

COUNTY COUNCIL OF ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY, MARYLAND

Minutes of
FY 2024 Budget Public Hearing
May 11, 2023 – 7:00 P.M.
County Council Chambers

The County Council meeting was called to order by Chair Smith at 7:00 P.M. It was opened with the Invocation, given by Ms. Fiedler, and was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. The meeting was held in the County Council Chambers in the Arundel Center, Annapolis, Maryland. There were approximately 55 persons in the audience.

The following members of the County Council were present:

Pete Smith	First District
Allison Pickard	Second District
Nathan Volke	Third District
Amanda Fiedler	Fifth District
Lisa D.B. Rodvien	Sixth District
Shannon Leadbetter	Seventh District

Julie Hummer, Fourth District, was absent.

The County Auditor's Office was represented by Michelle Bohlayer.

PRELIMINARY MOTION

On motion of Ms. Rodvien, seconded by Ms. Pickard, the Council voted that the partial reading of any bill, resolution, or minutes constitutes the reading of the whole.

READING OF BUDGET LEGISLATION

BILL NO. 26-23 – AN ORDINANCE concerning: Annual Budget and Appropriation Ordinance of Anne Arundel County – FOR the purpose of adopting the County Budget, consisting of the Current Expense Budget for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024, the Capital Budget for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024, the Capital Program for the fiscal years ending June 30, 2024, June 30, 2025, June 30, 2026, June 30, 2027, June 30, 2028, and June 30, 2029; and appropriating funds for all expenditures for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2023, and ending June 30, 2024.

Introduced by Mr. Smith, Chair
(by request of the County Executive)

BILL NO. 27-23 – AN ORDINANCE concerning: Tax Levies – Special Community Benefit Districts, Shore Erosion Control Districts, and Waterways Improvement Districts – FOR the purpose of levying and imposing the tax rates for special community benefit districts, shore erosion control districts, and waterways improvement districts required by the County Budget for Fiscal Year 2024.

Introduced by Mr. Smith, Chair
(by request of the County Executive)

BILL NO. 28-23 – AN ORDINANCE concerning: Tax Levies – Arundel Gateway Special Taxing District – FOR the purpose of levying and imposing the tax rates for the Arundel Gateway Special Taxing District required by the County Budget for Fiscal Year 2024.
Introduced by Mr. Smith, Chair
(by request of the County Executive)

BILL NO. 29-23 – AN ORDINANCE concerning: Tax Levies – Arundel Mills Special Taxing District – FOR the purpose of levying and imposing the tax rates for the Arundel Mills Special Taxing District required by the County Budget for Fiscal Year 2024.
Introduced by Mr. Smith, Chair
(by request of the County Executive)

BILL NO. 30-23 – AN ORDINANCE concerning: Tax Levies – Dorchester Special Taxing District – FOR the purpose of levying and imposing the tax rates for the Dorchester Special Taxing District required by the County Budget for Fiscal Year 2024.
Introduced by Mr. Smith, Chair
(by request of the County Executive)

BILL NO. 31-23 – AN ORDINANCE concerning: Tax Levies – Farmington Village Special Taxing District – FOR the purpose of levying and imposing the tax rates for the Farmington Village Special Taxing District required by the County Budget for Fiscal Year 2024.
Introduced by Mr. Smith, Chair
(by request of the County Executive)

BILL NO. 32-23 – AN ORDINANCE concerning: Tax Levies – National Business Park Special Taxing District – FOR the purpose of levying and imposing the tax rates for the National Business Park Special Taxing District required by the County Budget for Fiscal Year 2024.
Introduced by Mr. Smith, Chair
(by request of the County Executive)

BILL NO. 33-23 – AN ORDINANCE concerning: Tax Levies – National Business Park - North Special Taxing District – FOR the purpose of levying and imposing the tax rates for the National Business Park – North Special Taxing District required by the County Budget for Fiscal Year 2024.
Introduced by Mr. Smith, Chair
(by request of the County Executive)

