

Invite to Audience (online submissions) 7-3-2023

Timestamp	Full Name	Email Address	Home Address	City	Zip Code	Remarks	Attachment
07/03/2023 8:11:33	Kurt Svendsen	svendsensinmd@gmail.com	934 Juliet Court,	ARNOLD	21012	See attached one-page PDF	YES

July 3, 2023 County Council Invitation to Audience Starting Teacher Salaries, Structurally Balanced Budget, and County Tax Cap

A recent article in The Capital reporting on the approval of the contract between the County Board of Education and the teachers union which boosts starting salaries from \$50,000 to \$58,000 as provided for in the FY24 budget, noted the pay compression issue created by new teachers earning close to what some of their more experienced colleagues earn. The County school system spokesperson's comment was quite revealing:

"It is premature to have those answers right now," [Bob] Mosier said. "I think that everyone agrees that next year will present challenges; however, we are very optimistic given the partnership between the teachers' union, the school system and the county government."

This statement is NOT consistent with the County government's false narrative that the FY24 budget is "structurally" balanced. This highlights two very basic shortcomings:

1. Need for a better definition of what constitutes a "structurally" balanced budget (i.e, it's a multi-year, long-term concept).
2. Need for a formal policy regarding the property tax revenue cap and the County government's willingness to make use of the relatively new State law that allows such locally approved Charter limitations to be ignored.

Let's re-read that statement:

"It's premature to have those answers right now,..."

- Why?
 - That's the essential question to assessing the "structural" balance of a budget.

"...I think everyone agrees that next year will present challenges; however, we are very optimistic given the partnership between the teachers' union, the school system and the county government."

- It doesn't require much imagination to "read between the lines" of that statement.
 - Barring any new-found revenue windfalls, the FY25 budget will likely be the first in County history to exceed the County's citizen-approved property tax cap (even after adjusting to "correct" for past actions which "permanently" reduced the revenue yield by failing to maximize the rate allowed by the cap).

I think every official elected by Anne Arundel County citizens should be held accountable for their willingness to side-step County Charter-imposed constraints on the size and scope of County government.

This is the opinion of a person who happens to think that Anne Arundel County citizens are NOT over-taxed, but who thinks it's essential that the concept of "home-rule" for counties in the State of Maryland be acknowledged and honored.

Sincerely,

Kurt Svendsen, Arnold, MD