

Retreat  
11-4-06

**QUESTIONS FROM CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS  
FROM THE NOVEMBER 4, 2006 CITY COUNCIL RETREAT**

1. **Is enrollment in City schools increasing compared to private school enrollment?  
(Question was prompted by the higher percentage of respondents on city survey who  
indicated they had students enrolled in ACPS.)** **Mr. Lovain**

Response: ACPS has no way of readily collecting this data as private schools do not submit enrollment data to the State as do the public schools. This comparison is also made difficult by the fact that private schools in the City serve students who are both City residents and non-residents and, in the past, we have been unable to obtain information from the private schools on how many of their students were City residents and how many were not. **Leslie Peterson**

2. **Do we do things to provide incentives to staff for saving funds in current and future year budgets? Do we have a mechanism for them to save those funds across fiscal years?** **Mr. Krupicka**

Response: Funds cannot be "carried over" for use in the following school year by the Schools or by any departments in the Schools. Any savings are reflected in the fund balance carryover which is used by the City to fund the Schools in the following budget year. Currently, any "savings" generated by the Schools are used by the City as an offset to the City's appropriation. Therefore, the savings are of benefit to the City but this method does not provide an incentive, per se, for the Schools to save. If these funds were applied to the Schools "in addition to" the City's appropriation, it might be more of an incentive. School department budgets, however, are closely scrutinized for savings each year, requiring departments to justify existing budget amounts as well as any requests for increases. **Leslie Peterson**

3. **What percent of staff get step increases each year?** **Mr. Smedberg**

Response: Approximately 91% of our employees received a step increase last year.

An employee does not receive a step increase under the following circumstances:

- The employee received an unsatisfactory final evaluation.
- The employee is at the top of the salary scale.
- The employee has not completed one-half year of work with pay.
- The employee has not completed one-half or more of their work year prior to taking child care leave of absence.

It should be noted here that No Child Left Behind and the Virginia Code do not allow a Superintendent to recommend for re-appointment a teacher who receives an unsatisfactory evaluation. Therefore, non-tenured teachers who do not receive a final year-end satisfactory evaluation are not given a contract for the following year. However, tenured teachers may be placed on a "Plan of Improvement" for an additional year. Then if they do not meet the expectations, they are not given a contract for the following year.

Sixty-three percent of ACPS employees are licensed professionals (meaning they must have at least a Bachelor's degree for teaching and at least a Master's degree for administration, in selected areas, and meet all licensing and testing requirements). In addition, No Child Left Behind legislation requires testing and rigorous course work for support staff who work directly with students. Over 70% of our teachers hold Masters or higher degrees in their fields.

ACPS uses a very intensive evaluation system which is now the model for new standards in the State of Virginia. When an employee receives a "needs improvement" evaluation, he or she is

placed on an improvement plan. This plan is monitored throughout the following year and, if a teacher (or other employee) does not meet the required improvement goals by the time specified, that individual is either "non-renewed" or terminated from employment. Our goal is that NO employee should receive an unsatisfactory evaluation more than once. Therefore, there are a number of employees who cannot continue employment because of failing to meet standards (local evaluation, state licensing and testing requirements, and/or federal NCLB standards.)

Cheryl Ross-Audley

**4. Will there be any opportunities for savings in the new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Schools and Parks and Rec? Mr. Krupicka**

Response: A number of meetings have been held to update and streamline the MOU between the school system and Parks and Recreation. Most of the changes to the present MOU will have limited budgetary savings. However, additional meetings are planned to further explore and solidify the combining of various services which would result in more substantial savings and improve the efficiency of operations for both the City and school system. John Porter

**5. What percent of teachers and staff live in Alexandria City? Ms. Pepper**

Response: Thirty-seven percent of our teachers are residents of the City of Alexandria and 53.24% of our paraprofessionals live in the city. Of the 2,081 current ACPS employees, 831, or 39.93%, live in Alexandria. (see attachment) Cheryl Ross-Audley

**6. What opportunities are there for cost savings from increased collaboration between City and Schools? Mr. Krupicka**

Response: That remains to be seen as the City and Schools work together—department by department—to explore possibilities. We have included below a list of items we are currently collaborating on:

- Health Insurance -- The City and Schools administratively joined health insurance plans beginning in FY 2006. As a result, the school system began offering Kaiser to its employees in FY 2006. Employees, however, remain in separate risk pools. In an effort to hold down City spending on health care benefits in FY 2007, Council voted to increase City employee co-pays for certain items and to begin cost sharing of healthcare premiums by all City employees. These changes did not affect School employees.
- Computer Network Operations Center "Hot Site" -- The City and Schools previously agreed to co-locate their emergency computer network operations "hot sites" in Tavern Square. The implementation of this decision is progressing. ITS is working with General Services on issues such as power, cabling, and air conditioning. Once these are resolved, the Schools equipment can be brought over. ITS anticipates this will be accomplished later this calendar year.
- Risk Management -- City and Schools staff have explored the possibility of coordinating the provision of property, casualty and liability insurance. The City's insurance broker reviewed the Schools insurance program and concluded it was unlikely that the Schools could get a better deal by joining with the City.
- Fleet Maintenance -- The City is in the process of preparing a "statement of work" for a consultant to study possible consolidation or other efficiencies for three City departments with a fleet maintenance component....T&ES, Fire and General Services. The City is prepared, after consultation with the Schools, to issue an additional mutually agreeable task order to

look at possible efficiencies or savings that could be realized by consolidation or other collaborative efforts in fleet maintenance with the Schools.

