



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL

ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

COUNCILMEMBER LAURIE-ANNE SAYLES

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

AT LARGE

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

MEMORANDUM

March 23, 2023

TO: Montgomery County Councilmembers and County Executive
FROM: Laurie-Anne Sayles, Councilmember
SUBJECT: Ahead of the FY24 Operating Budget review session

As the Council gears up to review the County's FY24 Operating Budget, several questions and concerns arise; this memorandum articulates them in the hope that responses to the questions and concerns will aid the Council in reviewing and making informed decisions on the budget.

There are significant gaps between revenues and budgetary requests and my concern is that the last resorts seem to be the only solution resulting in significant increases in taxes, without clear evidence of serious attempts at reductions and management efficiencies in the base budgets. Everywhere I have gone constituents have expressed concerns about being taxed, especially without corresponding evidence of a good return on the investments. I empathize with our residents, especially the elderly population who see the tax increase as affecting their limited resources. I am convinced that we must explore all expenditure reduction options before resorting to raising taxes.

Several of us are new to the Council and I am positive that there will be a work-session or memorandum detailing the plan for reviewing and taking action on the operating budget. This is going to be a challenging budget review season and I am confident that by working with our leadership and Ms. Michaelson, we can come up with a system that is guided by an emphasis on accountability via a thorough review of options for reductions and reprogramming of existing resources to meet the needs of our schools and residents.

Understanding that much of the work on the operating budget will be done through the committees, my deliberations will be guided by responses to the following:

All Departments and Agencies, including MCPS:

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1. Please provide a list of reductions on how your department or agency would meet a 10% reduction from your request, preferably ranked by priority. This will provide helpful context in understanding where priorities are.
2. Please provide a list of all one time expenditures by department and agencies.
3. Please provide a five-year trend analysis of lapse and turnover assumptions by department and agencies.
4. Please provide a list of employee vacancies by department and agencies for the past five years and their value in dollars.
5. For the compensation packages, please provide more details about the cost and comparisons to neighboring jurisdictions, especially similar-sized jurisdictions.
6. Please provide an explanation of how you used racial equity and social justice lens to guide your budget requests.

County Executive Only:

7. Please provide a list of revenue assumptions and actual revenues received for the past five years (income tax, property tax, recordation tax, etc.)

MCPS only:

8. Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) has a list of 15 “accelerators” or initiatives as part of its operating budget request; please provide the cost for each item and prioritize the list in terms of need.
9. For MCPS, could you provide more details on the rationale for increasing your original budget request by the approximately \$60 million in state revenues received after your budget was created?
10. For MCPS, please provide a cost comparison of budget increases with Fairfax County and the following jurisdictions in Maryland (Prince George’s, Baltimore, Howard, Anne Arundel)

Finally, the school system’s budget is fully half of the entire county’s budget. I am confident that EC Chair Will Jawando will ask all the hard questions to hold the school system accountable and assure residents that they are getting great value for their investment. I pledge my support in brainstorming ways to provide a more robust structure of accountability and oversight, using the OLO and other supports we may need. What is clear to me is that we need an all hands on deck approach to explore more options to address growing needs with limited resources. I urge my colleagues on the council to weigh in on this very important issue. We have an opportunity here to make a significant difference. I look forward to working with my colleagues on the review and adoption of both the operating and capital budgets.

Copy to:

Marlene Michaelson
Craig Howard