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Fairfax County School Board Budget Committee Meeting of the Whole, Thursday, February 19, 2026

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Place Fairfax County School Board, Virginia
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- Official meeting video (YouTube): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FIhkZwFWYZQ>
- Official School Board page (FCPS): <https://www.fcps.edu/about-fcps/leadership/school-board>

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[00:07:55] this meeting of the Board Budget Committee of the Whole to order at 5:07 PM. Ms. Lady has submitted a request to attend tonight's meeting remotely due to a personal conflict as she has a family matter and is located in Chester, Virginia.

[00:08:14] The board chair, I have performed an initial review of Ms. Lady's request and have found it to be in compliance with the school board's remote participation resolution and I have approved the request. Ms. Lady, can you please check your audio and visual video?

[00:08:32] check check we can hear you hello thank you thank you uh we we now ask board members who are physically present to vote on the following all those in favor of confirming the chair's approval of miss lady's request that is miss mr moon miss st john cunning miss dixit mr mcdaniel mr mckelveen and myself all those opposed dr anderson we have some other board members that will join us in just a few minutes and we will vote them in as as as they arrive and we call on

[00:09:09] Dr. Reed for a presentation of the fiscal year or 2027 proposed budget. - Thank you, Madam Chair. And I'm phoning a friend already. So it is my pleasure this evening to share our budget presentation.

[00:09:28] I'm gonna be sharing slides with our chief finance officer and our finance and budget staff. So if we can go ahead and go to the next slide, please.

[00:09:44] One of the things I wanted to share as we approach the budget is I always wanna make sure we're student-centered. And this morning at our all county principals meeting, we had an update, if you will, a mid-year check-in on our strategic planning goals and our progress.

[00:10:01] And I wanted to just share a couple of these updates with the board and community because our principals, I know we're very excited to see the data. And again, just a reminder of our work with our current eighth graders and algebra.

[00:10:16] we again have achieved an almost 16% increase over three years and in particular wanted to highlight that we have doubled our multilingual learner enrollment with continued performance in one year over year with some of our new strategies which were budget related and in part these were selecting textbooks in home languages for students so that they're able to access the mathematics and the content so as their language acquisition improves they are not going to be behind in the math progression.

[00:10:49] So really wanna thank our board for investing in those resources that have enabled us to begin seriously closing opportunity gaps for our young people. Madam Clerk, if we could go to the next slide, unless somebody here, okay, thank you.

[00:11:08] Yeah, Alice has the clicker. Also wanted to share that 22 of our high schools are currently projected to improve their federal graduation indicator rate compared to last year. So that's a significant data point. Thank you, Dr. Ponce. But when you think about where we were at this time last year, to have 22 of our comprehensive high schools projected to improve, and overall the division is projected to improve our FGI rates over last year, that's great news.

[00:11:38] And again, our budget has supported strategies, positions, and resources that have continued to support world-class results for our students. Alice? Lastly, chronic absenteeism, we talked about this data point.

[00:11:54] And what we wanted to note is that in school year 22-23, we had a 17.1% chronic absenteeism rate for the school division. Even last year, for 24-25, we cut it down to 11.9, but we're right now at 10.5%, which is the strongest since COVID.

[00:12:17] And honestly, it's competing with our pre-COVID rates. At this time last year, our division chronic absenteeism rate was 12.9% and this year is 10.5. So we're making strong progress again, supported by the resources this board has allocated and our staff have utilized to support significant shifts in data.

[00:12:43] And again, really working to close gaps with our students. So I'm gonna turn it over at this point to our Chief Finance Officer, Lee Burden, the all-knowing finance officer and her staff to present the numbers, but don't want us ever to forget that the reason we need a budget that's needs-based is because we have children with needs that we are meeting.

[00:13:12] and I'm really proud of the work our staff is doing and I know this board is proud of that and our community is grateful for it. So, Ms. Burden. - Good evening. Most of these slides you all have seen a couple of times before. We just included them in the slide deck in case one of you all had a question or wanted to refer to them, but I'm gonna go through the ones that I've gone over before really quickly.

[00:13:36] So this slide, of course, the budget summary, we asked for 197 million increase, 138 million of that was increase in county transfer, which is about half of what our requested increase was last year. The

next slide represents all of the expenditure adjustments that totaled 197 million.

[00:13:55] This slide is new. We thought it was worth displaying the reductions that we took in fiscal '26. As you all know, that was 121.3 million. And the fiscal '27 budget restores the staffing formula change halfway.

[00:14:12] the elementary special education chairs and the AARTs. Next slide shows the master's lane comparison. Of course, this hasn't changed. We're real proud of this slide because we went from seventh of eight to second of eight in just three years.

[00:14:29] So that's great progress. The compensation comparison looks largely the same. We do have a few jurisdictions who haven't released their budgets or their salary scales yet. If you look at the next slide, We still remain second based on the proposed beginning salary of the divisions whose salary schedules we have.

[00:14:51] So we're still ahead of Loudon and Prince William. So that's our biggest competitors 'cause they're the largest. Then again, the revenue overview, county transfer request was 138 million. And then here's the new information.

[00:15:07] This represents the county programs that are being shifted to FCPS. 4.6 million that was previously funded outside of the school operating county transfer for the middle school after school program, the values in prevention program or VIP program, which funded summer camp at middle schools, and then transition services to FCPS, which basically helps high school seniors with IEP's transition.

[00:15:37] The county, also you should know that the county assumes that we would initiate a pilot fee structure for the middle school after school program and that those funds would be remitted to the county because the 3.9 million that's for the MSAS program is the full amount that they've included in the county transfer as opposed to outside the county transfer for fiscal '27.

[00:16:07] Another change was eliminating crossing guards at high schools, 13 positions, couple million dollars, and then redesign of the school health program, which is actually in its second year. They're phasing that in over five years. So if you go to the next slide, the impact of the county's advertised budget is we requested again 138.4 million.

[00:16:30] The county executive has provided 94.6 million as a transfer to the operating fund, which leaves a gap of nearly 44 million. And then support previously funded outside the transfer, They have transferred to us, but it's within the 118 million that you may have heard conversationally that was the increase to the schools.

[00:16:54] And then they also have identified 7.5 million to deal with major maintenance issues. But again, that's part of the school operating fund transfer. And I believe that Mr. Hill mentioned in his presentation of this, that this 7.5 million, It is school operating fund transfer and it's not really, their decision is how we would spend those funds.

