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## The Herrity Report Special Edition: FY2010 Budget Update April 20, 2009

Today we had our formal budget markup on Fairfax County's Fiscal Year 2010 budget. The budget includes almost all of the key principles I have fought hard for over the last several years including the elimination of the Penny for Affordable Housing, no motor vehicle decal fee, elimination of the new park entrance fee for residents and a property tax rate that reduces the burden on the average homeowner without significant new fees or taxes. While I do not think the budget goes far enough to reduce the tax burden on our homeowners, the budget represents a good start towards returning fiscal responsibility to the County and has been unanimously endorsed by the Board of Supervisors. The budget will be formally approved on Monday, April 27<sup>th</sup>.

**The Good News.** This budget includes many of the key principles I have fought hard for in the last several years and during this budget process. These include:

- *Tax Reduction for the Average Homeowner* - It sets the real estate tax rate at \$1.04 which results in a tax decrease for the average homeowner. This is below the advertised rate of \$1.05.
- *Elimination of the Penny for Affordable Housing* – Eliminates all of the Penny that has not been committed. The budget guidance calls for a review of the way we have been addressing affordable housing.
- *Eliminates the Majority of Proposed Revenue Enhancements/Fee Increases* – Fees totaling approximately \$41M had been proposed. The budget will include only about 25% of the proposed fees. Some specific fees that I worked to reduce include:
  - *Motor Vehicle Decal Fee* – will not be reinstated.
  - *New Park Entrance Fees for Residents Eliminated* – residents will not be charged to visit our lakeside parks as proposed by the Park Authority. This was going to cause serious neighborhood parking and traffic concerns.

- Athletic Use Fee (Kiddie Tax) – This fee for every child, for each season for use of our athletic facilities was proposed to increase 136% from \$5.50 to \$13.00. Supervisor Frey, Cook and I were able to negotiate the fee to be held at its current rate. I have been and continue to be opposed to this fee. With all of the problems with gangs and childhood obesity we need to eliminate barriers to our youth participating in sports.
- Restores Essential Police and Public Safety Expenditures – The approved budget continues the funding of School Resource Officers, the sexual predator enforcement group, the DWI coordinator and Motor Carrier Safety program to name a few of the critical police programs that had been on the chopping block. It also restores critical fire dept services that were proposed to be cut.
- Includes Full Funding for the Economic Development Authority (EDA) – The EDA’s budget has been flat since the early 90’s. As the agency responsible for attracting new business into the county, they are critical to growing our commercial tax base and further relieving the tax burden on our homeowners.
- Eliminated the Proposed Increase in Storm Water by Half a Penny – We still do not have a cost effective way to manage or evaluate our storm water projects.
- Schools Held Accountable – As Herry Report readers know, I have been critical of the School Board and school administration for not focusing their resources on teachers, kids and the classroom. We need to keep our schools the best in the nation. This budget has several proposals to hold schools accountable.
  - Carry Forward of Funds for the Projected 5,000 Student Growth – the budget includes \$40M for an estimated increase of 5,000 students next year. I have been a long standing critic of this estimate. The budget language includes an expectation that if the growth does not occur the money will be carried forward to FY2011.
  - Funding by Line Item – At my specific request, the Budget Guidance includes language investigating the funding of schools in nine line items rather than one lump sum. This would allow the Board of Supervisors to focus school spending on teachers, kids and the classrooms.
  - Virginia School Efficiency Review Program – On my motion the Board of Supervisors will work with the schools to investigate participation in a state funded program that reviews non-instructional functions for efficiency so that more funding can be focused on the classroom. I will have more on this program in a future Herry Report or you can see <http://dpb.virginia.gov/school/>
- School Construction Improvement Plan Funding Restored - The school CIP funding was restored to \$155M for badly needed school construction and renovation.
- Countywide Citizens Budget Review Committee - Before I took office in 2008 I formed a Citizen’s Budget Review Committee for the FY 2009 budget cycle. Since then several of my colleagues formed budget review committees for the FY2010 budget cycle. I found

their guidance and ideas invaluable during both budget cycles. I am happy to report that the budget guidance includes discussion on the formation of a Countywide Citizen's Budget Review Committee.

**Much More Work to Be Done.** This budget is only a starting point not a finishing point. I believe there are many more areas where we can use common sense solutions to reduce the tax burden on our citizens. As Herry Report readers know, we have doubled the tax burden on our homeowners over the last seven years. While this budget provides some relief to the average taxpayer, it does little to reduce the cumulative increases of the last seven years. It is however a step in the right direction but there is much more work to be done.

FY2011 promises to be a more difficult budget cycle with the continued decline of both residential and commercial real estate values and the need to provide our homeowners tax relief. We will also likely not have the one time stimulus money which we used to plug some of the holes as we did this year. Many of the Supervisors were disappointed with the lack of focus on restructuring and efficiencies - this must be a component of next year's review. We also need to look at and evaluate the positions that were held open during FY 2009 and we need to focus on more efficiently using our facilities among other things.

I will keep Herry Report readers informed as we work through initiatives for the FY 2011 budget. Please let me hear your thoughts on the budget.

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The **Herry Report** is a monthly publication from the Office of Supervisor Pat Herry to keep citizens informed on the issues facing Fairfax County. Communication is important to Supervisor Herry and he encourages your feedback on the items in the **Report** or other issues that concern you. Past issues of the **Herry Report** can be found at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/springfield/herry-report-newsletter.htm>. To sign up for the Herry Report please go to <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/springfield>. If you would like to be removed from our mailing list, please send an e-mail to [springfield@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:springfield@fairfaxcounty.gov) with the Unsubscribe in the Subject field.