

ACPS Budget Advisory Committee Meeting
Wednesday, February 8, 2023
Alexandria City High School
6:30 pm

Present: Nancy Drane, Ryan Reyna, Jenica Patterson, Bill Pfister, Bridget Shea Westfall

Absent: Lillian Vagnoni, Selena El Hajji, Robert Easley, Kelly Carmichael Booz

Nancy Drane called meeting to order at 6:37 pm. We do not have any public comments. No public attendees.

Table the meeting minutes for next month. Bridget, remind me we need to do that.

With respect to reports, I only have a couple of things. One is related to the joint memo with BFAC. Ryan and I have had communication with Kathy Stenzel who is a member of the BFAC and also the school board liaison to BFAC. She suggested the approach of their next BFAC meeting and our March meeting to outline the memo and also some time to get direct feedback from staff about the outline. Primary reason, it is a crazy time for city budget staff. Asking them to do another meeting on top of all the meetings they have at night. Second, refocusing the electeds on things that came up in prior meetings. We don't need another meeting of the join groups on these things. It's really revisiting and reminding the electeds of these things. I'm joining to try to attend the BFAC meeting March 6. You are happy to attend. No pressure! Kathy will come to our meeting on March 8th. My hope is to chat with Robert before our next meeting and see what he recommends. For our March meeting, we could invite Dominic Turner and Erica Gulick from the facilities because some of it is around capital planning.

I wanted to get more feedback from Robert before I shared more broadly. Kathy do same thing with the city side. I shared with you and Kathy added to it.

Come together with shared vision for city and schools. Integrate other community planning into the schools. Diversify revenue. Get support for what we want to do in the school system. All things raised by staff.

Bill: are there any controversial things because of the state of the budget? Haven't been following because in the past months, it was have to cut 5% or 3%.

Nancy: typically the superintendent and the city have talked about the budget. The schools have asked what they can get, at least the past couple of years. We have a new city manager.

Bill:...and an interim superintendent

Nancy: we will see when the budget gets to city council. Desire in the board is to increase operating in the budget—up—for staffing, mental health support.

Bill: I agree with that

Nancy: when they propose an increase, they have to give an decrease. Increase staff a lot and reduce central office, anyway you recommend. I'm sure they will not decrease central office. So it should be a spirited discussion. That could put the pressure on any conversations

Ryan: Remind me. When does BFAC do their presentation (with the city council)? Is it in the summer?

Nancy: they do it during the BFAC retreat in the summer

Lillian: in the summer

Nancy: they do some kind of comment. But they don't do a presentation. They do discuss

Our board will vote on 2/16. Add delete tomorrow (2/9). Vote on 2/16. City manager's budget soon after. IF the SB votes on a budget higher than the city planned...it's been awhile.

Bill: it's a big capital year. You have both MH and MacArthur on high spend years.

Nancy: because of supply chain issues and the like, some of the spending is spread out

Bill: or so behind schedule, don't realize the costs that will hit hard, shortly

Nancy: capital expenditures-ability of the city to borrow and reach the level not comfortable

Bill: great margin on our thresholds. Saw the emails from Justin (Wilson)

Is BFAC school supportive? If we are asking for more, they'd reasonably support.

Nancy: they council is supportive

SB-very engaged in the budget compared to past years. Engaged. Asking how to get to those numbers?

Bill: larger fish that needed frying. (knock on wood).

Jenica: a lot more community members speaking up. AT our school, reaching out to staff.

Nancy: and the school staff reaching out

Bridget (talk about issues in the teacher)

Nancy: having a permanent sub is on Kelly's add/delete

Need to have a co-sponsor. I think you need two co-sponsors. Staff sussing out who co-sponsored what. Superintendent has a response to whatever the add/delete.

Bridget: about budget and 30 kids in class

Nancy: a lot of confusion—including within the budget—how ACPS analyzes enrollment, project enrollment for the budget, this idea—I don't think the board members know that the number of the students is budgeted on the capacity. That is not the students actually going there. They are going to administratively transfer. No, there is more. There is only capacity for 88.

Jenica: they didn't do capacity transfers

Bridget: they did at our school

Nancy: Board members need to do a work session on enrollment and capacity. ASB said we are getting all these feedbacks from the community. We need to explain to the community how these decisions happen.

We need to recommend. This is an example of communication. If I were them as a board member, I would want to get a handle on it.

Ryan: especially as we head into another redistricting

Bill: well, it got pushed back two years because of MacArther

Nancy: you were involved last time?

