

Budget Forum Notes – 12/10/14

1. Budget related concerns:

- Transparency with Budget Tool online to show how much of your tax money covers K-12.
- APS costs covered by County budget.
- Will County Board raise the tax rate?
- Focus on land use?
- Tax rate increase used for schools.
- Why not use reserves instead of cutting services?
- What can reserves/carryover be used for? One time funding/Board decisions.
- How low can they go? Need reserve for bond rating & catastrophic events.
- Concern over funding for Police & understaffing.
- More funding of the “basics”
- Schools/Infrastructure/Public Safety & Affordable housing should be top priorities.
- Others put Parks as top priority along with fields.
 - Field usage correlates to school enrollment. More students = more field usage.
 - DPR should be held harmless.
 - Safety – Need to keep kids busy (parks programs).
- Human value over technology
- Focus on special needs & vulnerable population
- Make decisions on a long term strategic basis, not a year to year basis.
- Fire & Police money going up while crime is going down.
 - Re-do Firehouse model. It is outdated and over resourced.

2. APS Budget related concerns:

- What areas is APS looking at cutting?
 - Class size (would prefer bigger schools over bigger class sizes)
 - Summer School
 - FLES
 - Compensation
 - Video on APS website & budget tool – Would like more options for reductions
- Prefer increase to school size over class size.
- FLES
 - Concerns – Cost/benefit analysis?
 - Time spent in elementary schools vs none spent in middle school
 - Outcomes analysis?
- Concern over technology costs
- Can a Wednesday early release “package” be considered?
- Potential for raising class size? 2008 (25) vs 2014 (27). Can we increase it to 29?
- Step increase for APS. None in last 3 years. Salaries for teachers. Starting (\$54K) vs Experienced teachers (6 yrs) at same level.

3. Efficiency Related Concerns:

- Energy efficiency – Improve that and reduce costs. Do not take away.
- Re-use of existing space rather than new land.
- How do we monitor what we have achieved?
- Duplicity of Government services. Ex: Tree Survey.
- Reallocations – Take advantage of vacant commercial space. Repurpose commercial buildings for schools.

4. Anticipated budget gap:
 - Appetite for tax increase?
 - Explore development concessions model.
 - Work out a fee deal with developers to contribute to schools construction instead of low income housing or other contributions.
 - Targeted fee increases – Ex:
 - Pub Crawls
 - Fields
 - Sports
 - Summer School Fee

5. Potential for Savings:
 - Collectively, what can we do to economize?
 - Close Artisphere
 - APS administrative services
 - Effects of Sequester. Too much reliance on Federal Government.
 - Reduce spending on Dog Parks
 - One on One Initiative
 - Encourage cyber learning, which is cheaper and would require less school size/classrooms.
 - Have students take classes at local colleges.
 - County & APS. Use multi-use buildings/facilities rather than “grand palaces”. It is cheaper and more realistic to accomplish.
 - Use user fees judiciously where costs can be recovered.

6. Programming:
 - Recreation/Fields – Space concerns for sports access.
 - Senior programs – Nobody like Arlington. Continued support is key.
 - Cutting entities like Artisphere – how do we keep attracting people: Keep entities that might generate interest.

7. Other Concerns:
 - Do the County and APS perform data sharing regarding enrollment projections? Yes. Raw data from CPHD program assessments are shared with APS.
 - Don’t know peaks & valleys regarding number of students. We’ve been through tough stretches (low enrollment) in the past. Need to figure out trends & what those trends will mean in terms of facilities for APS.
 - Different views on class size.
 - How do we compare to local jurisdictions?
 - How does adding 1 student per class effect our budget?
 - It’s either increase class size or cut services throughout the County.
 - Food for others should not be cut.
 - Without changing budgets, make sure that facility users are involved in the design & implementation of projects. Examples: Usable field at Greenbriar. Keep open spaces.