



Tax Increase of 5% Proposed; 26% over Five Years

- FY2019 Proposed Budget Includes 5% Tax Increase. On Tuesday the County Executive presented the FY 2019 proposed budget which came with an unpleasant surprise for taxpayers -- an over 5% tax increase -- for a total of over 26% increase over the last five years.
- Addressing the Opioid Public Health Crisis. A lot has happened since my January Herry Report on the opioid public health crisis facing Fairfax County, Virginia and the nation. Below is an update on my efforts, what you can do to address the crisis and where I think we should be heading.
- Community events
 - Paving and Restriping Community Meeting Rescheduled for Apr. 5
 - Design Public Hearing for Rolling Road Widening Project - Feb. 27
 - Save the Date: Springfield District Tax Relief Workshop - Mar. 5
 - Springfield District Budget Town Hall - Mar. 22
 - JCA 50+ Employment Expo - April 30
 - 2018 Shredding Event Dates - Springfield District Jun. 16
 - GMU Offers Free Speakers to Community Organizations

FY2019 Proposed Budget Includes 5% Tax Increase

Tuesday's budget proposal comes with an unpleasant surprise for taxpayers -- an over 5% tax increase for the average homeowner -- for a total of more than a 26% increase over the last five years. If the increase in your assessment is greater than the average, the County Executive's proposed 2.75 cent increase (which includes a

.25 increase in the stormwater tax) in the tax rate could cost you more than 5%. Once again this year, the assessment increases are higher in the areas least able to afford them. While the tax bills continue to grow in Fairfax, wages have not, especially for our growing population of seniors and our dwindling population of millennials. Based on the emails I have received since Tuesday we are literally taxing our tax paying residents out of the county.

It's past time to refocus on our priorities like schools, public safety, congestion relieving transportation solutions, employee and teacher raises, and helping those most in need. The new County Executive started his presentation with comments that were right on point, with talk of a more creative and nimble government, setting priorities, cost reduction, economic growth, and returning to the Lines of Business reviews that the Board has put off for the last two years. Unfortunately he has only been on the job since January 1 and this budget was not able to reflect his opening comments as it included every new spending proposal by the Board from the last several years.

I am happy to see the budget includes several of my requests for additional resources to address our opioid public health crisis and gang issues. The 21% increase in taxes over the previous four years should have been enough to fund raises and some priorities. However, the Board has continued to avoid making tough decisions by trimming around the edges and making cuts from increases instead of making significant, long-term reductions or eliminating out of date programs and setting priorities.

I am extremely disappointed that we have reached yet another budget cycle and we have again failed to address our growing pension issues. I have advocated for action on pensions since 2009. As I talk with constituents throughout the County, they are in disbelief that we continue to offer new employees a pension benefit more generous than surrounding jurisdictions on top of a County taxpayer paid social security benefit as early as age 55. Pension costs alone add 30 cents to every payroll dollar and compete for funding with critically needed county services and employee and teacher raises. While not a silver bullet for this budget season, every year we put off pension reform for new employees costs us the ability to fund critical services and address employee and teacher salaries.

The residents of Fairfax County made it very clear that they have been taxed enough when they soundly defeated the proposed meals tax just over a year ago. I cannot and will not support increasing the tax burden on our homeowners another 5% this year. I look forward to working with my colleagues on the Board and our residents to address the challenges we are facing. I will be hosting a **Budget Town Hall with County Executive Bryan Hill on March 22th at 7:00PM at the West Springfield Government Center, 6140 Rolling Road, Springfield.** I also look forward to hearing your thoughts on the proposed budget and hope you can join us.

