ARLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
School Board and County Board Joint Budget Work Session Meeting Minutes
March 24, 2026

The recordings of School Board meetings are posted on the APS Website following the meetings. Regular meetings are also broadcast on Comcast Cable Channel 70 and Verizon FIOS Channel 41.

The Arlington School Board convened on Tuesday, March 24, 2026, at 1:34 p.m. at 2110 Washington Blvd., Arlington, Virginia.

Present were:

School Board
Bethany Zecher Sutton, Chair
Miranda Turner, Vice-Chair
Monique Bryant, Member
Kathleen Clark, Member
Zuraya Tapia-Hadley, Member (Absent due to personal reasons)

County Board
Matt de Ferranti, Chair
Maureen Coffey, Vice Chair
Susan Cunningham, Member
Julius D. "JD" Spain, Sr., Member
Takis Karantonis, Member

Also present were:
Dr. Durán, Superintendent
Andy Hawkins, Business Officer
Mark Schwartz, Arlington County Manager
Michelle Cowan, Deputy County Manager
Carmen Mejia, Deputy Clerk of the School Board

Introduction/Presentation

Mr. Schwartz presented an overview of the County's proposed FY 2027 budget, including a mid-year FY 2026 tax revenue update and a current economic and tax base outlook. He noted the uncertainty of the economic landscape, shifts in the local tax base, and trends showing flat real estate assessments and slowing revenues. He also discussed the oversupply and declining value of office properties, limitations on local revenue sources, and the County's continued reliance on personal property taxes. Mr. Schwartz reported a projected $5 million revenue shortfall and noted that the County faces an estimated budget gap of $35–45 million as it works to balance the FY 2027 budget. Ms. Cowan reviewed the County Board's budget guidance, including the County Manager's recommendation not to increase the transfer to Arlington Public Schools through a shared tax increase. She outlined the proposed 1.5-cent tax rate increase and the factors driving that recommendation, including workforce investments, rising costs, and funding needs. Ms. Cowan also discussed proposed service and program reductions, the cumulative impact of budget reductions made over the past several years, and the ways in which the County continues to support Arlington Public Schools.

Dr. Durán and Ms. Zecher Sutton presented the proposed FY 2027 Arlington Public Schools budget to the County Board, noting that it represents a 1.3% increase from the FY 2026 budget. Dr. Durán explained that employee compensation is the primary driver of the proposed budget and provided an overview of the recently negotiated collective bargaining agreements and their impact on budget planning. Ms. Zecher Sutton reviewed state funding, the Joint Legislative Audit

and Review Commission (JLARC) report, the Local Composite Index (LCI), per-pupil funding, and the County's ongoing financial support for Arlington Public Schools.

School Board Discussion

The School Board and County Board discussed their respective FY 2027 budget outlooks, offering both Boards the opportunity to ask questions and share perspectives on key financial priorities and challenges. Discussions focused on potential revenue shortfalls, reserve levels, budget planning assumptions, and the shared challenge of balancing budgets amid economic uncertainty. The County Board reviewed the School Board's proposed FY 2027 budget, including investments to support students with disabilities, English learners, and federally identified schools, while the School Board discussed the County Board's budget outlook, revenue projections, and infrastructure needs.

The Boards discussed the revenue-sharing agreement and acknowledged that changing economic conditions and enrollment trends warrant ongoing review and collaboration. Members explored strategies to address fiscal pressures, including diversifying local revenue sources, supporting affordable housing, and managing rising infrastructure and operational costs. The discussion also highlighted Arlington Public Schools' role in workforce development and the County's long-term economic vitality through partnerships with higher education institutions.

Additionally, the Boards discussed opportunities to strengthen collaboration by maximizing resources, identifying overlapping services, addressing program gaps, and maintaining essential services for residents. Members emphasized preserving specialized programs, particularly for students with disabilities, improving interagency communication, and ensuring that community investments effectively support children, families, and the broader Arlington community. Both Boards reaffirmed the importance of early, transparent communication, coordinated budget planning, and continued partnership in addressing shared financial challenges.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 4:05 p.m.

ATTEST:

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Carmen Mejia, Deputy Clerk
Arlington School Board

Bethany Zecher Sutton, Chair
Arlington School Board