- Purchasing -- Procurement/purchasing staff from the City and the Schools participate in the Council of Government's cooperative procurement program. Regional participants meet monthly in an effort to leverage the volume of purchases. In addition, as unique needs arise, staff work together whenever possible. Currently, staff are working on a joint procurement to handle the disposal of hazardous waste generated at City and School facilities.
- Joint Use Agreement -- A number of meetings have been held to update and streamline the MOU between the school system and Parks and Recreation. Most of the changes to the present MOU will have limited budgetary savings. However, additional meetings are planned to further explore and solidify the combining of various services which would result in more substantial savings and improve the efficiency of operations for both the City and school system.

John Porter

**7. How do we solicit input from teachers, schools, and community during budget development?** **Mr. MacDonald**

Response: There are a number of ways in which we solicit input from teachers, schools, and community during budget development. I will use the budget development process for the FY 2008 budget as an example.

In June 2006, the School Board held its first public hearing on both the FY 2008 operating and CIP budgets. At public hearings, any member of the public who wishes to be heard may speak and give input to the School Board as well as the Superintendent and her staff. In advance of every public hearing, the ACPS Information and Outreach office sends an e-mail to all PTA presidents and all E-news subscribers informing them of the public hearing and encouraging them to provide input. In addition, press releases are sent to the media announcing the public hearings and soliciting community input.

In addition, the School Board's Budget Advisory Committee (similar to City Council's Budget and Fiscal Affairs Advisory Committee) prepares its annual report in June and forwards it to the School Board and the Superintendent. This report usually includes a summary of the work done by the committee over the past year as well as its suggestions for the refinement of the budget process and budget document.

In August, principals and department heads begin building their budgets. Principals are required to form a building budget committee which includes staff members, department chairs, and PTA members. The building budget committee assists the principal in determining budget priorities for the following year and how resources should be allocated in order to address these priorities. In addition, every school is required to have a School Improvement Plan developed by a Building Leadership Team. Priorities for school improvement drive school-level requests.

In September 2006, the School Board held its second public hearing on the FY 2008 operating budget. This public hearing solicited input on the programs currently in place or those programs that the public wished to see implemented in the school system. The School Board and Superintendent both used the information from the June and September public hearings to develop goals and priorities for the FY 2008 operating and CIP budgets.

We encourage members of the public to provide input to the City Council at its public hearing on the FY 2008 budget in October.

During November and December, the Budget Advisory committee normally reviews the Superintendent's proposed CIP budget and provides feedback to the School Board before it approves the CIP budget in January. Because the Budget Advisory Committee is re-appointed

every three years after the new School Board is elected, this committee does not yet have its full complement of members and has not yet met.

At its first meeting in December, the School Board will hold its second public hearing on the FY 2008 CIP budget. This public hearing solicits input on the Superintendent's FY 2008 proposed CIP budget which was presented to the School Board on November 2<sup>nd</sup>.

After the Superintendent presents her FY 2008 proposed operating budget on December 19, 2006, the Budget Advisory Committee will review the budget and provide its feedback to the School Board before the School Board approves the operating budget on January 25, 2007.

On January 18, 2007, at its third public hearing on the operating budget, the School Board will solicit input on the Superintendent's FY 2008 proposed operating budget.

Once the FY 2008 operating and CIP budgets are approved by the School Board and forwarded to the City Manager, we again encourage all members of the public to provide input at the City Council public hearing on the budget when it is held in the spring.

This process will begin again in June 2007.

Leslie Peterson

**8. How can City libraries help schools more?**

**Mr. MacDonald**

Response: Presently, the City of Alexandria's librarians collaborate with ACPS media specialists to provide excellent services to children in grades K through 12. Examples of these activities include, but are not limited to, the following:

Elementary (K-5) students:

1. The City libraries encourage children to read over the summer months with the popular *Summer Quest* program.
2. Each branch offers a variety of targeted after school and Saturday programs for young learners.
3. In the last few weeks of the school year, City librarians conduct assembly programs at ACPS elementary schools to encourage leisure time reading, promote specific library programs and use of the Alexandria libraries in general. Frequently during these programs, librarians give "book talks" to students to generate interest in new titles that are in the libraries' collections.
4. Alexandria's libraries post and provide Accelerated Reader books lists and other required reading lists to enable students to find particular titles of books that are assigned to them by their teachers.
5. With advance notice, City librarians will pull multiple titles on a given topic for an ACPS teacher. The teacher will then check the books out and use them in her lessons and activities in the classroom.
6. Teachers frequently schedule field trips to the libraries so student can become familiar with all the resources that Alexandria's libraries offer.