BILL NO. 34-23 – AN ORDINANCE concerning: Tax Levies – Two Rivers Special Taxing District – FOR the purpose of levying and imposing the tax rates for the Two Rivers Special Taxing District required by the County Budget for Fiscal Year 2024.
Introduced by Mr. Smith, Chair
(by request of the County Executive)

BILL NO. 35-23 – AN ORDINANCE concerning: Tax Levies – Village South at Waugh Chapel Special Taxing District – FOR the purpose of levying and imposing the tax rates for the Village South at Waugh Chapel Special Taxing District required by the County Budget for Fiscal Year 2024.
Introduced by Mr. Smith, Chair
(by request of the County Executive)

BILL NO. 36-23 – AN ORDINANCE concerning: Public Works – Solid Waste Collection – Solid Waste Service Charge – FOR the purpose of modifying the solid waste service charge; providing for the effective date of this Ordinance; and generally relating to the solid waste service charge.

Introduced by Mr. Smith, Chair
(by request of the County Executive)

BILL NO. 37-23 – AN ORDINANCE concerning: Public Works – Utilities – Metered Water and Wastewater Charges – FOR the purpose of modifying metered water and wastewater charges; providing for the effective date of this Ordinance; and generally relating to utilities.

Introduced by Mr. Smith, Chair
(by request of the County Executive)

BILL NO. 38-23 – AN ORDINANCE concerning: Finance, Taxation, and Budget – Use or Occupancy Tax – FOR the purpose of increasing the occupancy tax on the rent paid for the use of a short-term rental; and generally relating to finance, taxation, and budget.

Introduced by Mr. Smith, Chair
(by request of the County Executive)

BILL NO. 39-23 – AN ORDINANCE concerning: Finance, Taxation, and Budget – Transportation Network Service Assessment – FOR the purpose of imposing an assessment on transportation network services originating in the County; providing for the collection, remittance, accounting, use, and enforcement of the assessment; providing for a delayed effective date; and generally relating to finance, taxation, and budget.

Introduced by Mr. Smith, Chair
(by request of the County Executive)

BILL NO. 40-23 – AN ORDINANCE concerning: Finance, Taxation, and Budget – Real Property Transfer Tax – Housing Trust Special Revenue Fund – FOR the purpose of modifying the transfer tax rate for certain real property transactions; modifying a reference to the levying of transfer tax for certain budget purposes; providing for certain transfer tax revenues to be paid into the Housing Trust Special Revenue Fund; and generally relating to finance, taxation, and budget.

Introduced by Mr. Smith, Chair
(by request of the County Executive)

BILL NO. 41-23 – AN ORDINANCE concerning: Finance, Taxation, and Budget – Revenue Reserve Fund – FOR the purpose of increasing the limit on the Revenue Reserve Fund; and generally relating to finance, taxation, and budget

Introduced by Mr. Smith, Chair
(by request of the County Executive)

BILL NO. 42-23 – AN ORDINANCE concerning: Finance, Taxation, and Budget – Income Tax – FOR the purpose of modifying County income tax rates; providing for a delayed effective date; and generally relating to finance, taxation, and budget.

Introduced by Mr. Smith, Chair
(by request of the County Executive)

BILL NO. 43-23 – AN ORDINANCE concerning: Property Tax and Semiannual Payment Service Charge – FOR the purpose of levying and imposing a property tax for the use of Anne Arundel County for the taxable year beginning July 1, 2023, and ending June 30, 2024; fixing the rate of the County property tax for the taxable year; and establishing the service charge to be paid by a property owner electing to pay real property taxes and all other taxes and charges billed on the real property tax bill under a semiannual payment schedule.
Introduced by Mr. Smith, Chair
(by request of the County Executive)

RESOLUTION NO. 17-23 – RESOLUTION increasing the rate of transfer tax on a written instrument conveying title to real property or a leasehold interest in real property when the consideration paid or to be paid for the conveyance is \$1,000,000 or more
Introduced by Mr. Smith, Chair
(by request of the County Executive)

BUDGET REMARKS

Chris Trumbauer, Budget Officer, gave an overview of the County Executive’s budget for Fiscal year 2024. (A copy of Mr. Trumbauer’s statement is attached to these minutes.)

