

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: SEPTEMBER 29, 2017

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL
THE HONORABLE SCHOOL BOARD CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF
THE SCHOOL BOARD

FROM: BUDGET AND FISCAL AFFAIRS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
BUDGET ADVISORY COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: OPINIONS ON BUDGET PROCESS AND GENERAL COOPERATION

On August 2, representatives from the Council's Budget and Fiscal Affairs Advisory Committee (BFAAC) and the School Board's Budget Advisory Committee (BAC) met to discuss respective approaches to preparing annual budgets and long-term capital planning. Committee members were joined by members of both budget staffs. As the Ad Hoc Joint City-Schools Facility Investment Task Force (Task Force) prepares its recommendations to be considered by the School Board and Council, our Committees want to call attention to the following observations and recommendations.

1. We commend the City and School budget staffs for working together to better align the City and schools budget process and calendar. The **recent trend toward generating an ACPS approved budget before the City Manager presents a budget is positive**, especially the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). While ideally both the operating budget and CIP would be approved by the School Board when the City proposes in February, we recognize restrictions on the school timeline based on availability of enrollment figures and other relevant data. For the upcoming cycle, ACPS will delay its CIP proposal one month to November in consideration of the Task Force schedule, but projects School Board approval on January 11, 2018, which is still before The City Manager's expected budget release date around February 20. BFAAC and BAC recognize the expedience of working in tandem with the Task Force this year.

2. **City budget staff should share with ACPS budget staff the same technical guidance it shares with other City departments in September, at the beginning of the budget process.** It is understood that while this guidance will not be prescriptive, it will enlighten the process for ACPS. Similarly, any opportunities to **work together on long term projections** should be exercised. This includes anything that impacts population, development, and land use. The spirit of openness and cooperation should apply throughout the year and across departments, so that our systems reflect the reality that our schools are part of our City.
3. **BFAAC and BAC support the concept of evaluating all City and school capital projects together, from a common set of criteria,** with the goal of prioritizing spending and synchronizing projects and timelines. Similarly, we support the Task Force’s propriety to **maximize space utilization and co-location** where sensible and feasible. This applies to existing space as well as new construction.
4. **BFAAC and BAC support the concept of shared maintenance and resources.** Preserving our capital investments requires careful maintenance schedules and fluidity to meet unexpected needs – neither of which should not be limited by any “department’s” ability. We also recognize that City and ACPS both possess valuable resources (e.g., vehicles and other equipment) and expertise (e.g., interpretation or programming skills) and encourage cross-utilization.
5. Finally, we encourage Council and ACPS to support a recommendation BFAAC made in its April 28, 2017 memo that **Council and School Board jointly develop a long-term plan to ensure the work of the Task Force is carried forward.** We also support the BFAAC recommendation that the Task Force reconvene after one year to evaluate outcomes.

BFAAC and BAC are committed to working together to maximize financial resources and talent across our City. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these recommendations with Council and ACPS leadership.