[00:17:21] So the 7.5 million could be applied to major maintenance or it could be included as part of the support to the operating fund. And then debt service, that's pretty standard, that that's our increase in debt service in 11.4, so that the total is the 118.1 million that you may have heard about.

[00:17:44] The next slide again is just the looking forward. If we do get additional state funds, we ask again that everybody stay involved. Next slide. Then the next steps are the House and Senate released their proposed amendments to the Governor's budget on February 22nd.

[00:18:04] We have a joint meeting with the Board of Supervisors on the 24th that you all are aware of. We're already working on the PowerPoint with the county today and tomorrow we're meeting with them. And then you all are slated to adopt the advertised budget on February 26th, and that's it.

[00:18:30] - Thank you, Ms. Burden, for the presentation. I'll now call on Mr. Moon for his question, yeah. - Thank you, thank you, Mr. Dixit. Thank you for the presentation. Seeing the gap of \$44 million, to say the least, was a huge disappointment on my part.

[00:18:55] I'm gonna begin the conversation with that set first. At this point, I understand, according to the timeline, The House's and Senate's amendments are not expected until February 22nd.

[00:19:11] Do you have any intelligence advance of what that may look like compared to what the superintendent initially included in our proposed budget?

[00:19:28] I do not. Generally, when we receive the amendments, we then kind of have an idea where the House and the Senate align, and so those things probably have the greater chance of making it to the end, but they don't adjourn until March 14th, so we usually do not get calculation templates that would tell us directly from VDOE how much funding we'll get until much later in the process.

[00:19:59] One of the things that I meant to mention, and I didn't, I forgot, is the county executive indicated that they had an available balance of \$23.2 million in recurring funding for the Board of Supervisors consideration and he did specifically mention that those funds might be used to assist the schools with the difference between the county transfer and the amount that we requested.

[00:20:26] I mean, members on the County Board of Supervisors do always have that discretion to use the money left on table by a county executive to use in whatever the best way they see fit but not all the time they had used for to help the school system so uh correct so with with that i do you

[00:21:00] know whether on the county side whether they are expected you know more funding from expected more revenue from the general assembly for their side i do not know but that would be a good question to ask on the 24th but i will they will they say that simply because amendments are not due until 20 i don't know the but revenue sources that they receive from the state

[00:21:30] and and going to a slide number whether we have a 180 that one 14 page 14 we see that do we have a comparable numbers in those categories like that for fi 26 because i So I want to be able to compare apples to apples.

[00:22:05] Because at the bottom, at the bottom, we see 118. Somebody might claim that that's the same as last year's 118. Magically, magically. And from an executive summary of an accounting executive's proposed budget, we see the number of 99.2, which is 94.6 plus 4.6.

[00:22:35] But I mean showing like the 118, you know, people could, you know, could think that, oh, 118, like it's the same amount of transfer from the last year.

[00:22:50] - Yeah, that's not quite right. I mean, the people could say that, but that wouldn't be accurate. - So I would love to have, right, you know, FI 26 numbers are broken out in that fashion. - Right, because we got the 4.6 for the middle school, after school program.

[00:23:08] - But there was an outside, there was an outside. - That's right, it was outside of the operating transfer. It was funds that just came in to us to support those programs, but outside the county transfer. - So right now, just looking at that slide, what I see up there is 94.6, 94.6.

[00:23:28] For FI 26, that was 118, wasn't it? For that particular line item. - It was 118, I just don't recall whether debt service was included. - Yeah, so debt service last year was 6.7.

[00:23:44] - Was that included, was it part of the 118 or 119? - It was 118 plus the 16. - Plus, correct. - Yes, to equal to 125. - So when you take those numbers out, it's 118 minus 90, let's say the 95, so that's the delta between FI 26 and FI 27, looking at in those categories.

[00:24:14] - Yeah. - Thank you, again, I would like to request in the manner for FI 26, thank you. - Dr. Anderson, you're next.

[00:24:32] - Thank you, I'm sorry, Mr. Moon's question has me twisted up in knots, I think I thought I had it, but now I don't have it. This is data from this year, so what I think you all were discussing was potentially having a similar chart that laid out last year's to really determine which one of these things fell outside the transfer which would have included debt service and the middle school after-school programming and VIP all of those other pieces that are on page I

[00:25:03] don't know thank you on page 12 so okay so I think I understand that so here's my question now that the items are outside of the transfer what does this mean for our ass do we have to build them in to keep them at this level and if we do does that grow our gap like how are we treating this information well we

[00:25:36] haven't done anything with it yet but is it accurate to say that if we were looking to maintain these expenditures at this level you would need to cut 44 million somewhere else in the budget right but if we were to just add it to our bottom line of I don't know why I don't remember this our bottom line of 197 plus that it will just show a larger gap yes is that going to be how we treat this dr. Reed how what how are we treating this kind of new approach I

[00:26:16] think at the moment we're just discussing the new approach because it's so new you know I think we've had new I'm sorry two days new yes ma'am so I think that we're trying to figure out how to explain it as well to be honest And I think Ms. Burden, you know, has done a good job with the initial explanation.

[00:26:39] And I think Mr. Moon's questions are spot on because normally you kind of look at a budget apples to apples year over year. And this is a different way of budgeting for us as a school division. So I'm going to likely defer to Ms. Burden as we think about how best to explain it.

[00:27:02] Because it is, I think, even our principals and others, as they began to read through it, are struggling a little bit to understand, you know, the implications potentially. So, since you are all-knowing, she said that at the beginning.

[00:27:19] I did. Yes, ma'am. So, I recorded that. What were the conversations with the county, with your counterparts there, as to why this is the approach with these three expenditures on slide 12? why are we doing this this way now when we haven't in all of this time I have not had any conversations with Miss Jackson about this but I can tell you that the comparable number to 94.6

[00:27:48] that you see there last year was 118.6 because the capital and the MSAS were not part of that number Okay. So can I just clarify for one second? So the capital piece is here because there is an increase over what they're funding us in the current year. So there isn't always an increase that they show in their budget, right? So there was a few years ago that they showed the capital

[00:28:24] separately. It was a couple million dollars where they were increasing out of that joint infrastructure reserve so I just wanted to be clear there and then the debt is also something that they have shown on a separate line item as well the debt is something that's consistent year to year the capital has come in and out I think I think I think I think I'm mostly asking about the 4.6 exactly that why is the people were you able to have any insight in your conversations with mr.