Dr. Joanna B. Tobin, President, Board of Education of Anne Arundel County, spoke on the County Executive’s budget for Fiscal year 2024. (A copy of Dr. Tobin’s statement is attached to these minutes.)

Dr. Mark T. Bedell, Superintendent of Schools, Anne Arundel County Public Schools, spoke on the County Executive’s budget for Fiscal year 2024. (A copy of Dr. Bedell’s statement is attached to these minutes.)

Nicole Disney-Bates, President, Teachers Association of Anne Arundel County, spoke on the County Executive’s budget for Fiscal year 2024. (A copy of Ms. Disney-Bates’s statement is attached to these minutes.)

Gloria Harberts, Southern Regional Manager, Anne Arundel County Public Library, spoke on the County Executive’s budget for Fiscal year 2024. (A copy of Ms. Harbert’s statement is attached to these minutes.)

PUBLIC HEARING

The following persons spoke on the Fiscal Year 2024 County Executive’s Budget:

Leah Paley, Crownsville
LaNae Kirwan, Pasadena
Brian Dague, Edgewater
Melissa Hadel, Crownsville
Jonathan Max-Sohmer, Severn
Kurt Svendsen, Arnold
Stephen Hammond, Annapolis
Brendan Maltese, Pasadena
Maryann Oliver, Arnold

Diego Garcia, Crofton
Trudy McFall, Annapolis
Laura Kellman, Annapolis
Dr. Gayle Jones, Bowie
Steven Waddy, Severn
Cathy Guay, Annapolis

The following persons registered to speak but were not present when called:

William DuSold, Glen Burnie
Jake Tannehill, Severn
Dan Tootle, Glen Burnie

There was no one else registered or present who wished to speak and the hearing was concluded.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, on motion of Ms. Pickard, seconded by Ms. Leadbetter, the meeting was adjourned at 8:12 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Anna Macaulay

By: Anna Macaulay

/s/ Laura Corby

For: Laura Corby
Administrative Officer



*Prepared Remarks of the Budget Officer
May 11, 2023*

Mr. Chair and members of the County Council, for the record, I am Chris Trumbauer, Budget Officer for Anne Arundel County. Thank you for the opportunity to give a brief overview of County Executive Steuart Pittman's proposed budget for fiscal year 2024.

The proposed budget before you reflects the fiscally responsible approach that has resulted in a credit ratings upgrade for the second consecutive year. Last month, Fitch upgraded the County's credit rating to AAA, giving Anne Arundel County the "triple crown" of the highest possible bond ratings from Fitch, Moody's and S&P. We are one of only 52 counties out of 3,143 in the nation to achieve this status.

The county fiscal foundation is strong. As we near the end of Fiscal Year 2023 and look forward to Fiscal Year 2024, our two largest sources of revenue are robust. Overall revenue from property tax and local income tax are projected to be a combined \$30 million above estimates. And looking

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DR. JOANNA TOBIN, PRESIDENT, BOARD OF EDUCATION

Good evening, Chairman Smith, Vice Chairman Pickard, and members of the County Council. Let me first acknowledge the other members of the Board who have joined us this evening.

Out of respect for those who have come to testify tonight, I will be quick. I simply want to acknowledge the value of partnership, and in particular the partnership between our school system, county government, and this County Council.

That partnership has made us a very, very good school system, and that helps every single person in our county. As Dr. Bedell says almost every time he speaks, however, very good isn't good enough. The goal is to be great and thanks to your partnership, we're on our way.

Ninety-five percent of our schools are rated three stars or higher on the latest Maryland Report Card. Annapolis High School was named one of five Unified Champion schools in the nation for its work with students of all abilities in its Unified Sports program. The Center of Applied Technology – North's Baking & Pastry program was just named one of 24 model programs in the nation.

I could go on and on. You – the Council – have been a part of that success, and I thank you.

I will close by reiterating one thing I said at our workshop last Thursday: As you go through page after page in your budget books, as you have conversations about dollars allocated to projects, and as you consider changes to the County Executive's proposal, please don't see the lines as simply funding. Each of those lines, at least in our budget, represents a child or group of children. Every penny you allocate impacts the life of a student. That's our focus, and I know it is yours as well.

