



Montgomery County Council

For Immediate Release

May 5, 2003

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OPENING COMMENTS BY COUNCIL PRESIDENT MICHAEL SUBIN

First Council Worksession on the FY04 Operating Budget May 5, 2003

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Over the next ten days, as we complete work on the FY04 operating and capital budgets, we will face many hard decisions. As I have said from the start, this year everything must be on the table. Recent news from Annapolis about the Governor's plans to revisit the FY04 State budget, and make much deeper cuts, reinforces this fact.

Another reason that everything must be on the table is that the Executive's budget has problems. All of us know what they are. About \$21 million in recordation tax revenue that we had earmarked for school construction is shifted to other areas. The reserve is underfunded by \$27 million. About \$4 million is assumed from an ambulance fee that is not acceptable, \$2.7 million is assumed by taking money from the cable fund, and \$2.2 million is assumed from an increase in fines for red light violations that the Court may well not approve. Another \$10 million was assumed from passage of the transfer controlling interest bill that did not pass, and nearly \$10 million more is now assumed from a speed camera bill that the Governor may veto. These problems alone – and there are more – add up to \$77 million.

To overcome these problems and approve an acceptable budget over the next ten days, all of us will have to give ground and come together. This is a 7 vote budget – I repeat, a 7 vote budget. In the spirit of compromise, I have said that I would consider taking off the table two items that I feel very strongly about – the recordation tax money for school construction and the reserve. These items alone cost \$48 million. But I cannot and I will not take these items off the table if others are not also prepared to act in the spirit of compromise. For the present I am placing them back on the table. And I say again, this is a 7 vote budget.

I am confident that this Council will step up to the plate and get the job done well. But to do so, we will all have to work together, act in the spirit of compromise, and recognize that everything must be on the table. ###