

April 2, 2018

To: Chair Barbara Kanninen and The Arlington School Board  
Fr: Matt de Ferranti, Chair, Budget Advisory Council  
Re: BAC Discussion of the Superintendent's Proposed Budget for FY2019

The Budget Advisory Council (BAC) for Arlington Public Schools has had extensive discussions of the Superintendent's Proposed Budget for FY 2019 at its meetings on March 8th and April 2. We anticipate having further discussions and making recommendations at our April 11<sup>th</sup> meeting.

### March 14th Recommendations

**At its March 14th meeting, the BAC voted a number of motions, seeking to close the projected budget gap of \$16.5 million for fiscal year 2019. We worked off the Superintendent's proposed budget reductions for the most part.**

- Revenue Items
  - By a vote of 11 in favor, 0 opposed, and 1 abstention, the BAC members present voted to accept the **Apple buyback program**. (\$1.0 million in savings by BAC)
  - By a vote of 12-0 the BAC voted in favor of the increase in the **aquatics fees** as a means to help close the budget deficit. (\$0.6 million in increased revenues)
- **Minor Construction/Minor Maintenance (MCMM)** (\$5.40 million in reductions from this year's budget due to use of one-time funds)
  - The BAC discussed this and several members noted opposition to using MCMM each year. After noting those concerns, and discussion of the alternatives in this difficult budget year, the BAC voted 11-1 in support of the Superintendent's proposed use of these funds for savings this year.
- **Planning Factor Adjustments to Class Size and FLES** (\$4.12 million in reductions)
  - By a vote of 12-0 the BAC voted, under the extremely tight budget this year, to support the savings from the proposed increase in class size at the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade levels by 1 student
  - By a vote of 11-1 the BAC voted in favor of the Planning Factor adjustments at the middle school level and the slight reductions in clerical staff at the high schools.
  - The BAC discussed FLES and heard feedback from some members who felt they had not seen the value of the program as currently constructed.
  - By a vote of 12-0 the BAC voted in support of the whole set of Planning Factor Adjustments.

- **Postponing Growth** (\$1.29 million in reduced expenditures by BAC)
  - Psychologists and Social Workers
    - The BAC discussed the proposed reduction which would postpone the hiring of 11 psychologists and social workers slated to be hired this year as part of a three year plan, voting 7 in support of the savings that would come with this recommendation and 5 against it.
  - ESL Level 5. The BAC voted 11-1 in support of delaying the hiring of staff for ESL Level 5, the most advanced of the ESL programs.
- **The Teaching and Learning Changes** (\$0.98 in reductions)
  - The BAC voted in support of some of these proposed reductions by an 11-1. The BAC did not vote in favor of eliminating the following:
    - STEM specialist
    - Minority Achievement Specialist
    - Department Chairs Release Period
    - Content area lead teacher stipends
- **Professional Development** (\$0.44 million in reductions by BAC)
  - The BAC discussed this and dual certification and assistant to teacher in particular was identified as something the BAC might like to keep, but, in the end, by a vote of 8-4 the BAC voted in favor of accepting these reductions
- **Communications** (\$0.10 million in reductions by BAC)
  - The BAC recognized that there will be challenges in light of these reductions but voted by a vote of 9-3 in favor of these reductions
- **Other Efficiencies** (\$0.65 million in reductions by BAC)
  - The BAC voted 12-0 in favor of these reductions.

The BAC also discussed other potential savings

- The 1:1 devices: there was concern that the devices were slated to be studied, but have not yet been.
- The BAC discussed increasing class size at the middle school level by 1.0 students instead of the recommended 0.75 students.
- The BAC agreed that discussion of FLES reductions should be further studied.

Through the March 14 meeting, the BAC voted in favor of \$14.04M in total savings. .

The BAC's regular meeting on March 21, before Spring Break, was cancelled due to snow and was rescheduled for April 2<sup>nd</sup>.

## April 2 Recommendations

The BAC convened on Monday, April 2, to consider areas for reductions that were not reviewed on March 14<sup>th</sup> and to further consider FLES as asked by the School Board. Discussions during the meeting focused on the Montessori Program, the FLES program, and the proposed reductions in the Superintendent's budget related to employee benefits.

The BAC noted that \$865K in spending would not be needed as the School Board determined in a work session earlier in April.

The BAC heard from Catharina Genove, Principal of the Montessori Program at Drew Elementary, as well as the President of the Montessori PTA (of the Montessori Program at Drew Model School Of particular note in the testimony were efforts by Ms. Genove to preserve teaching assistants through her discretionary funds. BAC members asked a number of questions and discussed the future move to Patrick Henry, Title I, and the revenues that Montessori brings in, as well as the reasons for the revenues.

BAC also discussed FLES after a presentation from Rick Jackson, Kelly Alexis, Elisabeth Harrington with APS, and one other parent leader regarding the FLES Program. Discussion focused on the stated purpose of FLES and included consideration of how to maintain the goals of the program, while balancing the early release goal and the proposed reductions. Extensive Q&A between the BAC and members of the public occurred over a significant part of the meeting.

**Adjustment to Montessori Planning Factors:** Supported by a vote of 8-1 (\$0.65 million)

The BAC notes that cost information about the Montessori Program needed to make an informed evaluation is not available. Given that Montessori will be moving to Patrick Henry, it should be possible to better understand the costs of the program. The BAC requests an analysis of Montessori over the coming year.

**Reduce FLES Staffing and Redefine the Program:** Supported by a vote of 7-2, with the following stipulation: The BAC supports the proposed reduction in the number of FLES positions provided that the budgeted positions allow the FLES program to continue to provide the same level of service at 90 minutes a week, as per APS policy.

Further, the BAC notes that the current APS policy *does not* reflect the instructional standards supported by research, which recommend teaching **at least 3 times a week and at least 90 minutes a week**. The BAC understands that the way FLES is currently delivered is constrained by the fact that it is programmed to address the elimination of early release, but feels that since the teaching of foreign languages is a priority, FLES

should be funded and implemented based on instructional standards that achieve the highest outcomes for students, not as a way to program instructional time at the discretion of the principals. The BAC recommends that the planned program evaluation of FLES look at the planning factors, current research, current policy guidance, starting FLES in 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, among other elements, to guide the development of a new service delivery model.

**Employee Benefits:** The BAC expressed the view that these proposed cuts were not what members ideally would like to see. However, given that these benefits do not accrue equally for everyone they are an appropriate consideration for cuts. In total, all the proposed cuts were voted for, as follows: (\$0.95 million in reductions.)

- Parental Leave: The reduction in parental leave was supported by a vote of 7-2 because it has only been in place for one year. The dissenters felt strongly that this benefit needs to be addressed in the long run, especially in light of APS' strive for competitiveness (e.g., DC has instituted a 6-week paid family leave policy).
- Live Where You Work: supported by a vote of 8-1
- Travel Demand Management: supported by a vote of 5-4
- Cellular Services: supported unanimously

### **Total Recommendations**

In addition to the \$14.04M from the March 14<sup>th</sup> meeting, the BAC recommends an additional \$1.60M in reductions, for a total of **\$15.64M** in reductions. Adding the \$0.865M in savings identified by the Board leads to \$16.505M in total recommended reductions, slightly above the \$16.5M in reductions that the Board and the Superintendent have asked for.

### **Recommendations for Additions if the Board Obtains Additional Funding**

The BAC discussed at several points what it would recommend be added back if the Board were to obtain additional funding. The consensus, without objection but also without a specific vote, was that Psychologists and Social Workers would be the top priority for additions.