

**Superintendent's Community Advisory Council  
Minutes  
Meeting January 23, 2007**

Ramona Morrow, chairing the meeting in place of chair Todd Rowley, introduced Superintendent Dale for updates.

Dale said that in two days the School Board would vote on a resolution to continue to assess the reading knowledge of students just learning English with tests that the students can understand and respond to, which may not include the regular SOL test for all such students. The SELP test had been approved by Virginia and the United State Education Department (USED) as a proxy for SOL tests for such students for several years, but the USED has now decided to withdraw that approval and not to extend approval for an additional year while Virginia develops an acceptable proxy. Some very high-achieving FCPS schools may not make federally determined adequate yearly progress (AYP) under this policy because not enough limited-English-proficient (LEP) students in the school take the SOLs.

Students who have only been learning English for a year or less are exempt from this requirement, but as many as 5,000 students could be affected.

The Board will make boundary decisions on the Haycock and Jackson gifted and talented centers and South County Secondary School in February.

The Board is working through strategic governance processes. It has considered performance reporting standards in academics and other areas of school system operation and will be monitoring reports on these.

Dale introduced Edward Long, chief financial officer for Fairfax County government, for a fiscal focus (see PowerPoint at link).

Long said he likes working with Dale because of his collaborative spirit.

Long said that local economic prognosticators had expected a "soft landing" for the real estate market, but that the landing has been harder than expected. The real estate market affects county revenue out of proportion to its portion of the general economy because the county cannot tax income. Real estate taxes make up about 60 percent of county revenue, and about 16 percent comes from the personal property tax (basically cars). Fairfax County gets back about 19 cents on every dollar that flows out in state taxes. Fifty-one percent of the county budget goes to schools. Long expects only a 1 to 1.5 percent gain in revenue in FY 2009 (compared to a gain of 2.5 percent in 2008). It appears that the real estate market has not yet bottomed out, and assessments will be down.

[the substitute for Hurley ???] said that balloon mortgages that had been taken in anticipation of continually rising real estate values have not yet caused a run of foreclosures but that many will balloon next year and the run may occur then.

Brenda Greene said that Fairfax County's situation is similar to that in the rest of Northern Virginia: the ability to fund education depends on how much is forthcoming from the state.

Jeanine Martin said that the county's overall population continues to increase while growth in student population is flat. She asked how this worked. Paul Regnier pointed out that students graduate, but their parents may remain in their homes.

Charlie Dane noted that assessments are based on the previous year's sales prices and asked if there was a need to go further back. Long said only last year's sales are considered.

Wolford said that the Northern Virginia Association of Realtors, which he represents, has seen a drop in real estate inventory as well as price, which should mean a slower price drop as supply and demand become better matched. He also expects a rise in interest rates after the election.

Dick Reed asked how much in bond debt the county could incur without endangering its AAA bond rating. Long said the county's rule of thumb is never to have more than 10 percent of its budget go to debt service.

Dale presented his proposed budget (see PowerPoint at link). He said that holding all schools' and departments' baseline budgets to the previous year's levels decreases individual schools' purchasing power.

Someone asked how many home-schooled students are in Fairfax County and how many attend private schools [approximately 1,900 to 2,000 Fairfax County students are home schooled and about 400 have religious exemptions from attending]. Dale said we have no information on the number of students in private schools.

Dale said that the process for determining which language a school offers in the foreign language in the elementary school (FLES) program involves discussions with the faculty and the community and consideration of whether the language can be supported at middle and high school levels.

Under members' issues, Charlie Dane asked why the budget includes more money for alternative schools. Dale said this is because the privately operated Richard Milburn Schools, where FCPS has placed recalcitrant students, have now closed, and FCPS needs to operate its own site for placing these students.

Rich Baumgartner noted that the Virginia General Assembly might take general funds to deal with transportation problems, which could mean less state funding available for schools.

Reed noted that the Hayfield "It's Academic" team was going to the state finals.

Dale mentioned that the March SCAC meeting has been rescheduled for March 20.

Johnny Miles said she would like to see a discussion of minority participation in various programs, including gifted and talented and special education.

The meeting was adjourned.