Thank you, and I will now turn it over to Dr. Bedell.

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DR. MARK BEDELL, SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Thank you, Dr. Tobin, and thanks to all the members of the County Council and to the public for being here tonight.

This is my first time through this process, so I have no experience to draw upon. I am told that in past years these budget hearings have been contentious and even filled with acrimony. I promise you won't hear that tonight. Tonight, I ask you hear two words very clearly from me and from our school system: Thank You.

Thank you, as Dr. Tobin said, for your partnership; for spending time with me since I've arrived; and for your genuine interest in our school system and our children.

Thank you for the time you have already spent on this budget and on the countless hours yet in front of you as you fine-tune the proposal County Executive Pittman has put before you.

Thank you for the thoughtful questions, not just at our workshop last Thursday but since I've arrived in August.

And thank you for your understanding that being great costs money.

As Dr. Tobin alluded to, the fact that I want to be great should be no secret to anyone. I know for a fact that you want us to be great, too.

We have significant staffing issues and pay gaps, and increasing student needs. But we also have an amazing team of people in our AACPS family, and they are doing incredible work on behalf of our students and our county. Provide us with the resources and our duty is to provide you and the residents of this county with results.

County Executive Pittman's budget proposal is a very significant investment. It addresses the biggest issues confronting us and we are enormously grateful.

I'll close where I started: My understanding is that in prior years you have been presented with a laundry list of our needs that the County Executive has left unfunded. I'm not interested in acrimony. I'm interested in progress. Together we can make our school system great.

So tonight, my list has just two words on it: Thank you.

forward to FY2024 we are projecting continues growth. However, revenue from real estate transactions has fallen sharply – losing approximately \$90 million in the current year compared with Fiscal Year 2022. While the Budget Office planned for a dramatic drop, this amount of revenue reduction does have an effect on overall capacity to maintain operations with current revenue streams.

This year’s proposed general fund budget is \$2,137,334,300, a decrease of \$20.2 million, or about 1 percent, compared to the adopted budget for Fiscal Year 2023. However, subtracting out the \$115.6 million of incremental fund balance and one-time revenue, this represents a \$95.4 million increase in recurring revenue from FY23. This increase is equivalent to 5 percent growth, year over year, which is less than the January 2023 rate of inflation of 6.41%.

The FY24 Proposed Budget is balanced and there is no structural deficit. All recurring expenses are being paid for with recurring revenues.

Today marks the expiration of the federal public health emergency related to the COVID pandemic. While the last three county budgets have been focused on recovering from the pandemic, this budget looks forward to our “new normal.” Indeed, County Executive Pittman has framed this budget as “Funding our Future.”

While the acute economic effects of COVID19 may be behind us, our County is forever changed. Unemployment is at historic lows, but high inflation and supply chain disruption is increasing the costs of providing vital services. Park visitation skyrocketed during the pandemic and has stayed high as more residents realized the value of our Rec & Parks amenities. Health gaps and disparities identified during the pandemic remain, and the need for affordable housing is greater than ever. The County Executive's proposed budget makes strategic investments to address these needs.

Overall, this budget continues the responsible fiscal management that Anne Arundel County is known for, while delivering essential investments in the services and infrastructure on which residents depend.

The proposed budget includes two changes in the local income tax rates using the Progressive Local Income Tax structure authorized in 2022 by the Tax Relief for Working Families Act. First, this budget implements new tax brackets for joint filers, which will lower the income tax rate on the first \$75,000 of taxable income from 2.81% to 2.70%. Second, for taxable income above \$400,000 for individual filers and \$480,000 for joint filers, the tax rate will increase to 3.2%. To be clear, this new rate only applies to income above those thresholds. So, an individual with \$450,000 of taxable income would only pay the higher rate on \$50,000 of their taxable earnings. The most

recent tax data available suggests that more than 98% of Anne Arundel income tax payers will pay the same rate or a lesser rate than the current year.

