

DATE: October 26, 2021
TO: Members of the Alexandria City School Board
FROM: Budget Advisory Committee
Nancy Drane (Chair); Selena el Hajii; Sukumar Rao; Ryan Reyna¹
SUBJECT: BAC End of Year Report 2020-2021
CC: Robert Easley, ACPS Director of Budget & Financial Systems
Dominic Turner, ACPS Chief Financial Officer
Kathy Stenzel, Alexandria City Budget and Fiscal Affairs Advisory Committee

The Alexandria City School Board Budget Advisory Committee (BAC) hereby submits this report summarizing its activities during the 2020-2021 academic year. The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic curtailed BAC's activities between March 2020 and November 2020. When BAC meetings resumed in December 2020, the pandemic necessitated virtual, rather than in-person, meetings. Nevertheless, BAC is happy to report on the work that it conducted; valuable work that will inform its future activities. To that end, BAC will be providing a 2021-2022 Scope of Work to the School Board through a separate memorandum shortly.

Summary of 2020-2021 Activities

BAC met 7 times during the 2020-2021 academic year: [December 15, 2020](#); [January 19, 2021](#); [February 23, 2021](#); [March 16, 2021](#); [April 20, 2021](#); [May 18, 2021](#); and [June 22, 2021](#). BAC submitted a [2020-2021 Scope of Work](#) to the School Board in January 2021.

During its 2020-2021 term, BAC worked towards the development of a comprehensive memorandum on the Board's budget development and adoption process. The genesis of this memorandum was feedback BAC received from Board members during the 2019-2020 term through a detailed survey and subsequent individual interviews with Board members. BAC's primary goal in doing so was to ensure that, consistent with [its bylaws](#), it was providing practical information to the Board that supports the Board's budget-related activities and is responsive to Board members' needs.

Throughout the course of 2021, BAC members explored budget-related issues identified by the Board and ACPS staff through discussions with individual Board members and ACPS finance staff. This work included an analysis of current and past budget calendars. At ACPS staff's urging, BAC conducted comparison research with neighboring and/or comparable jurisdictions that were identified in consultation with ACPS finance staff. After this initial information gathering and research stage, BAC members consulted over the course of several months on lessons learned from other jurisdictions and the feedback received from ACPS stakeholders, culminating in a comprehensive memo with a series of recommendations for the Board's

¹ BAC would like to acknowledge and express gratitude for the participation of our past Chair, Erin Dahlin, and past member, Sean McEneaney. This end of year report is being prepared by the 2021-2022 BAC.

consideration. ACPS staff and the Board liaison were involved throughout, both in BAC discussions and in the memo drafting stage. BAC enjoyed this productive and collaborative discussion among members, with ACPS staff, and the Board liaison.

In May 2021, BAC submitted its memorandum to the Board, [Budget Advisory Committee Recommendations on FY 2023 Budget Process and Calendar](#), followed by a presentation during the May 20, 2021 Board Work Session. The memorandum and presentation were well received by the Board.

ACPS staff subsequently issued a formal response to the BAC memo in the form of a [Board Brief](#) that was discussed at a subsequent Board meeting. In the Brief, staff stated that “[a]s is customary for financial reviews (Annual Operating Fund audit, School Activity Fund Audit, etc.) staff submits the following management response.”

BAC respects the views contained in that Brief but in the future, would prefer a process where all staff views are raised and resolved in advance. In our view, this is critical so that BAC can consider all staff views and edit any report(s) being drafted as needed. A complete exchange of views between BAC and ACPS staff in advance of report submission will better serve the Board. As we enter the 2021-2022 BAC year, we are confident that we will have an open and collaborative discussion with ACPS staff that is consistent with that goal.

BAC has always and hopes to continue to have a warm and positive relationship with ACPS staff. The BAC memo contains a series of suggestions that will require collaboration among ACPS staff, BAC, and community stakeholders to be successful. BAC is anxious to continue its work on these initiatives, and looks forward to our continued work with the Board and ACPS staff.

BAC appreciates the School Board’s support of its work and the support of ACPS staff, and will endeavor to continue to provide the best recommendations possible on the budget and fiscal affairs of Alexandria City Public Schools.