[00:28:52] Hill no ma'am clearly that's a question for next week it is one that I'm very curious about going up to page 13 while this is not directly in our budget slide 13 this is not directly in our budget but it really does impact our community I know that crossing guards have been reduced pretty much every year since I've been on the board and now with an additional 13 on the docket do we have any input as to where these would come from or is that decision made outside of

[00:29:28] FCPS all together so our understanding is they're eliminating all crossing guards at the high school and we currently have 14 high schools that utilize crossing guards Centerville High School West Potomac McLean South Lakes Edison Hayfield South County Robinson Lake Braddock Annandale West Springfield Robinson Chantilly and Oakton all have high school crossing guards and they've all been paid in the county's budget previously and my understanding is

[00:30:02] they're all being eliminated so it's 14 not 13 well it's 13 positions and 14 schools so there must be somebody that shares a school I'm not sure how they you know staff that but there are 14 schools that currently have crossing guards that will not have crossing guards next year how many crossing guards that we have at our middle schools mr. Lambert do you have that number I can pull that for you we do have the information it's a little difficult because sometimes the same crossing guard who does a middle school doesn't elementary school or so I guess the better question is how many of our

[00:30:42] middle schools have crossing guard support and how many of our elementary schools have crossing guard support whether they're shared or not is fairly relevant if you could get that that would be helpful dr. Anderson yes there is a page in the county's budget document that I can provide you all that basically outlines all of the county services that are provided outside of the operating fund and in that it shows that there are 55 crossing guards left for elementary and middle so they clearly are working more than one one school as mr. Lambert said thank you my other question is still on

[00:31:22] page 13 this reduction in school health programs can you speak a little bit in terms of what that impact would look like for us or who can speak to that it may not be you Dr. Reed this again has been something that the county has funded through the county budget and I think they're redesigning their public health model program and my understanding is that I mean I don't know which schools specifically are part of this particular five staff reduction in

[00:32:00] the redesign but it looks like they're utilizing existing vacancies so that no current staff are expected but that may mean there are current positions clearly that must be impacted and really we've only received this document we haven't received like what schools are going to be impacted or which positions yet so there were no conversations before this was determined not that I'm aware with FCPS school staff not that I'm aware of okay thank you I'll take a go back please

[00:32:38] okay thank you miss miss Anderson okay so I just have a few questions first do we typically see the county leave money on the table in order to plan I mean I understand that they always have end of year the same way we do but is it a traditional thing to actually leave money on the table at this point I think this number larger than we've normally seen as far as the amount of funds that are unallocated and can be used you know for something that they didn't anticipate that maybe comes up during the budget work session their budget

[00:33:17] work sessions yeah the number seems larger than than we've seen historically okay I think that what I'm noticing in this that's very similar to what we've been talking about the entire budget process this year is we need help from the state our county is at a tipping point of what we can fund through just the revenue options and we now have utilized them all it's no longer that you know anyone from Richmond can look at us and say well you haven't used every taxing mechanism we've given you because we've now used every one that we've had and so I think that what this shows me more than anything is that we

[00:33:55] need help to in order to meet the obligations and to be able to keep the school system at the at the level so I think what we're seeing is real time what the JLARC study is trying to show is that we have to get more money in order to continue to provide the same level and I'll go back to the same thing that I always say when we get to this point is if we start looking at state rates of completion and SOL track and everything else go ahead and pull Fairfax County out and see what happens so if we dip it really hurts the state

[00:34:31] in a significant way because the next largest division is half our size and so we are doing all the lion's share the work in terms of making sure that the state continues on the path for education that it is I do want to talk a little bit about not this slide but the slide before when we're talking about the middle school after school program because I know there are a couple things on this list that were hot button items last year and so I definitely don't want be in the same boat that we were however this does change things pretty significantly does Fairfax County or does the public school system at this

[00:35:08] point have a fee structure system that we could utilize to collect fees like this because the majority of our fees come through my school books correct yes so does the county already have a fee structure that they utilize that would collect a differentiated pay structure I do not know the answer to that I this is a rare opportunity where I'm actually gonna ask you a question I already know the answer to and it's yes because they already are doing this with the sac programs because sac is collected through NCS at a differentiation based

[00:35:46] on income of family and so I have meant several times to different board members on the county side about the fact that we while we have a robust system that we used to collect school-based fees we do not have a system that that differentiates so I do think that there's a certain amount of time that it would take for us to be able to put any kind of structure like this in place and the other question that I have is do we already have this I'm assuming that we do not already have this factored into the budget that was the hundred and thirty eight million correct we have it in our budget but it's offset by a negative

[00:36:26] 3.9 million which is the funds that come in outside of the transfer to offset our cost and that negative is now gone so it increases our budget by 4.6 million gotcha okay I would like to go back I'll take a turn um so a little this is a little bit shocking to see the gap but you know with the current situation like my colleague just said that we did exhaust a lot of resources but the forty three point eight million dollar deficit we have I'm looking at that and then

[00:37:05] going back to the slide number seven where we have shown where we restored the funds for one with the one-time funding to maintain the elementary spec chair advanced ART is basically so not saying that this is what we cut last time and so we can cut anywhere right but knowing what happened last time is it something of something good could hurt like is it is a possibility that we

[00:37:42] could lose this additional funding we provided last year because we didn't get funding for ARTs and SPED shares well I think like on the page that shows all of the expenditure adjustments I think that in order to align with the funding that's been provided we would have to look at all of the things on that list of expenditure increases that make up the hundred ninety seven million yeah miss Burton and 89% of our budget goes to the and salaries of the staff so

[00:38:17] there's not much room to cut elsewhere and other than going to that so even if we cut these and I'm not saying we want to but 32 million dollars comes from here which we funded last year by one-time money and then we have 10 more million dollars deficit if we don't get anything extra from the state and that 10 million could come from somewhere here it's not on the list but going to back to the staff and and we are very staff labor intensive

[00:38:50] in you know uh you know school board like not school system so um i i my concern now is like what do we tell our you know our staff or the people who are concerned because i have been getting media like emails and uh we had meetings with with the parents who are saying we absolutely need those pet chairs or we absolutely need those aart's yeah i mean everything here would have to

