

ACPS Budget Advisory Committee
December 8, 2022
6:20-8:30 pm

Called to order at 6:39 pm by Chair Nancy Drane. In attendance: Nancy Drane, chair, Ryan Reyna, vice chair, Bill Pfister, Jenica Patterson, Lillian Vagnoni, Bridget Shea Westfall, secretary.

Nancy Drane: Great to see everyone in person. Expectation is that we will meet in person. A couple people on their way or unable to come. Our ACPS liaison (Robert Easley) is not able to be there. He did share a staff report. I didn't have time to look. **If you have questions, please send to Nancy and she will send to Robert.*

Kelly Carmichael Booz is at a school board meeting (retreat). Unable to come tonight.

Let's get to the business.

First, November BAC meeting minutes. Called to pass by Bridget and seconded by Ryan.

Minutes passed.

Note: Lillian Vagnoni arrived at 6:41.

Nancy: Now we will talk about the scope of work.

Scope of Work 2022-2023

Bridget: Can we have the new members introduce themselves?

Nancy: can everyone go around?

Lillian Vagnoni: Background social worker. Work for Neighborhood Health. Was here (BAC) three years ago.

Jenica Patterson: my kids go to Patrick Henry. I'm on the West End. I'm a scientist by training. All this budget is new to me.

Scope of Work (Nancy Drane)

This is an opportunity to tell the SB what we are up to and give feedback to the board. In my experience, they do not ask questions.

The first piece will be a joint memo with the City Council. Budget and Fiscal Affairs Advisory Committee. Blurb comes from the BFAAC scope of work. Subject may change organically.

Second, we talked about doing a supplemental memo on implementation of community engagement from our memo from last year. I described that.

Catch all for all other memos giving us flexibility. Memo on the community budget forum that Ryan drafted is an example of that. We will talk about that in the minute.

Comments?

Ryan Reyna: question we had the communications director (blinking on name).

Nancy: Ms. Burgos

Wondering if she should come if we are talking about communication through the memo and recs

Robert said his staff went over the memo and his staff identified higher priorities. We don't have that information.

The comms-that is a good idea. Invite them to a future meeting. Around the synergy, communication. Invite them early next year.

The other idea I had was to potentially explore how the city council's budget committee operates. In my mind, the city council uses their committee more than the ACPS uses us. Each of the city council members appoints a member. Creates an organic relationship. They reach out and ask to write memos. In turn, they give recs to city council in the budget development. Comment with reflections based on their assessment and community feedback. Much more robust relationship. Strikes me if we have the capacity to do it. They produce a memo to our board in ways they could use us. We typically suggest ways we could be more helpful. They don't really suggest. Section three. Doesn't need to be their own standalone.

Lillian: think it's a wonderful idea. When I gave feedback on my first term. I felt like we were given a lot of information. Very education. In terms of us providing feedback to the board, it was one way communication. It just stopped. I just felt, much more looking at the budget. School budget is 70% salaries.

Nancy: more like 90%

Lillian: When I was here 60-70%. Mr. Turner would say this was the costs. For example the text books for the third graders had to be bought. What needed to be done again? What is coming up? Like your perspective.

Bill Pfister: Where are the levers are...where do we engage more? We had an opportunity with the forum. Gave feedback with the forum. Pretty concise and specific suggestions. Trying to observe and ask the question.

Nancy: I think that is right. The thing is strange is we are an advisory to the board. But most of our interaction is with the staff. At the end of the day, our advisory is to the board. We are supposed to be helpful to the board. A couple of new members to the SB were saying earlier this year, talking about BAC. "Oh, they can help us with that! We can help us with priorities and feedback." We can ask how our feedback can be more valuable. Push to make our work more relevant.

Ryan: I think Kelly as our liaison to the board would be open to that as far as going to the board. What are the right levers?

Jenica: what feedback provided?

Bill: announce early, up vote, down vote, community engagement, a lot of info in that memo (that Ryan wrote)

Nancy: I really liked Ryan's idea. Have influence. Jancinta Greene said "we the board should be speaking at this" Maybe if we set up like that, our feedback would be more well received. That is a challenge.

