



Dear Pinebrook Parents,

I appreciate the opportunity to share my views regarding the FY2015 budget process. There seems to be a significant amount of misinformation this year regarding the school budget. Most recently, an email was distributed that provides an inaccurate and incomplete description of my comments at a recent joint meeting between the Board of Supervisors and the School Board. While during that meeting I did raise questions about some aspects of the School Board's presentation, contrary to what the email indicated, I also offered my support for addressing teacher pay scales, and I most certainly did not say that Loudoun's cost of living is low—we all know that quite the opposite is true.

Beyond that clarification, here are my thoughts on the school budget. First, some context. This will be the third budget that I've worked on as a member of the Board of Supervisors. Over the past two years, my Board has increased funding for Loudoun County Public Schools from \$745 million to \$843 million—a 13.1 percent increase which exceeds the rate of enrollment growth during that time. The result of those increases has been a 5.7 percent increase in the amount we spend on each student (per pupil expenditure). Included in each of those budgets were increases for teachers—a \$1,500 across the board pay raise in FY13, and a 2 percent raise in FY14.

Perhaps most importantly for the Pinebrook community, the Board of Supervisors worked with the School Board to accelerate the construction of Cardinal Ridge Elementary School, which will be opening this September. For some Pinebrook parents, this will become their new school. Those staying at Pinebrook will see overdue relief from high class sizes because enrollment at Pinebrook will be reduced. I can thus say with confidence that class sizes at both schools should be lower next year than what you have experienced over the past few years—and that's a very positive development.

As far as the FY15 operating budget, based on guidance given by the Board of Supervisors, the County Administrator has proposed a budget that **will increase funding for LCPS by at least 8 percent**—a minimum of \$66 million. Additional funds may be available when the State completes its budget process and when new revenue projections for the County are available. This funding increase can be achieved without raising the average amount paid in taxes by homeowners because of the success we've had in the past year attracting new investment to Loudoun County. The Board of Supervisors has enacted a long term strategy to grow our commercial tax base—to create more jobs closer to home, reduce commutes, and

generate revenue for the County which we can invest in the community, including our school system.

Loudoun still has a comparatively high tax rate. In fact, the average amount homeowners pay in taxes here is among the 40 highest out of over 3,000 counties in the nation. Our tax rate is significantly higher than many of the jurisdictions we're competing against for economic development projects. Generally, high levels of taxation are not conducive to attracting new investment. Loudoun's technology/data center sector has been a huge area of revenue growth for us, but it is very price sensitive and some of our competitors have already begun to try to poach some of our existing businesses. We are closely watching this ongoing threat, and need to factor that into our decisions regarding future tax rates.

The School Board's proposed budget would increase spending by nearly 13 percent, requiring a tax increase of about 5 percent to fund. For some parts of the County that have seen major assessment increases, the tax increase would far exceed that and would be a significant burden.

While three new schools are opening next year, LCPS enrollment is projected to increase overall by 3.4 percent. The Board of Supervisors is now studying the School Board's request. From my initial read, it appears that much of what we hear as top priorities—teacher compensation, technology upgrades, and class size—may be able to be accomplished within the 8 percent increase that the County Administrator has proposed, albeit not exactly as proposed by the School Board and not necessarily all at once. The Board of Supervisors has asked the School Board for a detailed analysis of what could and could not be funded at the County Administrator's proposed amount to help give us a better understanding.

I appreciate that there are strong views on the school budget. As the father of four children myself, education is a top priority for me and I have a personal stake in ensuring we have a great school system. However, I also must consider our other many needs and what is best for the long term health of Loudoun County—including policies that will ultimately grow our revenue stream. During our budget deliberations over the coming weeks, I will do my best to balance all these many priorities.

If you have further questions or comments, please don't hesitate to contact me at matt.letourneau@loudoun.gov I also provide regular updates about the budget and other Dulles South issues in my email newsletters and Facebook. You can sign up for both at www.loudoun.gov/dulles I wish everyone a successful remainder of the school year and thank you for your commitment to Pinebrook and our community.

Sincerely,

Supervisor Matt Letourneau
Dulles District