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yorkcountyschools.org

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I am writing to provide information based on the work session the School Board held last night regarding the [FY14 Operating Budget](#). As I have previously shared, the division must identify \$1.7 million of additional reductions from the original proposed budget in order to close the gap with what has been approved by the Board of Supervisors. The actions under consideration to [balance the budget](#) are described in this email. The School Board will take final action on the [FY 14 Operating Budget](#) at a special meeting that will be held at York Hall at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, May 22. You are invited to provide input through e-mails and/or during the public comment period at our School Board meeting at 7:00 p.m. at York Hall on Monday, May 20. We plan to vote on the budget at a special meeting at 6:00 p.m. at York Hall on Wednesday, May 22.

I would like to emphasize again that the measures the School Board must now take are not actions the School Board takes lightly. These additional cuts, above and beyond cost savings identified in the original proposed budget, are a result of the level of funding provided by the Board of Supervisors.

Compensation

We plan to award a state-supported 2% market adjustment for all employees, similar to what the County is providing its employees. Recognizing that our employees have not received a salary or step increase for four years, this very modest adjustment is an important part of our efforts to attract and retain an excellent staff.

Health Care Costs

The cost of our health insurance coverage will increase another 20% next year (\$2.6 million). Rather than increasing employee premiums, we anticipate adopting a health care benefits and prescription plan similar to the plan that the York County Government offers its employees. This move would provide a savings of \$670,000, which is \$244,000 more than if we increased employee premiums by 20% without changing the plan or prescription benefits. Unfortunately, this would result in higher copayments and deductibles for our employees. Our tentative plan would also pass on to employees through premium increases their share of the dental insurance cost increase for a savings of almost \$20,000.

VRS Mandate

We expect to implement an additional 2% shift of the Virginia Retirement System (VRS) contribution to employees, with a commensurate employee raise, as required by the state. Implementing a 2% shift, rather than an additional 4% shift as will eventually be required, will provide savings of more than \$275,000. However, this puts us at a competitive disadvantage when recruiting high quality


employees. The York County Government and a majority of school divisions across the state have already fully implemented the required 5% VRS shift. Our tentative plan would also adjust salaries by two-tenths of one percent in order to hold employees harmless on an annual basis of the payroll tax implications of the VRS shift.

Elimination of Staff Positions

One hundred and twenty-four positions in the school division were eliminated between FY10 and the current school year, with the greatest percentage of reductions occurring at the School Board Office. Even before the new information regarding the level of county funding for next year, we had eliminated 14 additional positions in next year's budget, including 5 regular classroom teachers (due to lower projected enrollment), 3 custodians, 1 School Board Office clerical position, 1 warehouse position, and 4 para-educators.

Because of the School Board's approach to budget cutting, division-wide average class sizes have not increased at all after four years of budget cutting. Last night we discussed the possibility of cutting 6 additional teaching positions. According to [projections](#), this would result in division average class sizes of 19.3 for Kindergarten through grade 2 and 22.6 for grades 3 through 5. These projected averages are comparable to current averages. As in past years, the highest school level averages are projected to be within two or three students of the division averages. Staffing ratios at the secondary level would also be comparable. The [linked table](#) indicates that with these cuts the percentage of teachers reduced in recent years would still be significantly lower than the percentage of reductions in many other job types.

Thank you for your support of our schools.



Barbara S. Haywood
School Board Chair