Bill: can it go even later in the cycle? Sure, they told us about the process. How much can we push back for the forum?

Ryan: spring; they can't push it too far back

Bill: forum itself. Spring, talking about priorities for the next year

Nancy: in our memo two years ago about the budget calendar, we talked about the budget forum. If it was done well and advanced planning, setting the stage for the budget process. There are actual public hearings where the public can participate in the actual feedback of the budget. Timing isn't the problem as much as the content. Observation.

Ryan: perception of what it is actually trying to accomplish. It should not be doing something to check box. The goal is to get community feedback. Find ways to build other voices.

Bridget: is that what Jacinta (Greene) was saying?

Nancy: board have some role. Meagan Alderton was there. She could have said something like I'm the chair of the SB and thanks for being there.

One week later, school safety forum. Well advertised. Partnership with PTAC. Might want to mention in the memo of an example of what it could be if there was more of a partnership relationship for the planning of it. If we had more control, we could have more input. A, we haven't been invited. B, it's the timing. BAC struggles to get started in September, which is on us.

I texted with Robert. There is probably feedback that he has about the budget forum that he wants us to add that I could add to the memo that would be more candid. He knows what the problems are.

Bridget: Robert spent a lot of time with parents after. Feedback was that you could only listen in, not submit questions or participate.

Nancy: maybe it was an oversight or not. Sends a message that people's participation is not welcome, rather if it was intentional or not. 100 people need a chat

Jenica: who plans it?

Nancy: finance team

Ryan-Right now, it's seen as something the finance team hosts rather than the SB. As a SB member, I would hope that they would want feedback.

Nancy: it's on the SB calendar

Ryan: it's their meeting

Nancy: point. Have the SB own that event. Show ownership. Surprised number of board members. Meagan Alderton, Jacinta Greene, Chris (Christopher Harris) left early. Kelly online. Was Ashley (Simpson Baird)?

Bill: who do you send the info to? Say I want more info for athletics. Who do I send a note right now? The feedback for the forum. If Robert isn't consolidating and sending to the board, the feedback isn't going to the board.

Nancy: do you mean our input—community input—on the budget itself?

Bill: yeah, our input and community memo

Nancy: this is why we need to focus on implementation. Clear channel for members to submit info

Ryan: t's in there. One place

Nancy: it can go to the staff. Staff's job to compile it. To be more direct, speak at a hearing, directly to the board

Ryan: when I was at a similar situation at the state level, not that they have to operate this way, I was responsible for providing monthly summaries to the board each month. I don't know if that is an expectation.

Bill: I would say no

Nancy: at the board meeting there were questions at Ask ACPS. Categorized and summarized. Collated and shared with the board. It is new, but they are doing it. It should be clear where you should share info. Responsibilities for the staff that it gets to the board. In a memo that is a follow on to our memo last year, we should be clear.

Jenica: Right now can I make a rec. Be able to submit or write in another language. Very inclusive. People are very hesitant to submit because of this. We have a lot of families who would like to speak.

Bridget: even English speakers don't want to speak.

Jenica: they want to submit written comments

Ryan: feedback in the memo is examples of school districts doing that better

Nancy: my recommendation is to have a list of the public hearings. That is fine but not the whole answer to engage with the board.

Nancy: we are an advisory committee to the board. We can provide things to the board that can be helpful. They need to utilize us. Give examples of how BFAC utilizes. Council has a budget retreat—as does the SB. And they present at the retreat. Things the council should keep in mind, some dialogue. We have never been invited to do that, at least since I have been on BAC. Something to add to our scope of work not to add this year but give to the SB for food for thought about how they could utilize.

To move on, I'm going to add to scope of work. Nothing very complicated. Circulate it. You can let me know if you have any last comments. Hopefully, good to go if you can approve it. It's supposed to be our work for the year, and it's December. If we could get to the end of the CY?

Bill: is there a time you want it?

Nancy: let's go to the community forum memo and then I'll talk about the BFAC memo. Beef it up more. Any thoughts people had? Additional things? Kinda starting it with this statement. That it could be a partnership. That the board could be more involved. Anything you would add to that memo?