[00:39:20] be looked at but we can't fund ourselves right so what what do we do at this time is it uh something think we could do we could tell our community that you know go to their state you know officials or go to our county's counterparts like whoever can fund us I'm not saying one or the other but if we don't do that we're going to be in a in a issue and you know with this I think we had a law last year we had a very late decision-making and it kind of upset a lot of community members

[00:39:58] we don't want to do that this year so I really hope that we get answers soon from whoever fund is funded funding us thank you we are going to go backs miss and dr. Anderson thank you one of the things that I think we have to offer some clarity on to our population to our residents because we saw the outcry that occurred regarding the middle school after school programming I mean

[00:40:35] teachers students families alike from all corners of Fairfax County really rallied around that is our only option at this time dr. Reed a fee structure to help that continue that's not our only option I mean we could as a board you could choose to fully fund it you're just gonna have to not fund 4.6 million bless you you're not gonna be able to fund 4.6 million of something else which could be any of the above items that I've said this before and I'll say this

[00:41:13] now it would advocacy to route it's not just for the logistical difficulties that mr. Anderson has explained we talked about this ad nauseum last year that most of our students who participated in the after-school programming I believe 72 percent was the number that was provided by and I'm so sorry I can't mr. Emory are on free and reduced lunch so we're going to be looking for blood from a turnip at this point and the reasons why this program was established by Jerry Connolly was to provide opportunities for those

[00:41:49] students that were constructive I would not want to be part of a board that now says there's a fee involved with this and so families will have to make some really challenging decisions so that for me as

one board I am not interested in that whether we get the funds from county state we make some different decisions I would like for all stones to be turned on this this is a fairly hard line for me because I know what this means in the community that I serve and those robust programs will not be such if there's a fee involved even

[00:42:29] nominally will be a challenge for many of our families the other question that have is regarding we talked about how we seem to be in a decent place perhaps with the state amendments are still flying about are we anticipating and looking at the the bills that are in process right now any unfunded mandates which will change our picture do we see any of that on the horizon mr. Malloy I don't know if he's here or dr. Reed has anything been raised to your awareness

[00:43:06] that could kind of sink us a little bit I think anything's possible miss burden is often said not to speculate I believe about what could occur but if there's anything in a pipeline I'd like for that to be raised in this conversation that's the sort of thing that mr. Malloy certainly would call to air attention if there was something that was going to have a huge impact but it wasn't being funded and I've not heard anything like that but you know we're a long way you know from adjournment so okay thank you can you also say this for

[00:43:45] me I know I've asked this before the meals tax how it being included in the county's budgeting well according to their documents they doubled it it increased by a hundred percent I think sixty four point seven million was what was assumed for fiscal 26, which represented a half year, and they have, okay, 67.9, and so they've doubled that to 135.8, or a 100% increase.

[00:44:21] So, according to their documents, they have accounted for the entire year of meals tax collections. Okay, and we're still here. I wish I had never raised that as a point now.

[00:44:38] Okay, find my last question. I'll come back once I find my question. please proceed. Mr. Moon? Yeah, I've been trying to find one particular number that I saw yesterday and I have not found that yet, but I have a couple other questions anyway, so I'm going to ask you those questions first. I'm trying to make sure that I am understanding this correctly. Looking at

[00:45:15] county executive's message published yesterday that they were expecting altogether 270 million dollars of additional revenue for fi27 and 270.65 to support county and school requirements and they are proposing not even half of that for us i'm not even talking about 52 percent according to their

[00:45:55] documents they have a total of 270.65 available and then out of that 118 even even using their number 14 slide number 14 they are proposing 118 or county executive proposing 118 which is perhaps about 48 as opposed to 52 or so yes okay there's another disappointment right there

[00:46:26] And I am also looking at the language of the county executive message on its page number three, I think.

[00:46:43] For our middle school after school activities, the language seems to dictate school system will implement fee-based collect. Is that something that we agree to do with?

[00:47:01] Okay, let me see. Okay, it says, it's on first full paragraph on page three of county executive message, FCPS will implement a pilot program for the upcoming school year, which will include the introduction of a fee schedule.

[00:47:33] Is that something we agreed to? It is something that the staff, the county, and the staff in our activities office was working on, looking at modeling that we could bring to the board for consideration and was predicated on the middle school after school programming being outside the school operating fund transfer.

[00:47:59] So since the monies no longer exist outside the school operating fund transfer, I think they've paused the work on creating modeling to bring to the board for review at this time. But why would the county executive use definitive language that this we will implement?

[00:48:22] That's probably a question better directed to him. Okay, thank you. So I just wanted to see whether there was an agreement for him to be able to say something like this. Because this would require a board of approval. Absolutely.

[00:48:37] Okay, thank you. And one number that I have not found yet, it was Sommel I remember seeing school system having flexibility of being able to use \$240-some million to meet its needs.

[00:48:55] Is that? I think with that particular line item, they have combined the state revenue, the revenue that they are now providing, and they've mixed expenditures in there and included the VRS rate reduction and the value of that, and that's why it's a really big number that they're saying.

[00:49:19] Since that is out there, since that number is out there, and I would like to know the breakdown of what that is so that I could intelligently be able to respond to any inquiry from anyone. Okay. Next up is Ms. Lady.

[00:49:45] Thank you. I just have a couple questions. First of all, I'm, you know, speechless like most of us because we've really done a fantastic job post-COVID putting Fairbanks County back on the map in terms of all the successes that we are seeing in our students and their learning and then their achievements.

[00:50:11] So I guess my one question is, Dr. Reed, is it possible that you could put together a budget that would match what the county is saying they were going to give us? If we didn't get anything more from the state, so we could see what else could be impacted in terms of cuts. I just I don't want to wait and do this at the 11th hour like we did before.

[00:50:36] My hope is that the state will show up in the state will come through and will provide what we what we need to to support this needs based budget, but is it possible to produce a budget. I mean, I'm thinking of all kinds of things that could be cut. I don't necessarily want to throw them out in this particular call.

[00:50:53] But I do think that we need to start looking at what we would have to do to get to their number. Is that a possible thing we could ask that Lee and her team do? Yes, ma'am. I mean, I think we've already begun discussing what are the possible things.

[00:51:10] beyond the cuts we had to make last year which I believe we still have we've retained 88 million in cuts from last year that are still cuts which are significant and the to answer your question directly yes ma'am we'll have to because we have to present a balanced budget for approval late this spring the items we're discussing are obviously not items that we would advocate nor or are they characteristic of a world-class school division?