Anne Arundel County has a property tax revenue cap that limits revenue to an annual increase equal to the January Consumer Price Index or 4.5%, whichever is less. For FY24, that corresponding tax rate would be 95.2 cents per \$100 of value. However, in accordance with State law, the County Executive has set the rate at 98 cents, in order to propose \$26 million of additional funding to the Board of Education and fully fund the Board's compensation request for educators. The new rate still positions the County as the 10th lowest of Maryland's 24 county jurisdictions, and lowest among the "Big 7" central Maryland counties.

The County Executive's Budget also includes increasing the hotel tax from seven percent to eight percent, and establishing a 25 cent surcharge on rideshare trips that originate in the county. Together these two revenue enhancements are projected to bring in approximately \$2.3 million in FY2024 and this revenue will support the County's Resilience Authority and transportation programs.

The FY24 budget makes several investments to secure long-term fiscal stability. The proposed budget includes increasing the Revenue

Reserve Fund to 8 percent of general fund operating revenues, with a contribution of \$24.6 million. This will result in an estimated balance of \$159.2 million of reserves at the end of fiscal year 2024.

The budget fully funds our annual pension and retiree healthcare fund contributions, at \$130.8 million and \$53.5 million, respectively. This includes \$19.2 million to establish the Board of Education as a component in our retiree healthcare trust for the first time. This is a significant step for ensuring the security of retiree healthcare for our teacher and educators.

The County Executive's Office has put together a four page document with highlights of what is funded in the budget that is a helpful resource. I encourage residents to grab a copy or find a digital version on aacounty.org/budget. Nevertheless I will run through several key components of the proposed budget.

The proposed budget includes \$879.7 million of direct county funding for the Board of Education, an increase of \$45 million from last year. Adding in debt service, school health, school safety, and general fund contributions to the school construction budget, the total is \$1,045,200,000 and represents 49 percent of the county general fund budget. The proposed budget prioritizes several key components of the Board of Education's request.

Again this year, the Administration fully funds the compensation package request for our educators, totaling an 8 percent increase for all units. The budget also includes a \$2,000 bonus for special education positions and a \$5/day increase for substitute teachers.

The proposed budget meets all new requirements of the Blueprint for Education, fully funds the Virtual Academy, and brings on the first new positions for the new Old Mill High School. The budget also invests in 45 new Pre-K positions, 15 social/emotional health positions and 14 English language development positions.

Our nationally acclaimed Anne Arundel Community College will receive \$50.1 million in county funding, an increase of \$1 million from last year. Our library system will receive \$30.5 million of general fund support, an increase of \$2.7 million compared to last year.

The budget makes significant new investments in public safety, including adding 12 sworn police officer positions to bolster community policing, and a police Lieutenant to manage the new Real-time Fusion Center. In addition, it creates 18 new firefighter positions to fill much needed posts. The budget also adds 12 new vehicles for Deputy Sheriffs and a new reentry hub at the Ordnance Road Correction Center. Overall, Public Safety

accounts for \$433.6 million in funding, or 20 percent of the general fund budget.

In our Department of Public Works, several new project management positions are proposed to manage increased capital projects and expedite project timelines. Similarly, with the addition of several new county parks and continued high park visitation numbers, the Department of Recreation and Parks is proposed to add four new maintenance positions and a park ranger.

The County is proposing to continue or extend several key health and human services initiatives. We are proposing an additional \$1 million for Eviction Prevention, \$1.6 million of new funding for enhanced Crisis Response, and \$1.8 million of increased funding for the County's food assistance programs.

The County is also proposing a new, dedicated revenue stream to fund the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. This revenue will come from a 0.5 percent increase in the transfer tax for real estate transactions greater than \$1 million. In FY24, this is projected to be approximately \$7.5 million, but that amount will grow as the real estate market recovers from recent levels of low activity.

The county successfully negotiated agreements with all eleven of its bargaining units. The proposed budget also includes a 5.0 percent cost of

living adjustment for non-represented employees and the same for contractual workers, effective upon renewal of their annual contracts.