Jenica: you talk about engagement. We didn't know the information to spread to our community. So the community didn't know.

Nancy: two years ago, we had send to PTAC. We had a ton of people. Part of it was a covid issue, didn't know the format

Jenica: did they have SOP for each year?

Nancy: kind of related to covid. Usually in person. At the HS here somewhere. Date set well in advance. No question about it. Two years ago, did all virtual. Last year, they did it multiple formats. Did it over Facebook, ACPs....

Delay. Part of it was getting the notice out. I felt constrained. No details. Maybe canceled because no information.

Bill: Nancy was sending emails out repeatedly for three weeks.

Nancy: even when format was set, the lack of comms was unacceptable

Jenica: noticed. I always think about engaging other parts of our community? I don't think they understand the why? That needs to be communicated. Touched upon. Not just people from the US. How do we get people engaged? PTAC?

Bridget: -is it two fold? School division and community; memo to implement had great examples of internal and external stakeholders and engaging both the school division and the community

Jenica: families, parents, guardians

Nancy: we could help introduce the event. This is why I am on the BAC, this is why you should care. All sorts of examples. They need to buy into it. The person running the meeting doesn't carry it.

Nancy: You need messengers. The messaging.

Nancy: Ryan you were tactful in your memo. It was cut off. It was supposed to be 90 minutes.

Bill: conflicting. One was an hour.

Jenica: have a lot of why questions. Lessons learned. Hopefully not repeated

Nancy: who has responsibility? Critical event. Sets the stage for the budget season. It shouldn't be squandered. Have the division partner with the board, us, PTAC. Gives the opportunity to be the event it should be. PTAC school safety event was well attended, well advertised.

Ryan, I really appreciate this memo. Have attention on this. Continue.

Bridget: diplomacy and tact with the memo. Very good.

Nancy: this is one where there is no rush. Convo is about the budget forum, but so much more. About attitude and how approach the committee? Folks, take another look at it. We have an idea of ideas how it is floated around here. I'll Robert take another look at it. It's great. We can hit the themes. Cross reference our memo. Any last thoughts?

Nancy: BFAC: I have said this before. As a reminder, a way of background. The SB's budget advisory committee and the city council meeting will meet jointly once a year, aiming at a joint memo. Typically, the joint meeting and memo harkens back to joint facilities planning that happened in the 2017-2018 time period.

Bill: the blue ribbon panel

Nancy: exactly. There were some recs that joint taskforce made. Alexandria lacks a unified vision of the future. The CIP process lacks coordination and collaboration. A lot of it was a lack of collab and coordination between the schools. A lot has improved since then. I think most of it has been "oh they talked to one another. They get along. They meet regularly." Some of the unified vision has been lost beyond getting along and collaborating.

Ryan and I met with two people on BFAC. We met with Kathy Stenzel. The SB appoints one member.

Bridget: is she a member of the school division or community?

Nancy: -she's a community member. We also met with Karen Graf, who is a community member and former SB member. Really hones in on a joint vision. In particular, the need for community to recognize what type of community, what type of school system they are aiming for? What resources are needed? They role of the community in engaging that vision. Not just "oh we have to raise taxes." Engage businesses more. Engage tax payers. All our expenses for schools and beyond will far exceed our resources. At some time, we will need to raise taxes or find revenue. BFAC, educate the community and give notice. Why is this important to the community? Conceptually, this is what we talked about. What am I missing Ryan?

Ryan: you hit on the head. Stems a lot about earlier convo. Purpose for where we are going and why this matters? In particular, one thing you didn't talk about was diversifying different sources of revenue. Division needs to partner with businesses and communities. Examples of an "in". Decisions of capital projects need to be guided by academic outcomes and not just need we need another building. How are we designing the buildings? Things we have to be most academically enriching for students? Not decisions about building. Engineers and building designers rather than academic leaders. Vision of what we accomplish and capital vision.