Addressing the Opioid Public Health Crisis

A lot has happened since my January Herrity Report on the opioid public health crisis facing Fairfax County, Virginia and the nation. [See my January report here.](#) *The crisis is growing.* Unfortunately, despite many efforts to address the problem it has become worse:

- More people die from heroin overdoses than traffic accidents
- Over 30% increase in overdose deaths in Fairfax County last year despite our efforts
- Virginia was averaging 3 overdose deaths a day - it is now 4 per day
- Nationally for the second year in a row our life expectancy as Americans has decreased with the opioid crisis listed as the primary cause
- 75% of heroin addicts start with prescription drugs - many innocently - lots of athletes people recovering from injuries.
- It is getting to the point where most people I know and meet have been touched by this crisis

Progress to date. I first became aware of the crisis in 2014 with two deaths in my community that were heroin overdose deaths but not reported as such. The next year I attended the DEA's Citizens' Academy to learn more about the crisis. Since that time I have been actively working to raise awareness of the problem, to keep opioids off of our streets and out of our schools and to get the addicts that need treatment for their disease options for treatment in Fairfax County. Some of my efforts include:

- Raising awareness by speaking on the issue at every civic association meeting I attend. I hosted a well-attended town hall meeting in May of 2016 and have hosted and spoken at several since. Please let me know if there is an opportunity to further raise awareness of the issue.
- Consistently raising this issue with the Board of Supervisors. The Board now regularly receives reports on overdoses and overdose deaths in the county. That reporting is being improved this year.
- Working with Delegate Hugo on HB1885 to limit on amount of opioids prescribed. If more than 7 days the physician must register with PMP.
- Having the West Springfield Police Station be the site of the pilot for drug take back boxes in our police stations. Since Oct 24, 2017 the box has collected over 175 pounds of drugs. The pilot is expected to be expanded to other police stations this year.
- Working with Senator Jill Vogel this legislative session on SB862 which will require pharmacies to take back unused medication. This legislation was carried over to next year but the outlook is promising.
- While addiction is a disease and we need to get addicts help, we also need to prosecute those that peddle the opioids that have been killing our addicts. This session I also worked with Delegate Hugo on HB1469, a bill that would enable our prosecutors to charge dealers with felony

homicide even if they were not at the scene of the death. This legislation has the support of the AGs office, the FCPD, the Commonwealth Attorneys, as well as my colleagues on the Fairfax County Board.

- Continuing my two year push to get drug counselors back into our schools at the request of the principals in my district.
- Last year the Board approved funding \$2.4M of carryover money to address the crisis. Most of that is going to treatment and getting some drug counselors back in the schools.

Current Efforts. In addition to continuing efforts to raise awareness and get legislation passed this session, I am focusing on the availability of local treatment for recovering addicts because Fairfax County and the greater Northern Virginia area are severely lacking in detox and recovery centers. On January 9th the Board was briefed on the County's current plans to address the crisis. I asked the Board to address two areas that were not covered - addressing availability of treatment in the County and in the jail. I have also been talking with a number of other recovery organizations from around the country about locating in Fairfax County. We need to provide our residents better options locally.

Members of the Fairfax County Community Services Board, the Fairfax County Sheriffs' Office, and my staff will be headed down to Chesterfield County, Virginia to tour their jail as well as the [McShin Foundation](#), a leading Peer to Peer Recovery Community Organization in Virginia. The tour will be reviewing a low cost innovative recovery program that has reduced recidivism rates amongst its opioid addicts by 40%. [The Heroin Addiction Recovery Program \(HARP\) focuses on peer-to-peer support where professional persons in recovery are brought into the jail to provide services, like therapy, that these men and women can rely on.](#) The peer-to-peer focus is incredibly important.

What You Can Do. There are a number of things you can do help address the crisis:

- It starts at home - get any excess opioids out of your medicine cabinets. Opioids can be worth up to \$80 a pill in our schools
- Raise awareness with your friends, families and neighbors - share this newsletter.
- Look out for your family, friends, and neighbors - get them help if you see issues - opioid addiction happens to good people.
- Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board (CSB) can be a good first stop if you or a friend has issues - 703-324-7000.
- Get trained in the use of Narcan if you know someone who has an addiction - it can be lifesaving - either the CSB or the Chris Atwood Foundation can provide information on training.

