

ACPS School Board Budget Advisory Committee

December 10, 2019 7PM
George Washington Middle School Room 101

MINUTES

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m.

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

ACPS Staff Liaisons Present: Robert Easley (Director of Budget and Financial Systems) and Dominic Turner (Chief Financial Officer)

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

➤ Minutes Approval

- All members present voted in approval, as did Ms. Dahlin by phone.

➤ Staff Report

- Mr. Turner provided the ACPS Staff Report.
- He began by reviewing the budget process timeline, much of which had been reviewed at prior BAC meetings.
- As a reminder, the budget priorities set by the School Board in September have been used to guide the development of the Superintendent's combined funds operating budget. Those priorities were also shared with the ACPS Senior Leadership Team and Principals to guide the development and prioritization of budget requests.
 - Some examples of budget requests grounded in budget priorities: adding counselors in elementary to front-load restorative practices; increases in multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS), Positive Behavioral Intervention Services (PBIS); adding a counselor at GW to model Hammond program; additional funding for career and technical education (CTE) and the AVID program (for first generation college students); examining work-based learning programs (specifically targeted towards Latino students) in order to address the absenteeism/low graduation rate for Latino students; expanding cultural competency to respond to equity audit; expand ALICE safety training; etc.
- At this point, ACPS budget team has received all discretionary budget requests and has obtained information on non-discretionary items (e.g., health benefits) – which they are now weighing and balancing with the ACPS Senior Leadership Team.
- On non-discretionary items, anticipate an overall increase of approximately \$10 million. Approximately \$5.3 million of the increase is benefits-related (e.g., supplemental retirement increase borne by the employer); the remainder would incorporate a full step increase or one-time 2% bonus (for those ineligible for a step increase). ACPS also received just today a compensation study, which has the potential to lead to additional increases for under-funded positions (e.g., paraprofessionals; principals; bus drivers/monitors). The overall \$10

- million increase also anticipates a savings of \$900,000 for ACPS central office existing positions that are now vacant and will not be filled. In terms of balance across ACPS staff, they anticipate central office reductions and increases to school building-based staff.
- ACPS budget team is currently holding two-by-two meetings with School Board members and getting feedback from them on how the budget should be presented and also about the add/delete process. The budget will be released on January 9. Thereafter, School Board members will have an opportunity to submit questions. BAC members with questions are welcome to send them to Ramee so that she can include them in her submitted questions.
 - Some relevant dates:
 - Jan. 9 – Combined Funds budget released
 - Jan. 16 - 1st work session on personnel issues, additional positions [88% of budget]
 - Jan. 23 – Public hearing on combined funds budget
 - Jan. 30 - 2nd work session on non-personnel issues [12% of budget]
 - Feb. 13 – 1st Add/Delete session
 - Feb. 18 – 2nd Add/Delete session
 - Feb. 20 – School Board adopts combined fund budget
 - BAC members asked a few questions at the end of the discussion. For example, there was a question about whether bi-lingual employees are entitled to a salary supplement. Generally no, although if that is a requirement of a position it might impact the salary attributed to that position.

➤ **BAC Scope of Work**

- Ramee, Dominic, Erin, Nancy, Kathy met last week to discuss Scope of Work. Kathy provided some information on BFAAC's activities as a model.
- Two potential memos:
 - Budget-Related Communications – opine on how ACPS can better communicate budget-related information to ACPS families and other members of the community; a recent ACPS Communications audit may be built upon in this memo.
 - BAC Best Practices – develop a memorandum on best practices and process for BAC work; include moments in the budget timeline when BAC can be engaged; other BAC-related activities; etc.; focus on specific deliverables that would be helpful to the School Board
 - BAC might write a letter to School Board members inviting some informal feedback on where BAC could be most helpful; School Board members can then provide more formal reaction after the full memo is delivered
 - Other input to tap into: ACPS budget team has solicited input from internal stakeholders on how to improve the process and better engage those internal stakeholders (e.g., senior leadership team; principals; etc.)
 - The School Board also provides some feedback at the end of the process, around add/delete time.
 - One idea is for BAC members to observe the budget process in action and draw some conclusions from the interactions between ACPS staff and the School Board; the types of questions posed; what we heard from community members who participated in budget hearings; etc. As external stakeholders, we might be well situated to identify communication gaps, etc.
 - Some things to look for: role definition between Board and ACPS staff especially in navigating the add/delete process; we might

suggest something like adding another 2x2 moment after the budget drops (but before add/delete); what happens to the budget at the City Council level (is advocacy needed to sustain City Manager's recommendation, etc.)

- Memo could also include recommendations on Board memberships (note that BFAAC just did a memo on this)
- Other potential ideas:
 - BAC members liked the idea of the concept of developing shorter memos that are more directly relevant to the School Board, and discussed some potential topics
 - For example: Assessing and identifying academic return on investment; ACPS staff has attended conferences on academic return on investment and worked with experts like Natalie Mitchell on this issue and is in the process of putting together a task force to start thinking about how ACPS will incorporate these principles in its work, how to develop and measure outcomes, etc.; BAC members mentioned that BAC member Emily Brock could be helpful since she does return on investment work in her professional life
- **Future Meeting Topics and Budget Engagement Opportunities**
 - January – we could map out a Scope of Work with goal of sending shortly thereafter
 - (Ramee noted that School Board Committee Chairs will be meeting in February sometime)
 - Note: January 9 budget release at School Board meeting, with subsequent work sessions and meetings
- **Walk on topics**
 - Circulate a budget calendar – available at:
https://esbpublic.acps.k12.va.us/public_itemview.aspx?ItemId=12872&mtgId=1515

The meeting was adjourned at 8:17 p.m.