Nancy: this came up with the board. Capital investments. Do we find new land? Do we invest. Capital decision made by necessity rather than driven by educational programs. Example of what came up. Karen had background. K-8 schools. Did we do that because it is a preferred way of education our student body or we stick the 6th-8th. Now we have that swing space. Retrofitted in 2023. Retrofitted for an elementary school. Is that a good place for a HS satellite campus or a middle school? Those decisions are often driven by necessity. Several of the board members.

Jenica: last night's meeting?

Bridget: questions about federal funding. What federal funding does ACPS receive except the Department of Education IDEA and other grants and the DOJ COPS (community policing) for physical security items.

Nancy: the elected need to look into other funds, partnerships, foundations, grants

Ryan: person on council side

Nancy: need for the city for funding. Usually these joint memos are different from what we do. They are not outside research. We suggest you prioritize other revenue streams. Nature of the memos. Either body is available to help. Directed to the staff and the elected.

Lillian: new city manager focused on funding from feds other sources

Nancy: joint meeting of the committees. Staff invited to attend as well. Kathy asked if we needed to have a meeting? I think it is good form to have a meeting.

Bridget: who is the staff?

Nancy-Erika Gulick, capital staff. Dr. (Alicia) Hart, CIP facilities department. City side-budget staff, planner. Counterparts

Bridget: was that on the ACPS board page?

Bill: suggestion: get copies of board minutes, time and date stamped for version control

Nancy: concept. Have feedback, conversation with both committees and staff. Work on the ultimate memo who goes to both bodies. Kathy takes the lead. We will have opportunity to provide feedback and she is always really open to feedback.

We have to pick a new date, not our reg meeting. We could cancel our meeting and just have the joint meeting. Subjective. Different people's schedules. I'll keep you posted. They take the lead, Kathy for arranging.

Questions about this? In terms of governance, size, I've had people reach out about BAC. Bigger we are, more we can do. Some of the limitations based on capacity. 17.

Bridget: our principal put it in the newsletter

Nancy: what do we do and not do? That can help attract new members and grow the committee.

Last thing, we are meeting in person. The policy and expectations are governed by VA state statute. We are required to meet in person. We as a body could meet virtually 2x per calendar year. In 2023, we could meet virtually, but probably only meet once. We have that opportunity as a body. For each member, you can participate virtually 2x per calendar year.

Bridget asked me if it was possible to view the meeting per Zoom. Pre-covid, we put out someone's cell phone. I don't think they have these committee meetings hybrid. I'll ask Susan. I don't know what the protocols would be for that. I'll find out so we have that info. It's been a topic at the state house to try to relax these requirements.

Bill: atmospheric question. How are we looking? Budget has a different focus due to issues. Do we have a sense where we shake out? Fully fund our schools or fund ACPS?

Nancy: I don't know. The last joint meeting we had with the city, the city staff said at a point we can't do this anymore. We can't take on more debt, we can't increase CIP. The construction delays have spread out the expenses. They haven't had to take. Kathy was saying he only had to instead (Mark Jinx, staff, budget guy). Regardless, they look to see is Minnie Howard delayed for 6 months? They are strategic. Don't take on debt we have to pay until next year. There is a limit. I don't know the answer to that question. That is something we could have on the agenda. It is a city issue. It speaks to the need to diversify revenue. I don't have the details. It could have come up in some of the joint meetings.

Bill: Parajon (city manager) was looking to give a 2% cut. DASH was told tell us where you could find 2%. I assume this is city wide.

Ryan: Justin Wilson's newsletter was \$17M down. His projection...

Nancy: couple of board meetings did revenue projections. State revenue

Bridget: I took screenshots of the slides

Nancy: we should add to the joint meeting. Ask Robert

Bill: -that is when budget
Becomes a focus for everyone. Motivation. No one cares if everything is fine.

Nancy: in some ways, they will be able to use the federal funding for another year. They will push it out. The appropriation will be gone.

Bill: this year and next will be really big capital spend years. City is already on board with that. What about subsequent? They saw the 10 year and haven't balked at it.

Nancy: I've watched meetings. This council recognizes long overdue and necessary

7:56 pm. Meeting adjourned