Bill: they'll hire consultants, for another \$100K, they might do it in July. Then it will be another year...

Nancy: Kelly talked about how some work will happen

Bill: I agree about the enrollment thing. Ever since '15, it's been horrible. And they predicate everything at the macro level, and in the micro level, it isn't right.

Nancy: Robert mentioned that the city and schools work on this together. Explore on both sides. They always say it's accurate.

(everyone-ha)

Bill: we do the births, five years and predict kindergarten

Nancy: "oh it's pretty accurate"

Bridget: Wash post article, 2k

Bill: end of the day, needs more transparency

Nancy: all I wanted to share. Obviously, Kelly and Robert are not here. I wanted to spend time talking about our presentation on March 30th. The next day, Susan Nielson, the board clerk reached out to me about the presentation. All the committees are doing presentations. Tonight-brainstorm. Topics, what we want to discuss. I did not ask how much time we had. I imagine 15 minutes? We don't have a ton of time. We could brainstorm, pull from the memo. Things that we have observed from this budget season since it will be on people's mind and the board members will of course remember what happened

Ryan: inclusive of the recs on the forum

Nancy: I sent the memo to Robert. Those are shared in the consent agenda. So hopefully, will be on the consent agenda on 2/16.

Bridget: on the consent agenda?

Nancy: I'm not sure exactly...when it is on the agenda, it will be consent agenda

Lillian: how is the superintendent search going?

Bridget: they had a report this week

Nancy: they said in terms of the process, the application closes tomorrow. This week. Interview in March. Hire this April. My understanding is there is no public involvement in the process.

Lillian: yeah, I wanted to talk to you about that. I know when they hire DCHS for big time directors, they have interviews, questions and answers. Why aren't you (Nancy) involved?

Nancy: or PTAC?

Bill: so I've been part of that for other positions, I'd assume for the superintendent too

Nancy: I asked Kelly if there were community members on the selection committee

Bill: on the panel interviews, given 2-3 questions. Only ask for those. You give your responses to head of HR...

Nancy: I expressed a view of lack of community involvement

Goal is to have someone in place on July 1. Whether current person or somebody...

Lillian: it's an important role

Nancy: indeed.

So, what do people think about the memo from last year? We really want to include it with any comments to the board?

Ryan: calling upon or encouraging the SB to a more active role themselves in the community engagement and directing the division on what should happen instead of deferring to them as to what that would look like

Nancy: you said that in the memo. I think there is an openness to that.

Bill: I know at least four members who would be in that camp.

Jenica: community outreach. Expand out to communities who were are typically not able to reach out to, in unique and creative ways.

Nancy: in the memo, ways to reach out to the community

Jenica: sub-bullet: explaining why it is important

Bridget: being able to find information. In the memo, you gave the examples of the school divisions, where the videos were imbedded in the website, or where it is to find

Lillian: when this committee was created, what was the role? The first time I did this, it was very clear it was a one-way. There was no reciprocity. It was not fluid. Is there a job description? What was their job description? What was the intent? We should not be fighting to be heard?

Nancy: it has changed from committee, chair, superintendent, school board, etc. They are struggling with how to utilize the committees. They surveyed us about our experience. I don't have an answer to your question, but that is a point to raise as well. What do they want out of our

committee? Look at how the council uses BFAC. Kelly is here. We get a lot of feedback from staff. We are a committee of the board. The board should be giving us. The city council will have BFAC to do research, explore issues. That has never happened on my time on BAC...

Ryan: they use them as additional staff

Nancy: they should see how they want to use them?

Bill: one of the things we should do is to recruit people on BAC? I'm hesitant to do that until I could explain our role.

Nancy: when I was on BAC, we did interviews. Two SB members said, "I don't want to recruit members". IT wasn't a good use of time.

Lillian: walking into the middle of the movie. We had to figure it out.

Nancy: related to recruitment. Clear objectives lead to more recruitment

A lot of people think that we do provide feedback that we analyze, give recommendations on the budget. That has not happened on my time on BAC. There would be a resource component as the budget is vast. Asking if that is something they would want. The staff wouldn't want that. We would need to have fuller complements to do that effectively. We are a committee of the board. We haven't done that but BFAC has done that.

Ryan: one other piece that I had, you did a great job of communicating how much opportunity there is to engage rather than one and done. To be clear, what is that calendar of engagement. IT would be important. Don't just talk about it in January and February.