[00:51:43] - Yeah, and I mean, I'm thinking about other things, and I don't know if we do something as drastic to going back to, you know, because of elementary planning time and the fact that we have specials

that create that planning time, it sounds like we might be losing some of that staffing that we go back to early release every week, like it was before Dr. Garza.

[00:52:06] The other thing is, let's talk about staffing. I mean, we just reallocated, I believe, 400 positions throughout the county where there was growth. We took from schools where they had lost enrollment as opposed to maintaining positions and hiring new people. And I know that there's been a lot of repercussions and certainly in my constituency, very disappointed in those moves. But I think our community needs to understand this is what we're looking at.

[00:52:31] We were hoping to reinstate a 0.5 back in that staffing model. But what I'm seeing is that's impossible, and not only can we not do that, that we're going to have to look at deeper cuts in order to get to this, you know, the number that the Board of Supervisors has shared with us thus far. So, you know, I don't want to wait to do it. I know we're having conversations. I don't know what all those details look like, but I think that we need to, at some point, point out to the public, here's what the budget looks like if we only have this much funding from the county and state doesn't pick up anymore and I want it to be very spelled out so people can understand and

[00:53:11] that for me you know my experience has been the one place that you get the biggest bang for your buck is in the staffing model um and unfortunately that really impacts the learning experience of all of our kids um but again i'm still certainly uh i'm in sticker shock in a in a different way than i expected to be so uh thank you for listening i look forward to seeing what the team comes forward with and what we can work on together to see where those cuts would be yes ma'am thank you miss lady miss lady um miss anderson next okay so i'm just going through my list of questions here

[00:53:49] um so they may not be in the perfect order um am i understanding correctly that crossing guards were put back into the budget last year is that correct they were restored so this is this is going back to the same thing that we were discussing last year so the 1.9 that would be crossing guards because the schools that were read off many of them are schools in my district so i fully and completely understand why we need crossing guards in those locations um it was my understanding that do those contracted employees have a right to stop traffic now because from what i understood that is something that solely

[00:54:29] aligns with the police department is that correct i don't know i guess mr lambert i don't know we we can go back to that but I would say that in speaking to mr. Lambert my understanding is that the contracted crossing guards were able to stop traffic as were the police officers because the contracted officers had the training and the certification to do that and but they've all for the high school been cut by the current county executive's budget proposal so

[00:55:05] basically if we wanted to continue that contracting then we would have to find 1.9 million dollars in the budget in order to continue it at those 14 schools right and we are a little upside down now in the budget but you're right I mean that the budget the county was budgeting for it and is now said I'm not sure if they've said there's not a need or they're not going to fund it mr. Lambert has returned so mr. Lambert did you have any conversation at all about crossing cancellation not for the the reason or the origin behind it you know if they they'd thought about that I did want to follow up I think dr. Anderson had asked

[00:55:44] after last year as you recall the same proposal was for a 22 crossing guards to be removed and that didn't end up happening they are moving away from full-time equivalents doing this and they went to a contract and so there is a company that's doing it one slight difference is that they only stop traffic to

allow children to cross and they do not direct traffic so they don't for example stand at the end of a kiss and ride line and hold traffic and move traffic they simply focus on the uh the children who are crossing

[00:56:21] and i do know that they are moving toward all contracts for for that and is is that at all 55 of our or is that at all of the locations related to crossing guards and is this just the first iteration of that my understanding is that they are moving toward all contract but they do still have some full-time equivalents who uh cover some of their crossings right now so it's a bit of a hybrid where you have some um that are being handled by fairfax county police employees not not police officers some that are handled by the contract as my understanding is that as they they

[00:57:00] lose a full-time equivalent that they move that over to the contract and so I believe that's the direction they're going I do know that on Tuesday that the safety and security committee will be briefing this out at the Board of Supervisors as well so I expect this to be a topic during their Tuesday briefing of the safety and security committee for the Board of Supervisors okay thank you that's helpful I think I had heard pretty significantly that it was getting harder and harder to find folks that were willing to be crossing guards so I do understand I think that it significantly impacts our safe routes to

[00:57:36] school if we can't trust that kiddos can can cross safely okay so to move to the discussion about the capital the 7.5 million in capital my question is is that I understand that that's additional money towards capital is that part of the sinking fund and just being identified this way because the sinking fund traditionally has been outside correct outside the transfer you're correct so the funding here is coming out of that joint capital infrastructure sinking fund and the county executive did say in his presentation when he was

[00:58:15] giving it on this piece that the school system could supplement you know use the 7.5 million to supplement your current you know capital requirements or you could supplant existing you know school operating fund dollars to provide additional flexibility to help. So I guess my question is if the 7.5 million is part of the sinking fund that's been identified for capital or for capital improvement in terms of facilities renovations and things like that does that mean that we cannot make a decision on our own about how that money would get used within the budget? No he explicitly said that you you could do that

[00:58:53] you could use it to supplement current either major maintenance or other facility needs or you could supplant you could choose to supplant existing our existing operating dollars that support capital in order to free up school operating funds so he explicitly said that in his presentation I would like to I think point out that had the money come in its traditional form from the sinking fund that flexibility would not exist it would then need to be I believe wouldn't it be

[00:59:24] earmarked for maintenance so the best way I think I can answer that is that so far the money that we have received out of the sinking fund has come from the sinking fund into our construction fund I'm gonna go off of pure memory but this is the first time that I can recall that the county executive has provided flexibility to FCPS very explicitly as part of his presentation isn't that

[01:00:01] likely because it's the first time it's actually been put in the school operating fund transfer thank you thank you that was kind of that was the question that I was getting to as I was trying to understand whether or not I understand that we can reallocate money that we already had in the budget towards but it does not change the fact that again we are talking about real dollars that we need to improve our facilities so these are all compounding problems can you speak a little bit to the increase in death service costs because I mean is that just an interest rate issue or is it an amount of debt

[01:00:41] like because I understand that as we increase the bond that we are going to increase our debt service every time yeah I think it's associated with the sale of bonds I mean in theory we sell the same number of bonds every year though correct we just vote on them every two years yes but at the same time debt could be falling off that it's completed so yeah I mean we can get some detail as to what makes up the 11.7 but okay and then the other question that I had there are a few things that I am and I am guessing that are not in the budget right now and I think that they're related to things that we're