Due to continued high inflation, county utility rates are increasing. The annual trash and recycling fee is proposed to be \$380, up \$39 from this year's rate. Water and sewer rates are proposed at \$3.23 and \$5.67 per 1,000 gallons, respectively. These are increases of 29 cents for water rates and 51 cents for sewer rates. The average annual bill for a residential water and sewer customer is estimated to be \$746.58, which remains the lowest in the region. The county's stormwater fee is proposed to increase by 5% to \$93.71 annually for a single family residential home.

The County Executive's proposed Capital Budget contains \$525.9 million of funding for general fund projects in FY2024. This includes \$222.2 million of total county bonds and \$115 million total Pay As You Go funding. The remainder is derived from impact fees, state and federal grants and other miscellaneous funding. The Capital Budget includes 18 new general fund projects and keeps all major projects on track. The entire six-year Capital Program remains approximately \$12.6 million under our debt affordability guidelines.

The largest component of the Capital Budget is the Board of Education, which accounts for \$191.8 million. This includes moving up the funding for

Old Mill High School by one year and funding the final year of the new West County Elementary School.

Notable projects in the Capital Budget include fully funding for the Next Generation 911 Joint Operations Center, additions of multipurpose athletic fields at parks across the county, final funding for the Arnold Senior Center renovations, expanding the county's bike/pedestrian network, funding for the new Cape St. Claire and Jessup Fire Stations, planning and design for the new Glen Burnie Library and funding for the renovation of the Community College's Florestano Building.

In closing, I thank you for an opportunity to present this overview tonight. The County Executive, and the entire budget team, look forward to working with the County Council and the Auditor as we work to strike a budget to meet the priority needs of our county residents. Copies of the entire budget, including budget's highlights, are available on the Budget Office website at www.aacounty.org. Thank you and good evening.

Good Evening County Executive Pittman, Chairman Smith and honorable members of the council. I am Nicole Disney-Bates, TAAAC President and it is my privilege to stand before you and speak for our over 6,000 members. When I am invited to speak, I often start with a story and today is no different. I have 4 daughters, my oldest is 10 and my youngest is 4. They are hard working, capable, children with bright futures that will allow them to do anything that they put their mind to. In that, I am their mom and I encourage them to reach for their dreams.

I recently asked my daughters what they want to be when they grow up. My oldest told me something with math or science, my six year old something with bugs, or animals, and she has particular interest in Madagascar hissing cockroaches and salamanders, my four year old is torn between a princess and a mermaid (I can not wait to see how that turns out) and my 8 year old, what does she want to be? A teacher of course, just like her mom, just like many of us here today and I see it, I see the qualities that will make her an excellent teacher, she is caring, innovative, patient and has boundless energy. She has the makings of a great teacher but I have to be honest with you council members, I hesitate to encourage her to become a teacher. This is not because I do not think that teaching is an amazing job, because it is! Teachers get to watch their students faces light up when they see you, that ah-ha moment when they learn to read their first book, that moment when you know that you encouraged them to keep going even though they wanted to stop. Teaching is the best job, the best career but still, I hesitate.

That is why I am standing before you today. I am not only standing here as TAAAC president, I am not only standing here for our over 6,000 members but I stand here for our troubling present and potentially bright future.

Where we are now is not a sustainable course. We can not, should not and will not accept 270 vacancies as the norm. We can not, should not, and will not accept our students being taught by an OWL (virtually) because there are not enough physical teachers in the building, we can not should not and will not accept teachers giving up their plannings day after day after day because there is a sub shortage. This needs to end, this is our present, but it does not have to be our future.

I want our future to be one where I can encourage my daughter to pursue a career where she only needs to have one job and not 2, 3, 4 to support herself and one day maybe, a family. I want our future to be one where she can live in a place that best suits her needs. I want her future to be better than our present.

In that, this is your moment our honorable council members, this is your moment to make our future better than our present. Teaching is a hard job, you work nights, weekends, you answer calls, emails, texts from families in need of support, you work to pursue and earn your masters degree. Teachers are professionals and yet, we are not treated as such. Recently I came across a tik tok where a teacher quits teaching and goes to work at Costco and is less stressed, makes the same amount of money and gets additional time with her family, what does that tell us? What does that say to us as a county? As a state? As a country? Who are we when we do not treat our teachers with enough respect to pay them enough to show that they are professionals that you respect.