Bridget: timeline of the board, add/delete and public comment

Nancy: agree. Would be interesting to hear from them on calendar. Real challenge. Constraints. Two years ago, did a memo on the budget. Staff's position is that they are working over the holiday, when no one else. They can't get it done before early January because of enrollment data. And they are doing the capital stuff in the early fall. That, at least is the explanation. And they have pressure to get it done before the city manager's budget. IT is super rushed. Hard to engage. Add/delete rushed. Back and forth with cosponsorships. Used to be two add/deletes. Frankly, some of our recs have condensed even more since the city manager budget. The staff would probably say that they need to do it more. Rushed.

Maybe ways to enhance communication

Bill: add/delete-what is most helpful? These two are my pet projects or high level priorities. You give me the priorities and then the board members go deal with it. Do they really want us deal with every line item? I don't think so...

Nancy: I do wonder if they need to get board agreement with these add/delete. IF people in the community. There is opportunity for advocacy.

Bill: hey, these are the things at play. Flag these things.

Nancy: it is not a surprise, more staff to meet some of the requests, is on people's radar

A good question: are there things that BAC could have done through the budget process to be helpful or supportive?

Bill: have you filled out anything in the spring hey my kid is going here?

Bridget and Nancy: yes

Bill and Jenica: no

Bill: I think that I know what might

Ryan: city council and more affordable housing and density issues...

Bill: did anyone tell the school?

Bridget: enrollment/help kids get

Lillian: I work at Neighborhood Health, we have a van. That is so sad

Nancy: dedicated communications support for the budget team. A lot rests on the budget team. That is not their expertise or job. I just pulled up the budget page. They haven't done anything. There is no budget at a glance. No info graphics. Nothing this year! Worse than last year.

Ryan: That shouldn't be on Robert to write up

Nancy: so many ideas for infographics, one pagers. There is literally nothing this year. I don't think that is fair to put on the budget team. They need communication support.

They are suggesting more people on the comms budget. Some have that in add/delete. Dedicated comms support is something we should recommend.

Bridget: a comms person that is a liaison to the budget

Nancy: they were going to use some of their ESSER funds to hire a comms person. There were certain requirements around public meetings.

Bill: The CIP model...

Jenica: aren't there dashboards?

Nancy: all kinds of things we suggested. It's disappointing.

Jenica: people have already did it

Nancy: on the budget page, they did post the add/delete. Long meeting

Ryan: competing

Nancy: 21 add/deletes. All got requisite supports

Jenica: communities care about what is going on in their schools. Link to each school and what they are doing

Nancy: dedicated comms support to the budget team. Here are all the things, to highlight some of the things they could increase their communications.

Anything else? There was also so much in here, they focused on nothing. Keep it high level.

Nancy: 7 people on the accounting team, 5 on the budget, 4 financial systems

Jenica: is there a way to format this for easy wins for them. Easily attainable, low hanging fruit. Then long-term goals.

Nancy: important to acknowledge that the staff has a lot on their plate. Great idea. Reference things that we saw that were really terrific that would take a lot of staff time to pull off. I feel like we have good, meaty amount of stuff.

Ryan: even just having the meeting on the books will hopefully remind them to read this

Nancy: slides, you guys can look at it. We do have a meeting with BFAC in early march

Bill: when does it need to be submitted?

Nancy: a week in advance. They usually post the Thursday, I don't know, it's a Thursday meeting. She will probably want it a week before. They usually don't post

I will work on that. I'll circulate it. We can all take a look. Share feedback. I will also ask Kelly if she has suggestions. She wasn't here tonight. Any suggestions. She was here last week. I'll also ask Robert.

Adding communications support would probably be #1 on his list.

I think that's it. I don't think we need to talk about anything else. This will keep us busy, our scope of work.

Jenica: should we try to attend the SB meeting when you present?

Nancy: let me find out. The short answer is yes. We did a presentation a few years ago and we split up amongst committee members. I think now the default that they do presentations remotely.

I was at the SB meeting. There was a school presentation in person. And a committee there. I think they have given the staff the opportunity to present virtually. I'll ask for expectations around that and get back to you. As many of you who can come, would be great. We can handle as a group.

Ryan: I'm in Austin 6-8. I won't be here next meeting. I can attend the board meeting.

Nancy: March 30th is the SB meeting. The board meeting is 3/8.

Move to adjourn the meeting. Ryan, second. All in favor. Meeting adjourned 7:40 pm.