[01:01:21] going to be discussing soon is the is transportation costs for phasing in the budget currently no okay because the board has not made a decision on that so if I'm understanding this correctly if we make a decision that we are going to provide transportation for every child that is phased, then that is going to be money that is directly impacted by other things that we already have budgeted. Yes. Are the math textbooks, which

[01:01:57] I know all parents and teachers desperately want us to have, is that currently in our budget this year? It's currently planned for in the budget, but it would be one of those areas we would look at potentially having to cancel if we're not, if we don't receive additional funding from the state of the county I'm just gonna say that we already did this once related to social studies materials last year and I understand that these are one-time funds and I'll finish up but I understand that these are one-time funds but they are it's kind of like if we don't increase staffing at the appropriate rate is that

[01:02:36] if we let it go too far then we're increasing the amount that we're gonna have to spend to get back to step the status quo so thank you miss Anderson I'll take a quick turn and Marcia why don't you go okay I just wanted to make a I guess a plea to our funders that the crossing guards are not for high schools are as important as elementary and middle schools I've been in the mornings of near Centerville high school almost two three years with my son and it is absolutely crazy crosswalks there and if there's nobody to guide those

[01:03:16] students we are seeing this union mill very busy and road going through the morning you know rush hour traffic from there and it's like an accident waiting to happen so our kids lives are very important and 1.9 million dollars or 2 million dollars of I think it's not a big you know amount for such a you know so many schools so I definitely would like this funds to be allocated because you were talking about safety and security and livelihood like the life of our kids

[01:03:52] so but I'll then go to mr. miss cunning and junkering this wasn't what I was gonna ask but I just want to piggyback on what you said you talk about you know what two point million for crossing guards and you know what's the value of

[01:04:10] I know that there was when my kids were in high school on very busy Franconia Road a student was struck and killed and I know that exists in several high schools where there are very busy streets and it's not through the fault of anybody else other than sometimes a distracted driver so safety is one thing a life is another and we've got to remember that I want to go back to the staffing formula because as I was looking over this budget and thinking about it and my concern is always the least of in our community and when you think about

[01:04:48] staffing formulas and how that goes with you know advanced academics and our sped chairs or after school middle or after school or after middle school programming the communities that that serves them lifts are the ones that are going to hurt the most so in terms of our staffing formula and looking at

slide number seven there are still reductions of 15.8 million what does that transfer into numbers class size teacher to student ratios that am I

[01:05:27] reading that correct I'm looking at what we formula adjustment right this 0.5 million is a half a student per class in the formula and so if we go back to where we were with the loss of the 1.0 then we would obviously save the 17.5 million but currently it's in the budget that the superintendents proposed budget

[01:06:03] to try to claw back some of our class size ratios I think this is important because I think what a lot of people don't understand is that title one funding is just K through three and so then what we see is an increase in sixth graders like in terms of class size for sixth graders is that correct I'm gonna ask dr. Ponce to respond to that my understanding is the title one is for the school k6 if it's at that elementary school but there's school-wide and then there's targeted title one and it depends on how they've chosen the plan

[01:06:41] but dr. Ponce maybe you could elaborate on that and you are totally right and what is this specific is if we can utilize the fund for something else or we can actually utilize it but also we do have some schools that overlap last year but this year only for elementary okay I'm happy to add a little bit to

[01:07:19] this conversation there are there are two separate things funding sources for first for higher need schools obviously title one is one of them and that's a federal government program for you know mostly elementary schools all that we do have it in the middle and I think high schools at this point but but in addition to that the the state has a program known as the state k3 reduced ratio program where the state provides additional funding if we meet certain standards for class sizes in k3 at elementary thank you and in that overlaps with title one but it's not necessarily exactly the same set of

[01:07:53] schools and that's state funding that's correct thank you I understand that times are tough for everyone but they're particularly tough for our underserved community and I think that when we look at how we're funding we look at it as an investment and in people and in our community instead of bending on something I just have to sit with us for a while because I'm a little bit

[01:08:25] surprised we all are dr. Anderson yes thank you I have a still questions I may need a go go go go back whatever that is dr. Reed I know I've asked about this a little bit and I know this continues to be a question out in the community people are wanting to know the difference between a class size increase versus a staffing formula adjustment so I'm gonna defer to Matthew because

[01:08:59] that's his wheelhouse mr. Norton yeah so when we when we think about a staffing formula adjustment we would be talking about something like taking the number of students at the school and dividing by some kind of divisor so you know say you take 300 students you divide by 25 which is a divisor for a relatively lower poverty school that's about you know mid-sized and that would produce a number of teachers when we talk about a class size increase you're often thinking more in terms of like the class size caps that the

[01:09:35] board has in regulation but it because it doesn't when you make a staffing formula change it doesn't necessarily mean that an individual class size at any given school would go up or down so it's it's it's slightly nuanced in that way sure and the bigger bang for the buck would be the class size increase if we were twin and I'm not advocating just trying to make a point if class sizes were to be increased by one across a division what would be the savings in terms of dollar amounts I I know you know this.

[01:10:10] About \$35 million. About \$35 million. When we had the staffing reduction by the staffing adjustment, which was also by one teacher, that yielded \$33 million, I thought these were further apart.

[01:10:28] Yeah, sorry. I would like an opportunity to talk that through a little bit more. When we talk about the school board's regulations on class sizes that are set at 30 or sorry 27 for I believe it's 27 for first to third grade and then a cap of 29 at fourth through sixth grade when we talk about increasing that from 27 or 29 up to 28 or and 30 or something like along those lines it would actually affect a fewer number of schools because we we only have we don't have as many classes that are right up against those caps and so by

[01:11:07] By making a change to that regulation, you would actually be affecting fewer individual classrooms than you do if you make a staffing formula adjustment. Because when you make a staffing formula adjustment, you're applying that to every single school. It's just that at any given grade level at a school, when you make a staffing formula adjustment, it doesn't necessarily mean that the classes in third grade at Aldrin Elementary would necessarily be any different than they would have been with or without it.

[01:11:32] Exactly. Okay, that's very important. Thank you, and I'm glad that I've been kind of stressing about having that right nomenclature in the documents here. What am I saying here?

