

ARLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Joint School Board/County Board Budget Work Session
April 12, 2021

The Arlington School Board convened in a joint work session on Monday, April 12, 2021 at 3:04 PM. This meeting was held by electronic communications due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, using Microsoft Teams.¹

Present were:

School Board

Monique O’Grady, Chair
Barbara Kanninen, Vice Chair
Reid Goldstein, Member
Tannia Talento, Member
Nancy Van Doren, Member
Dr. Francisco Durán, Superintendent
Melanie Elliott, Clerk

County Board

Matt de Ferranti, Chair
Katie Cristol, Vice Chair
Libby Garvey, Member
Christian Dorsey, Member
Takis Karantonis, Member
Mark Schwartz, County Manager
Kendra Jacobs, Clerk

Also present were:

Dr. Francisco Durán, Superintendent
Raj Adusumilli, Assistant Superintendent, Information Services
Catherine Ashby, Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources
John Chadwick, Assistant Superintendent, Facilities and Operations
Cintia Johnson, Assistant Superintendent, Administrative Services
Bridget Loft, Assistant Superintendent, Teaching and Learning
Leslie Peterson, Assistant Superintendent, Finance and Management
Dan Redding, Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources
Lisa Stengle, Executive Director, Planning and Evaluation
Arron Gregory, Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Mr. de Ferranti called the meeting to order at 3:02 PM, introduced the members of the County Board, and welcomed attendees. Ms. O’Grady thanked the County for hosting the meeting, and introduced the School Board members. Mr. de Ferranti then summarized the meeting agenda.

1. APS Budget Presentation

Ms. O’Grady introduced the School Board’s presentation, highlighting collaboration between the two Boards in the FY 2021 school year to ensure students and families were supported throughout the pandemic. She then shared student demographics and enrollment data, as well as enrollment projections through 2029 and the costs per pupil for the last several years. The economic impact of COVID-19 on the schools was also noted, along with external budget factors that have affected the budget proposal. Ms. O’Grady also reviewed reductions that have been made in recent years as well as current challenges that

have increased costs, such as retirement and health insurance and additional supports needed to address lost learning. She confirmed that equity and compensation are two areas of particular interest in this budget process, and outlined efforts taken to reduce the budget.

Ms. O’Grady then presented the needs-based budget that the School Board is proposing. She also noted the strategic use of reserves in the proposed budget to address the funding gap. In closing, Ms. O’Grady shared an additional request to the County for one-time funds for summer school incentive payments, one-time costs for two new facilities opening in the fall, and support for distance learning for families who continue virtual learning in the fall.

Mr. Priddy then spoke to opportunities for collaboration between the Boards, in terms of transportation such as partnerships, use of public transit for students, and improved walk zones that benefit both schools and the community. Ms. Diaz-Torres spoke to equity as another area for collaboration, sharing highlights of efforts by APS to address equity issues. She shared components of the proposed budget that support equity initiatives, such as stipends for equity teams in the schools, increased staffing to support students with disabilities, literacy and math screeners, and a Director of English Learners.

Mr. Goldstein summarized plans for APS moving forward. In the near-term APS is focused on returning to in person instruction, sports, athletics and extracurriculars, and child care. He noted the emphasis on ensuring social and emotional learning and supports are provided to all students with special needs. Going forward, new activities include the equity audit, hiring an in-house counsel, and a revised organizational chart. Mr. Goldstein then spoke to new schools or locations opening in the fall and plans for compensation and budget studies. Finally, APS will expand virtual learning, build out the Career Center, continue to focus on high quality staff, and conduct an elementary boundary process.

Noting the importance of quality staff Dr. Kanninen spoke compensation going forward. She shared results from the first phase of the compensation study, confirming that although previously APS pay scales were competitive, salaries have fallen below market recently. She described concerns with the teacher salary scale, which affect recruiting and sustainability. She also summarized considerations that have informed the compensation in the Superintendent’s proposed budget, and shared plans to complete the compensation study and make needed adjustments to compensation in APS.

The group then discussed the presentation, including how the return survey data will inform plans moving forward. County Board members appreciated the challenges of reworking the compensation schedule. Ms. Peterson responded to questions on how the one-time funding for the opening of new schools will be used, and spoke to use of reserves by APS. The group also briefly discussed continuing collaboration to manage budgets and reserves, enrollment projections and anticipated growth, and cost per pupil data. Also discussed were the plans and challenges of continuing distance learning. In closing, Mr. de Ferranti confirmed support for ongoing discussion of structural questions and concerns.

After speaking to the County’s response to the issues resulting from the pandemic over the past year, Mr. Schwartz then presented the County Board’s proposed budget. He reviewed

areas of focus, revenue changes that have affected the County Budget, and funding Arlington will receive from the American Rescue Plan. He also described reductions in the County’s proposed budget, and highlighted next steps nthe County budget process.

School Board members appreciated the presentation and the County’s support for the schools, and recognized the importance of collaborating to ensure that needed on wrap-around services continue to be provided as families recover from the pandemic. Dr. Kanninen asked for clarification on the County’s contribution to the schools and the revenue-sharing agreements that have been in place. Mr. Schwartz clarified that revenues shared with APS are limited to tax revenues. In closing, both Boards agreed with the need to work together and recognized the challenges of the past year that both Boards have faced.

Teen Network Board (TNB) Co-Chairs Yasmina Mansour and Ava Boston updated the Boards on their work over the past year. Ms. Mansour and Ms. Boston provided an overview of the TNB and described the TNB’s five committees and the work they do. They confirmed the overall goal of the TNB’s work this year was to support equity, and encouraged the budgets to include funding to ensure digital equity for students and families. They also supported continuation of the restorative justice work underway in Arlington. The TNB also encouraged efforts to address concerns about global warming. In closing, Ms. Mansour and Ms. Boston thanked the Boards for the opportunity to speak.

Both Boards thanked Ms. Mansour and Ms. Boston for their leadership and the members of the TNB for their work on behalf of the youth in Arlington.

Kim de Blauw, member of the Arlington Partnership or Children, Youth and Families (APCYF) provided a brief overview, highlighting the biannual Youth Risk Behavior Survey that the group sponsors. She shared data and encouraged ongoing efforts by both Boards to address youth needs. Ms. de Blauw also highlighted support for aspects of the proposed Budgets. Linh Nghe, interim coordinator to APCYF, spoke briefly to efforts underway by the ACPYF. The Boards discussed the Youth Risk Behavior survey data. Ms. Diaz-Torres, School Board liaison to the APCYF, spoke to their work, and noted the connection between the Partnership data and the focus by APS on addressing the needs of students through both equity work and increasing counseling services.

Mr. de Ferranti thanked the Partnership for their work, and agreed with the importance of investing in the areas of interest they shared. Ms. O’Grady and Mr. De Ferranti thanked all for their collaboration and work.

The meeting adjourned 5:02 PM.

ATTEST:

Melanie Elliott, Clerk
Arlington School Board

Monique O’Grady, Chair
Arlington School Board