While this may sound depressing, we have made significant, common sense strides in combatting the opioid public health crisis in Fairfax County and Commonwealth of Virginia. We have much more work to do and I am interested in hearing any thoughts you may have.

RESCHEDULED: Paving and Restriping Community Meeting - April 5

FCDOT and VDOT will hold a public meeting on proposed repaving and restriping changes in the Springfield District on Thursday April 5 at the West Springfield Government Center (6140 Rolling Road). VDOT has completed its draft list of roads to be repaved this season and FCDOT has proposed striping changes on some of these roads in conjunction with the repaving work in order to accommodate cyclists as designated on the County's Bicycle Master Plan. Community members are invited to give feedback on these proposals either at the meeting or by [submitting comments online](#). The comment period will be open through April 15, 2018.

Design Public Hearing for Rolling Road Widening Project - February 27

The Virginia Dept. of Transportation will be hosting a Design Public Hearing for the project to widen Rolling Road from two to four lanes between Viola Street and Old Keene Mill Road and will improve safety, reduce congestion, include bike and pedestrian improvements, and a traffic light at Greeley and Old Keene Mill Road. VDOT has incorporated numerous changes based on feedback from residents. After over 30 years and more than three design efforts that were not funded, I believe this project is finally ready to move forward. The hearing will be held on Tuesday, February 27 at 6:30 p.m. at Irving Middle School (8100 Old Keene Mill Road in Springfield). The snow date is March 5.

For more information, [click here](#) to visit the project webpage.

Save the Date: Springfield District Tax Relief Workshop- March 5

The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors is hosting a series of free tax relief workshops in late February and March at several locations throughout the County. The Springfield District workshop will be held at the West Springfield Government Center (6140 Rolling Road) from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Monday, March 5. Real estate and vehicle tax relief is available for older adults over 65 years of age and people with disabilities who meet certain qualifications. Staff from the Fairfax County Department of Tax Administration (DTA) will be at this workshop to assist with filling out the application form, as well as answer any questions residents may have. No appointment is necessary and residents may attend the workshop that is most convenient for them regardless of where they reside.

For the full list of workshops, visit the [Dept. of Tax Administration website](#).

Springfield District Budget Town Hall - March 22

On Thursday, March 22 at 7 pm, I will host the Springfield District Budget Town Hall at the West Springfield Government Center (6140 Rolling Road). Both the new County Executive and CFO will be in attendance.

JCA 50+ Employment Expo - April 30

Jewish Council for the Aging (JCA) will hold a 50+ Employment Expo for seniors 50+ in our community. The Expo will take place on April 30, 2018, 10 am - 2:00 pm at the Fair Oaks Marriott Hotel (11787 Lee Jackson Memorial Highway in Fairfax). The Expo is free to all employers, community resources, and jobseekers. Employers and Community Resources/Training/Education need to pre-register prior to the Expo to reserve a table. No pre-registration is necessary for jobseekers. For further information contact Micki Gordon at mgordon@AccessJCA.org or 703-652-1511.

2018 Shredding Events

The Fairfax County Dept. of Public Works has announced its annual list of dates for free shredding services. The Springfield District event is set for Saturday, June 16 but there are also other events nearby scheduled earlier than June. Visit the [Dept. of Public Works website](#) for the full list of dates.

George Mason University Offers Free Speakers to Community Organizations

Is your club or organization interested in having a speaker? The George Mason University Mason Speakers program is comprised of over 100 faculty and staff who provide lectures and guest presentations on hundreds of topics to organizations and businesses free of charge. Rotary clubs, retirement communities and businesses that offer "lunch and learns" have been using this service for over 20 years. Favorite topics range from "Joint Health: You Rest, You Rust" to "Forty Years of Exploration of the Surface of Mars." For more information, visit: <https://masonspeakers.gmu.edu/> or contact Sarah Gallagher at 703-993-8761; sgallag5@gmu.edu.

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