[01:11:54] Geez. One of the things that you mentioned, Dr. Reed, which was the textbook that Ms. Anderson referred to, where is that in our expenditures list here, or Ms. Burden, on page 6?

[01:12:09] Yeah, it's not a new item. Therefore, we, in page six, it has our multi-year initiatives that are new. It has the restorations we were endeavoring to provide. And the textbook fund is not something that is a new initiative or a multi-year initiative because it's part of our budget.

[01:12:31] So where does that show up? I still would like to... It's because they're multi-year funds that we give year-to-year for when there is a textbook adoption. Because you can never afford to do a textbook adoption.

[01:12:48] So we save along the way. A little bit every year. So we have money when the adoption... So what does that mean for the textbook adoption for last year? Okay.

[01:13:04] The little dollars we were saving a number of years, we wiped that out. So how much are we intending on saving for the math adoption in the base budget currently? Like, how much do we have to date? I do not know.

[01:13:21] I'd have to get back with you on that. I just don't have that level of detail with me. Can you add that to my list of questions? Thank you. One of the things that I also wanted to touch upon is the, not the debt service, I think, the capital improvement.

[01:13:40] while there's flexibility it's really it I'm not seeing it as flexibility I'm seeing it as more of a misnomer because if we have the flexibility to use that elsewhere we just continue to push back our renovation cycle is that accurate dr. Reed it's not the renovation cycle it's major maintenance maintenance thank you there's so much deferred major maintenance now I mean the board is really gonna have to decide do we want to invest in staff to support kids in the classroom or the major maintenance, because the debt service dollars, I believe, according

[01:14:18] to Ms. Burden, had previously come to us outside the operating fund. And earmarked. And earmarked, which we, of course, were using for major maintenance. Now, when it's placed in an underfunded transfer, then we have to make a decision as to which things that we are planning to do that we stop doing to do the major maintenance.

[01:14:45] So we're certainly excited that there's a recognition of the importance of the major maintenance backlog, and it now competes with other commitments and other priorities that we've been discussing. Sure, and I think I go back to one of the first questions I asked.

[01:15:04] Why are we doing, why is this being done this way? We're not doing it, but I'm really, really questioning that, and I do have a few more questions. I'll put you on the go back. That's Ms. Anderson now. So I have a quick question because I mentioned Safe Routes to School before.

[01:15:27] Is it my understanding correct that part of the reason that we have the Safe Routes to School that we have is because we have the crossing guards in place? Is that correct? Safe Routes to School is a national program, and so it plays a role in helping every time that a principal or administrator sees something that they think merits.

[01:15:48] We do use Safe Routes to School to first go out there and evaluate it. If it meets the Fairfax County threshold of, yeah, we think it meets it, then we contact the Police Department's Traffic Bureau, who will then come out, and they have their own standards that are laid out in general orders of how many students over how much time.

[01:16:05] So that is one of Safe Routes to Schools initiatives, but it also has others such as encouraging walking and biking to school, teaching biking, teaching biking safety to students. So it has a pretty broad mandate, but one of the things it does is help inform if it's a good option.

[01:16:22] And we work with Mr. Muick's team on those as we develop what would be a walking route and what would not be a walking route. So I guess my question is, would we have to potentially increase transportation costs if we don't have safe routes because we do not have a safe way for kids to cross?

[01:16:39] Mr. Muick and I were just discussing that on the side. I think that's something we would look at. You've really got to dial down into each of those intersections and really determine, you know, perhaps some kids, you know, if they stay on the same side of this, you know, street, but across 14 different schools, that's a lot of reviewing.

[01:16:59] yes that would be something that we would be looking at and I and I spoke last year with some student advocates that were from Chantilly High School because they have a unique issue is that they have an area where they cross at a light but it's significantly removed from where they actually have the kids parking because of the reduced parking available and so like just not having an additional and I believe that we had a student struck there last year the school and so I am I am deeply concerned about this safety I'm also deeply concerned about what it could mean in terms of transportation costs particularly as

[01:17:36] many of us are very interested in trying to get to healthy start times adding buses for for places that we previously had good options for walking is not necessarily a good path here so okay thank you thank you mr. Anderson I would like to recognize our student representative in this year a student leadership development program who are attending tonight's meeting and ask them

[01:18:03] to please stand thank you for being here and being part of this important discussion because you know this budget impacts every single school you guys attending and and the families of course so I have only dr. Anderson right now left thank you and I just have a few because I just wanted to circle back to

[01:18:41] these. This is for Mr. Lambert. Mr. Lambert, at current, and I hope you have this information, how many of our high schools have coverage with crossing guards? And this is without whatever's being shared by the county. 14. 14 of 25. How many of the middle schools? I just got, and I think Dr. Reed may have just shared with you where all the crossings are. I just need to go through and see which ones are middle schools. Just for clarification, the police department would look at it less in the buckets of high school middle school elementary although we're discussing high

[01:19:18] school cuts they look at them as crossings like numbers of crossings but i uh i literally probably just hit your wires while you were asking the question so i'll take a look at it but it's 55 between the two sorry it's 55 schools between the two or 55 fte between the two i'm not i'm not sure the 55 it's 49 i'm sorry their budget document shows that there are 49 remaining after this reduction 49 fte's which could cover multiple schools the point that i wanted to make is for

[01:19:57] years now we've been chipping away at um the crossing guards and in places where it's high on gallows road if you need to go to um woodburn if you need to go to mason crest there's no crossing guard and there hasn't been there for years on um little river turnpike to go to way an oak little river turnpike and braddock road busy busy has not been a crossing guard there since my first year on the board so this is not a new issue this is an issue that i think if we're going to really elevate we need to kind of elevate the decisions that were already that already

[01:20:33] occurred because it didn't take away the fact that the cars are speeding down those roads at 35 40 miles per hour 45 and kids are just trying to get to school and many of them on their own and many of them elementary school kids who don't have the wherewithal that we think our high schoolers have which also happens we had a student who passed away crossing the street trying to get to Justice High School in 23 now so there's a lot out there for us to investigate and I know know we're here asking a lot of questions and but dr. Reed I want to get

[01:21:11] some clarity I want to make sure I hit the mark if you had any particular outcome you were hoping for from us any kind of particular feedback I want to be sure that I provide that in this conversation or is this still very much exploratory I think the tradition of this particular work session is exploratory it's to make sure we understand the budget in light of the county executives proposed budget and you know I think that's what we're doing I think we're trying to grapple with what it means in particular this year and I

[01:21:48] don't know that there's a further ask that I have at this time okay thank you so the last thing that I want to say that I I am one of the board one of the board members who feels that we have to provide transportation for our kids and phasing. We know right now it's 1,700 kids. We know some subset of those kids are going to elect to remain at their schools. We cannot take that decision away from them because of lack of transportation, which is what's going to happen. They are not going to be able to have transportation, so there are potentially seniors who are going to have to switch schools because they can't get to

[01:22:25] schools otherwise because they don't drive, their parents don't have the flexibility to drive them. So I'm really hoping we can be a little bit more creative to handle those students. And yes, none of this looks great. You know, and I've added the 4.9 to the negative 43, I think we have here, but that still has to be managed.

