

**ALEXANDRIA CITY SCHOOL BOARD BUDGET ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MAY 24, 2022 – 6:30 TO 8:00 P.M.**

VIRTUAL MEETING VIA ZOOM

MINUTES

Present: Budget Advisory Committee Members Nancy Drane [Chair], Selena el Hajji, Sukumar Rao, Ryan Reyna, and Bridget Shea Westfall; ACPS staff members Robert Easley, Director, Budget & Fiscal Compliance; Dominic Turner, Chief Financial Officer; and School Board Member Kelly Carmichael Booz

The meeting was called to order by Ms. Drane at 6:30 p.m. Ms. Drane began by welcoming Ms. Westfall for her first meeting as a BAC member.

There were no public attendees, thus no public comment was received.

The meeting started with a discussion of the previously circulated draft of BAC's memo on budget-related communications.

Mr. Turner shared some feedback with the group. First, he clarified that Dr. Hutchings does have Superintendent Chats and Town Halls (hosted at the high school) periodically. They are not specific to budget, but rather focus on numerous topics. They are typically held at ACPS locations, not in the outside community. He also shared that the Community Budget Forum has included interactive presentations in the past, although not during the past few years due to the virtual format. When in person, ACPS staff led a 'Budget Hold 'Em' activity to help attendees get in the mindset of budget decisionmaker. There was also an opportunity for Q&A in either in-person or virtual format. The last forum was quite successful, with over 150 participants. Mr. Turner shared that ACPS would like to get back to holding this event in person, and that they'd think about additional ways to make the session as interactive as possible. Mr. Turner urged BAC to reference in its memo the capacity issues that must be considered as the Board reviews the various ideas included in the BAC memo. He pointed out that several of the jurisdictions that were reviewed have finance and communications staffs far larger than ACPS, and that gives them the capacity to do more. ACPS will have to consider how or if they'll pursue some of the new ideas included in BAC's memo and the capacity implications for those decisions. Some hard choices may need to be made about what activities to cut or reduce in order to do new things, unless staff capacity is increased. He did note that ACPS will be hiring an FTE to focus on communications re: the ESSER plan. Finally, Mr. Turner noted that he especially liked the interactive budget approached from Highline and Brookline, but recognized that this would come with a cost (e.g., web design, etc.) in order to execute well.

BAC members supported inclusion of these themes in its memo. BAC members emphasized that its intent is not that we be proscriptive, but rather that our memo serves as a toolkit of sorts to present ideas that the school division might pursue. Staff is in the best position to

assess the capacity to take on any good ideas, decide how to prioritize them, and how the staffing might work.

Ms. Booz mentioned that many topics come up during the budget process that cannot be fully addressed, either because of lack of funding or because the idea isn't ripe for inclusion in the budget. (For example, adding a new class at ACHS requires engagement with the team that develops the program of studies.) She suggested a "parking lot" approach, where ideas that come up during budget testimony and discussions are identified and there is a subsequent opportunity to discuss them – not waiting until the next year's budget process.

BAC members raised several other ideas, including:

- Need for an infographic that demonstrates the budget formulation process on both the revenue and expenses side;
- FAQ on common budget categories or common proposals and ability to fund;
- Expanded information on ACPS' ESSER page;
- a more navigable and more efficient website; and
- Follow the American Association of School Administrators guidance about school budget briefs, available at: https://www.aasa.org/uploadedfiles/policy_and_advocacy/files/schoolbudgetbrieffinal.pdf; and
- Use of college interns or others to help with graphics.

Mr. Easley suggested that we be sure that the intent and purpose of the effort is highlighted in the memo. We want more "engagement" – but what does good engagement look like? Why are the barriers there in the first place? He mentioned that BAC's memo mentioned some items ACPS staff is already working on, such as incorporating better graphics, utilizing more graphic presentations on budget content, having easily digestible, discernable information, and using graphic laden dashboards. He also said that he liked the "parking lot" idea, a way to remind the community about things that have come up during the budget process that can be reinforced throughout the year and then brought up again.

BAC members agreed that they had several goals in doing the memo, including ensuring that community members:

- know *when* and how they can weigh in
- can be well informed about the budget and can do so easily
- are able to obtain information in a way that is accessible to them (e.g., language access, format and timing, etc.)

After discussion, Ms. Drane said that she would circulate an updated draft that will incorporate the comments to BAC members for approval soon. Once approved, it will be sent on to ACPS staff for submission to the Board.

As far as a Starr Report, Ms. Easley reported that the budget will be adopted on June 2, both the combined funds budget and 10 year CIP. He said that ESSER funding was close to \$60M (but with multiple years to spend). He reported this year's budget process was quite and fairly smooth. In response to a BAC question, Mr. Easley said that 55% of the ESSER funds are being used for SEAL.

With that, the meeting was adjourned at 7:58 p.m.