

Alexandria School Board Budget Advisory Committee

January 14, 2020 7PM
George Washington Middle School

MINUTES

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

Budget Advisory Committee Members Present: Erin Dahlin (Chair); Nancy Drane (Secretary); Sean McEneaney; Sukumar Rao (by phone); Lillian Vagnoni

ACPS Staff Liaison Present: Robert Easley (Director of Budget and Financial Systems)

Alexandria School Board Liaison Present: Ramee Gentry, Alexandria School Board

➤ Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes

- Mr. McEneaney moved to approve the minutes as drafted, seconded by Ms. Vagnoni. All members present in person or by phone voted unanimously to approve the minutes.

➤ Staff Report

- Mr. Easley began by reviewing the PowerPoint that the Superintendent presented to the School Board when he released the Combined Funds budget on January 9, 2020.
- Key point – ACPS has used a more collaborative approach to the development of the budget and use of budget resources (e.g., development and application of priorities set by the School Board). This was helpful because it helped ACPS staff prioritize budget requests.
- Combined Funds Budget is \$324 Million (includes general operating; grants/special projects; and school nutrition)
- Revenue – City appropriation is largest portion of revenue. That number was calculated using budget guidance as well as targeting a portion of anticipated additional revenue.
 - Question: Is there a value in saying, we are setting a budget within the guidance we have received, but we really need \$X million more in order to fill all the needs that we have or, alternatively, if we had \$X million more we could do this or that?
 - **ACTION ITEM:** Ms. Gentry suggested that we pose this question through the School Board questions they are entitled to submit to ACPS during the budget review process. Something like: “If there were additional revenue identified (from whatever source) is there a list of additional items that you might add to the existing budget? (Separate point was made that there may be items that could have a larger community benefit (e.g., sports or recreational facility; etc.))
 - NOTE: BAC should remember this issue when it develops its Best Practices memorandum.
- Expenditures – Salaries/employee benefits are the largest portion of the budget. There was emphasis on ensuring that they could guarantee step increase/bonus and make appropriate

contributions to various retirement-related programs (w/out having to pass those to employees); and market rate adjustment for certain positions (e.g., bus drivers) (average around 4.9% increase). Generally, ACPS was strategic about adding positions to ensure that they were necessary.

- **ACTION ITEM:** Ms. Gentry suggested that if there are confusing areas of the budget materials, please point them out to Mr. Easley. (This came up after Mr. Rao raised a question about reconciling the \$11.7M total in the PowerPoint and \$10.2M on a page in the budget book).
- Question: What is the communications plan around providing a “bite” to the public about the budget post-budget release in advance of the Public Hearing on January 23.
 - **ACTION ITEM:** Mr. Easley will follow up on this issue. It was suggested that the public be provided with a shorter document that mirrors the “key changes” page in the budget book, the Superintendent’s presentation, and includes some of the process-related context that informed budget development.
 - Note: This is also a good item to include in the BAC Best Practices memo.
- Mr. Easley noted that the first work session this week (Thursday, January 16) will be focused on compensation. The meeting will also include a summary of the external compensation study that was done. Overall, there are increased costs in compensation and benefits.
- Ms. Gentry encouraged BAC members to attend upcoming work sessions and add/deletes or review the meetings online.
- **ACTION ITEM:** If there are questions that BAC members have that they want posed during the budget process, please send those to Ms. Gentry (ramee.gentry@acps.k12.va.us) no later than January 22, 2020. (She has to submit them by January 23.)

➤ **Review and discussion of proposed Scope of Work**

- The committee reviewed the draft Scope of Work circulated in advance.
- It was recommended that the content of Memo #2 (BAC membership) be moved to Memo #1 so that it can get to the attention of the School Board right away.
 - Ms. Gentry also recommended that at the upcoming meeting of all School Board committee chairs, this topic of membership protocols and recruitment be discussed, with perhaps recommendations that would apply to all committees, not just BAC.
- Ms. Drane will make the changes discussed and re-circulate to BAC members.

➤ **Review and approval of Memo #1 to School Board**

- Ms. Gentry suggested adding a bullet to the list of BAC activities to include coordination with BFAAC
- As discussed above, content of Memo #2 will be added to Memo #1
- Ms. Drane will make the changes discussed and re-circulate to BAC members.

➤ **Other Business**

- Ms. Dahlin suggested changing the February meeting to February 13, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m