[01:22:48] I don't think that's how we manage where we are in this budget. Yeah, and I'll stop there. Thank you. - Thank you, Dr. Anderson.

[01:23:03] So I'm gonna come back to, what? Oh, Marcia first. I'm sorry, Marcia. You're just not used to having me right next to you. So, Dr. Reid, I'm going to second what one of my colleagues said. I would like for you to try to do a proposed budget.

[01:23:22] Well, I don't know if you can or if this is a fair ask of what it would look like with what we just have because I think the public needs to see what that would look like and they would have the opportunity to advocate for what's important to them because we don't know what would be cut, you know, we're waiting for the state and I think that one of the biggest impacts this has is obviously on our families and on our students and they're also our strongest supporters because they see our work every day and they're the ones that are

[01:23:54] going to help advocate for what they see as critical so I think if you're requesting that I write a budget based on the county current transfer I think that would require me to hear from the board which things you are more interested in having cut than not right like because I know there was a conversation around wanting more input into that as well so I think that would certainly be information that would be helpful in our designing of a budget to

[01:24:32] get a sense of which things the board would like to cut thank you I realize it's a hard ask I don't even know how you even come up even came up with this budget. I realize it's a hard ask and I realize it's also hard times and I feel like we're robbing Peter to pay Paul sometimes but we will see the negative results of that down the road and we'll have to eventually pay one of them in one way or another. I agree and I have to believe that number one we're always going to stay in the light right and number two I think our state delegation is

[01:25:10] working hard we've elected a Senate and the delegates to the assembly and a governor who ran on supporting public education and I believe that that they're going to do that and I know that that's important and they I trust that our that our budgets gonna work out for our staff the other thing you know as we think about and contemplate writing a budget that somehow matches this specific scenario there's still time right to contemplate funds from the

[01:25:49] state and perhaps other funds from the county rather than you know it's also very challenging for many of our staff to be going back and forth and back and forth every year on topics such as this so trying to balance the need for stability and our focus on our children as we are getting close to March and within a couple months of what unfortunately are also high-stakes assessments and really want to keep our focus on that and focus on what's happening in the classroom so I hear the direction and we'll work earnestly to

[01:26:26] support that while our school-based staff stay focused on our children and their education thank you uh mr john cunning and i'm going to just uh make one last point that the class sizes which uh some of our close schools had increased classroom sizes parents were not happy about that uh you know i

had a lot of emails again about that and calls and meeting with the pta that uh they you know they're they did not expect their students to be in a bigger classroom last

[01:27:03] year and now i think we're going to heading back to that even though the intent was to to relieve some of those bigger classroom sizes so over and all i think we're working kind of going backwards on everything except i hope we don't do that in whatever progress we have made in student teacher salary but other than that i'm seeing no really good restoration here that we are left with so i guess our community has to um you know talk about this more and and and i think we have a voice

[01:27:42] of as a community and not just the school board here so um having said that i think mr moon just wants to go you know just i'm sorry that's okay i was a slow and raising my black is uh as we have heard there are a couple of board members at least you know wanting to see what a doctorate superintendent could potentially uh you know share with the board to consider if there was not additional revenue other than what has been already shared with us i think that's a prudent

[01:28:19] practice uh especially looking at the budget timeline uh county board of supervisors budget hearing is april 14th through 16th and a community needs to know community needs to know that what school system budget will potentially look like if we only get certain amount of transfer from the county side by that time we'll probably we'll know what the state is going to give us or is going to give us of course nothing is for 100 guaranteed but but we'll know that so we we will need to have

[01:28:56] potential reduct list of reductions you know before people go out and testify before board of supervisors yes sir I think we can look at certainly providing a list we already have a start of a list right on our slides but there are the things to add to the list I do think though that it is prudent to wait till we see what the state is going to do in talking with the principals this morning we're going to be delaying the delivery of staffing sheets until we see state

[01:29:35] dollars because we also you know our staff our educators are more than numbers on a chart and I know this board knows that and when we think about formulas and adjustments it's real people that are moving schools that they've been at for years or being moved to a school that increases their commute and creates hardship for childcare and I know this board cares deeply about that and I rather before we sort of begin to turn lives upside down again I want to make sure that we exhaust every possibility and stay true to our North Star of

[01:30:13] wanting to focus on resourcing our classrooms so I think as we look at the state and Miss Burton I think that's March 12th 14th March 14th we should have a clear idea of what the state is gonna do and I think at that point it's probably I'm gonna believe that we're gonna be fine at that point but if there are still gaps then absolutely I think we're gonna need to present what those are prior to so also the Board of Supervisors sees that and maybe you know at that point they may have an opportunity to make an adjustment then

[01:30:48] as well. Thank you, Dr. Reed. Ms. N. Junkani. Okay. All right. So this budget committee of the whole is recessed at 6 30 p.m. and the board will reconvene at 7 p.m. to move a motion to meet in closed session. And just thank you to all of you, Ms. Burden, Alice, Matthew, and Dr. Reed for this

[01:31:23] presentation and everybody who's worked on this. Thank you. Okay. No, not yet.

[02:01:52] the board budget committee a meeting of the whole is reconvened at 7:01 p.m. and the board will now make a motion to go into closed meeting on February 19th 2026 to conduct with legal counsel

regarding matters requiring the provision of legal advice by such counsel pursuant to section 2.2-3711 a7 and a8 and a29 of the Code of Virginia specifically contracts do I have a motion Mr. McDaniel drive a second Mr. Moon all those in favor that is

[02:02:25] unanimous for all board members the budget meeting of the whole is recessed again at 7:02 p.m. and the board will now meet in closed session



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