

Dranesville Budget Task Force

FY 2011

Addendum

The Dranesville Budget Task Force has met twice since the County Executive released his proposed budget for FY 2011. We have considered the County Executive's proposed budget in light of the Task Force's previous recommendations, and set forth herein a variety of observations which we hope Supervisor Foust, the Members of the Board of Supervisors and the County Executive will consider as the budget process continues to unfold.

First, the Task Force commends the County Executive for producing what is, in our view, a more nuanced and thoughtful budget proposal than last year, which does a better job than last year of looking at span of control issues, consolidations, reorganizations, and the like, with an eye toward producing permanent and sustainable expenditure reductions and organizational efficiencies.

Revenue

The Task Force is on record and remains committed to its position that the Board of Supervisors raise the property tax rate no higher than that which will hold an average Fairfax county homeowner's property tax level when compared to FY 2010. Despite our view, set forth below, that there are proposed cuts in the budget which should be restored, the Task Force remains steadfast that the Board should not raise taxes beyond that which will hold taxes level, and any restorations to the budget will have to be met with either new revenue sources or corresponding further cuts.

With regard to diversification of the County's potential revenue sources, the Task Force is pleased that the County Executive has proposed the reimposition of the County vehicle decal/registration fee (without display requirements), which the Task Force supported both last year and this year. The Task Force renews its call for more revenue diversification, and urges the Board to take necessary steps to raise the lodging tax and to seek authority to impose a meals tax.

Proposed Cuts

With regard to specific reductions proposed by the County Executive in his advertised budget plan, the Task Force reacts as follows to the cuts contained in the "FY 2011 Reductions General Fund Impact" statement disseminated by the County Executive. Paragraph numbers correspond to those in the County Executive's plan:

48. The Task Force believes the County must find a way to fund the operation and management of the Martin Luther King, Jr. swimming pool this year.

118. The Task Force expresses concern about effects on emergency response times that could result from the reductions and eliminations described in cuts numbered 118 and 119 relating to reduced hours of Basic Life Support Units and elimination of a fire and rescue battalion.

145. The Task Force is concerned with, and recommends against, eliminating emergency services at the Mount Vernon Center for Community Mental Health.

148. Similarly, the Task Force is concerned with, and recommends against, eliminating emergency services at the Northwest Center for Community Mental Health.

91. The Task Force is concerned that the elimination of all middle school SRO's cuts too broadly, and suggests that a more targeted and limited reduction could, while still saving substantial funds, make more sense.

86. The Task Force is concerned that the efficient management of the Circuit Court would be put at significant risk by the elimination of 5 law clerks, and that the purported savings from that action would be more than offset by significant costs stemming from a slower and less efficient docket. The Task Force recommends fully funding the Circuit Court law clerks.

The Task Force is concerned that the proposed cuts to the library budget may be too severe. As we noted in our initial report, the libraries absorbed significant cuts last year, and the additional cuts this year are troubling.

The Task Force is of the view that the Fairfax County Parks were significantly impacted by budget cuts last year, and may be targeted to absorb too big an additional cut this year. The Task Force recommends that the bathroom facilities scheduled for closure not be closed.

The Task Force commends the County Executive for developing a budget that conforms to the four general guiding principles he laid out last year. In that regard, we are pleased that the County Executive's advertised budget avoids significant new cuts in the human services area which was disproportionately cut in FY 2010.

In addition, the Task Force believes that the efforts of the Department of Family Services (DFS) to face this crisis through strategically identifying cuts as well as implementing innovative efficiencies and reorganization should earn the support of the Board in final budget decision-making. Moreover, as we look to managing continuing challenges in the coming budget year, we believe that while there may be other fine examples in county government, DFS has provided us with a model of effective government that may be applicable to other departments.

Schools

The Task Force understands that there remains a gap (on the order of \$18 million) between the proposed County transfer (which represents a 1% cut), and the current transfer amount sought by the Superintendent. There was some sentiment on the Task Force for meeting the school board half way, but the general view of the Task Force is that the County Executive's proposed transfer to FCPS is, while no doubt challenging to the school system, tolerable.

Conclusion

The last two budget cycles have presented enormous challenges, and all indications are that next year's budget will once again present similar challenges. The Task Force applauds the County Executive for his effort to address some of the issues the Task Force thought were unaddressed last year. The Task Force urges the County Executive and the Board to continue working hard, and to avoid growing complacent. Continued focus on prudent revenue diversification and

enhancement, expenditure cuts, and reorganization, will be necessary to continue to meet future challenges. Despite many painful decisions over the last two fiscal years, and no doubt more to come, the Task Force believes that the County Executive, Board of Supervisors, School Superintendent, and School Board have managed this crisis in such a way that Fairfax has remained -- and can continue to be -- a place where individuals and businesses will want to move, raise families, send their kids to school, start a business, grow old, and-- if necessary-- be lifted up by their neighbors.

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Dranesville Budget Task Force

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