I would like to remind you that you, Chairman Smith, you are a marine, council person Feidler, you are a Senior Media Buyer, council person Volke, you are a lawyer, council person Hummer you were a teacher, council person Rodvien, you are a teacher, council person Leadbetter, you are a small business owner, council person Council person Pickard, you were part of Nonprofit management. Today, you are all here, council

members, not only because of your drive, your desire to serve, your willingness to advocate for what you believe in but because of teachers. Teachers got you here. I often think of the shirt that says “if you can read this, thank a teacher.”

So today, while hopefully you think back to your past, the teachers that taught you and got you to where you are. Our present where teachers are working harder than ever before, what is our future going to be? Are we going to stay on this course or change? I hope you choose change because our students deserve a certified teacher in every classroom, change because our communities need teachers to stay and become part of the community, change because in the end, the world, our country, our state and our county need teachers and you have the power to change the future.

Today, I implore you to fully fund the budget. Think about your past, our present and the future. After June 1st, I want to be able to tell my 8 year old, that teaching is not only the best job but your future is bright if you decide to pursue it.

Thank you!

Testimony to the Anne Arundel County Council
Public Budget Hearing
May 11, 2023

Good evening, Chair Smith, Vice Chair Pickard, and Council Members Volke, Hummer, Fiedler, Rodvien, and Leadbetter.

My name is Gloria Harberts and I'm the Southern Area Regional Manager for Anne Arundel County Public Libraries. I have worked at AACPL for nearly 36 years.

We are grateful for your steadfast support of the library whether as a member of the council or simply as a customer at one of our 16 branches.

I'm here this evening to ask for your support of the County Executive's proposed budget and to respectfully request you consider allocating additional funds for our dedicated and innovative staff.

As you heard from staff and customers at the eight budget town hall hearings, the library is the center of our communities, providing services and resources that improve the lives of county residents. In partnership with the Department of Health, library staff have distributed more than 300,000 masks and COVID test kits. In our latest partnership with the Department of Health, just this week library staff reached the major milestone of distributing 1,000 gun safety locks to Anne Arundel County Residents in just under one month. Our kindergarten readiness programs give parents and caregivers the skills to help prepare their child for school and our computers, laptops and hotspots along with free expert assistance, help residents find jobs and bring in much needed tax revenue. These are just a sampling of the hundreds of services library staff provide every day.

But as you've heard, our staff aren't being paid competitively or even fairly. The most recent compensation study completed indicates that out of 289 career staff, 245 aren't paid at the market rate. And some are leaving to go to nearby Prince George's, Baltimore and Howard counties who pay significantly more.

We are grateful that the County Executive proposed \$485,800 in his budget toward the \$2.9 million dollars that is needed to bring our staff to parity with our neighbors. But it doesn't get us anywhere near what is needed. So, our request of the County Council is to add \$500,000 to the \$485,765 that the County Executive proposed. If you do, we'll be 1/3 of the way to parity with the library systems in our region.

Why are we asking for nearly \$3 million dollars to get our staff to parity? Let me give you an example. A Library Associate, which is a position which provides kindergarten readiness classes, pays \$41,000 at AACPL. In nearby Prince George's, it's \$49,527 and in Baltimore County it's \$46,658.

Our long-serving managers face even steeper disparities. In Anne Arundel our Branch Managers, who supervise up to 25 people, start at \$65,000 while in Prince George's, they start at \$76,426 and in Baltimore County Public Library, they start at \$92,409. That is \$26,000 more than we pay. It's 40% more. This is for positions requiring Master's degrees and many years of experience. These are just basic examples of why we must get to parity some day, some way.

In closing I'd like to thank the Council for their continued commitment to ensuring everyone in Anne Arundel County enjoys convenient access to the enriching public spaces in our libraries and urge your consideration of our request.

Thank you for your consideration,
Gloria D. Harberts,

Anne Arundel County Public Library
Regional Manager