;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Stafford County Board of Supervisors on this the 27th day of February, 2024, that it be and hereby does authorize discussion of the above matters in Closed Meeting.

CERTIFY CLOSED MEETING - SEC. 2.2-3711 (A)

At 7:08 p.m., Ms. Allen motioned, seconded by Ms. Vanuch, to adopt Resolution CM24-05(C) to certify the closed meeting.

Ms. Bohmke asked for a voice vote. She confirmed that the motion passed unanimously (7-0).

Resolution CM24-05 (C) reads as follows:

A RESOLUTION TO CERTIFY THE ACTIONS OF THE
STAFFORD COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS IN A CLOSED
MEETING ON FEBRUARY 27, 2024

WHEREAS, the Board has, on this the 27th day of February, 2024, adjourned into a Closed Meeting in accordance with a formal vote of the Board and in accordance with the provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Freedom of Information Act provides for certification that such Closed Meeting was conducted in conformity with the law;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Stafford County Board of Supervisors does hereby certify, on this the 27th day of February, 2024, that to the best of each member's knowledge (1) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, and (2) only such public business matters as were identified in the Motion by which the Closed Meeting was convened, were heard, discussed, or considered by the Board.

Ms. Bohmke confirmed that the motion passed unanimously by voice vote (7-0).

Ms. Allen motioned, seconded by Ms. Vanuch, to approve R24-116, a resolution to accept the resignation of the County Administrator.

The Voting Board tally was:

Yea: (6) Allen, Bohmke, Diggs, English, Gary, Vanuch, Yeung
Nay: (1) Yeung

Resolution R24-116 reads as follows:

A RESOLUTION TO ACCEPT THE RESIGNATION OF THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

WHEREAS, the Board entered into an employment agreement with Randal E. Vosburg on June 7, 2022, effective on July 5, 2022, entered into a first amendment to the employment agreement with Mr. Vosburg on December 13, 2022, and entered into a second amendment to the employment agreement with Mr. Vosburg on June 27, 2023 (collectively, Employment Agreement); and

WHEREAS, Mr. Vosburg submitted his resignation letter on February 21, 2024, and requested the required notice of resignation be reduced from 60 to 45 days; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Section Four of the Employment Agreement, upon mutual agreement in writing a shorter timeframe for notice maybe established; and

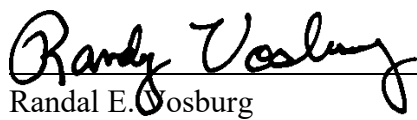
WHEREAS, Mr. Vosburg and the Board have mutually agreed to the below;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Stafford County Board of Supervisors on this the 27th day of February, 2024, that the Board be and it hereby does accept the resignation of Stafford County Administrator Randal E. Vosburg; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board, in agreement with Mr. Vosburg, accept his resignation effective April 5, 2024.

ADJOURNMENT

At 7:11 p.m., Chairman Bohmke adjourned the February 27, 2024 Joint Stafford County Board of Supervisor and Stafford County School Board work session.



Randal E. Vosburg
County Administrator



Meg Bohmke
Chairman