Secondary (6-12) students:

1. The City libraries receive input and feedback from a Teen Advisory Board. Meetings are held at G.W. Middle School and also at the Beatley and Burke library branches.
2. The City library provides a Teen World website which offers books suggestions and author information to our adolescent readers.
3. Students can access computers at all Alexandria libraries.
4. All Alexandria libraries feature wireless configurations, making them excellent locations for high school (9-12) students to complete research and school assignments on their laptop computers.
5. With advance notice, City librarians will pull multiple titles on a given topic for an ACPS teacher. The teacher will then check the books out and use them in her lessons and activities in the classroom.

6. Some teachers schedule field trips to the libraries so students can become familiar with all of the resources that Alexandria's libraries offer. This is particularly beneficial for English as a Second Language students.

Collaboration between the City librarians and the public school media specialists is ongoing, and there is always room for increased efforts. Ideas for additional collaborative work include:

- 1) Work together to add differentiated nonfiction reading materials to the City library collections. These are books written at a variety of reading levels that provide information on a common topic.
- 2) Promote the responsible use of the library with middle school students. Many middle school students, especially those who are struggling readers, lose interest in reading as young adolescents. City and school librarians could work together to add contemporary high interest/low difficulty level reading materials that appeal to middle school students who have reading deficiencies. School and City library staff can explore ways to make the libraries more inviting for middle school students, and encourage middle school students to demonstrate appropriate conduct when using a public library.
- 3) Peggy Koplitz, ACPS Curriculum Specialist for Library/Media Services, plans to meet with Julie Fields, Alexandria Children's Services Librarian, to discuss ways that the City libraries can support the ACPS Literacy Focus.

**9. What mechanism do you have in place to continually re-evaluate teacher salaries?**

**Mr. MacDonald**

Response: Every year, teacher salary scales are compared with surrounding jurisdictions (our major competitors for teachers). If scales need adjustment based on the surrounding jurisdictions, then changes are recommended during the budget cycle.

Every other year, a more intensive scale comparison is undertaken to evaluate whether adjustments need to be made at particular steps or whether we need to adjust to meet a particular need. For example, ACPS makes a conscious effort to encourage teachers to obtain a Master's degree and to hire teachers with Master's degrees. Therefore, our Bachelor's degree scale does not remain very competitive at the top levels because we wish to encourage teachers to "move" to the Master's scale.

The Arthur Andersen Company was contracted in 2000 to conduct an in-depth review of the structure and competitiveness of the scale. In 2002, a consultant from William and Mary was hired to work with a Teacher Compensation Advisory Committee. The Committee reviewed and assessed information on promising practices in the field of public education for compensating teachers and worked toward a sustainable and practical compensation system. The scale was reviewed more extensively in 2005-2006.

A similar process is utilized for administrator and support salary scales. The more extensive studies are done on an "every other" year basis so that if adjustments are needed to scales, the budget impact will not have to be absorbed all in the same year. Cheryl Ross-Audley

**10. What is included in the contingency fund for the new TC Williams? Ms. Pepper**

Response: The \$500,000 contingency fund for the new TC Williams (\$250,000 in personnel and \$250,000 in non-personnel) is requested to address the following important needs for opening a new high school:

- Wages for staff to spend an extra day to pack and unpack
- Costs of hiring professional movers
- Costs to address security of items moved to the new building, particularly technology security
- Costs to relocate equipment being transferred to the new building, particularly in career and technical education, culinary arts, food service, science labs, weight room, library media areas
- Costs to disconnect, move and reconnect computers, servers, and networking systems
- Costs of disposal of hazardous materials (science and career & technical areas)
- Costs to rent trucks, carts, etc.
- Other incidental expenses such as costs to cover the loss and/or breakage of materials, textbooks, and equipment and provision for boxes, tape, labels, and other packing materials

Because these items are not related to the construction and outfitting of the new building, they cannot be paid for from the CIP budget but must instead be paid from the operating budget.

John Porter

## ACPS Employees Who Live in Alexandria City

Unit	Total In Unit	Total in Alexandria	%
Administrator	84	27	32.14%
Admin Support	180	65	36.11%
Bus Driver/Monitor	123	56	45.53%
Café Hostess	21	17	80.95%
Custodial/Maintenance	118	37	31.36%
Ed Facilities Supervisors	6	1	16.67%
Food Services	79	44	55.70%
Security Monitors	27	15	55.56%
Paraprofessionals	216	115	53.24%
Teachers	1227	454	37.00%
Totals	2081	831	39.93%