

An adjourned meeting of the Board of Supervisors of Albemarle County, Virginia, was held on April 28, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. This meeting was held by electronic communication means using Zoom and a telephonic connection, due to the COVID-19 state of emergency.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. Ned Gallaway, Ms. Beatrice (Bea) J.S. LaPisto-Kirtley, Ms. Ann H. Mallek, Ms. Diantha H. McKeel, Ms. Liz Palmer, and Ms. Donna P. Price.

ABSENT: None.

OFFICERS PRESENT: County Executive, Jeffrey B. Richardson; County Attorney, Greg Kamptner; Clerk, Claudette K. Borgersen; and Senior Deputy Clerk, Travis O. Morris.

Agenda Item No. 1. Call to Order. The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by the Chair, Mr. Ned Gallaway.

Mr. Gallaway said the meeting was being held pursuant to and in compliance with Ordinance No. 20-A(16), "An Ordinance to Ensure the Continuity of Government During the COVID-19 Disaster." He said that the opportunities for the public to access and participate in the electronic meeting were posted on the Albemarle County website, on the Board of Supervisors' homepage, and on the Albemarle County calendar. He stated that participation included the opportunity to comment on those matters for which comments from the public would be received.

Agenda Item No. 2. **Public Hearing: FY2021-FY2022 Proposed Operating and Capital Budgets.**

Ms. Nelsie Birch, Chief Financial Officer, said the development of the FY 22 budget was close to being finalized. She said this was the last interaction with the development of the FY 22 budget and as Mr. Gallaway mentioned, there were two different public hearings; one for the proposed budget for FY 22, and one for the proposed tax rates for Calendar Year 21.

Ms. Birch said she was joined by Ms. Lori Allshouse, Assistant CFO for Policy and Partnerships; and Mr. Andy Bowman, Chief of the Budget Division, who would help answer any questions that may come up during the evening's session.

Ms. Birch said the County Executive recommended a budget on February 24 and since then, there had been a series of public engagements around the development of the proposed budget for FY 22. She said the slide on the screen showed a series of work sessions and townhalls that were put together after the recommended budget public hearing, bringing them to April 28 for the two public hearings before the Board that evening.

Ms. Birch said she wanted to make sure that the Board and the public knew that the recommended budget had not changed, and so the proposed budget is the recommended budget plus one monetary change, which was the Board's approval of funding a Transportation Planner position out of the capital budget. She said anyone who had been watching and following the budget process could do the math by taking the recommended budget, plus \$106,343 for the planner position to arrive at the two figures they would momentarily see when she presents that slide.

Ms. Birch said the Board was having a public hearing on the proposed budget, as well as for the advertised tax rate that the Board approved at their March 18 work session for all the tax rates that are impacting both this budget from a revenue perspective and the public from a tax perspective.

Ms. Birch said this was a nice moment to share with the Board and the public the information available. She said there were a couple of changes that year which she wanted to recognize. She said staff continues to provide this information on the County website, which does include the FY 22 recommended budget.

Ms. Birch said some things had been added that year, however, that staff felt were important to note. She said one of those changes is that the budget work session presentations are in one place, on the budget website. She said historically, if any member of the public or Board wanted to access a presentation, they would have to find the agenda and search for where that presentation landed. She said these presentations have now been pulled together so that if anyone wants to see all the presentations that were provided on the FY 22 budget, they can view them in one place.

Ms. Birch said another interesting addition that year is because the Board asks several questions as they move along through the budget development process, staff thought it was a good opportunity for them to provide the answers and share those publicly on the website so that people can see the dialogue and how staff is engaging and answering the various questions that came up this year. She said frankly, some of those questions are asked time and time again, so it is also a great tool for County employees to be able to access.

Ms. Birch said the next item was one she was recently introduced to. She said she had not known that the County had a budget visualization tool, which allows one to go in and dive deep into not only where the tax dollars go, but how revenues are broken down, specifically. She said it is a much more interactive tool than the large budget document that many Board members are carrying with them. She said there are also FAQs available on the website.

Ms. Birch said the next slide was one that the Board and the public have seen many times, and staff thought it was important to take a moment and reflect that this was really their north star, in many ways, for developing the FY 22 "resilient budget," which is also very much a transitional one, reflective of not only determining the impact the pandemic has had on the community, but how the County can continue to drive performance and outcomes. She noted that the slide showed nine boxes for the Strategic Plan, with Quality Government Operations on the bottom that oversees this all and ensures staff can complete the nine strategic priorities for the Board.

Ms. Birch said the triangle on the righthand portion of the slide is something staff is constantly keeping an eye on as they look at the transitional budget for FY 22. She said they cannot do what they do without having a workforce that is poised and ready to come to work, and they are trying to make sure they stay on top of the needs they have in the organization to stabilize their workforce. She said they are also making sure that they keep an eye on the economy, using the FY 22 transitional budget to help drive some strategic investments to support that.

Ms. Birch said lastly, the financial foundation guides all of staff's decision making to make sure that they maintain the County's Triple-AAA rating.

Ms. Birch said the next slide was one that staff used a few times, and it was something she wanted to make sure to share again. She said they started off with the "3-6-6" model, which she thought was a great idea and predated her in her role as CFO. She said because of the volatility of the pandemic and not understanding where and how the County would be impacted on the revenue side, it was slowing down and taking the FY 21 budget, the current budget, in bite-sized chunks to make sure they were making good, solid decisions.

Ms. Birch said when staff developed the FY 22 budget, it reflected the transitional period they are in where they are not yet stabilized, but are stabilizing, and revenues are performing. She said they must, however, not only make sure they understand the impact the pandemic has had on their revenue, but also on their expenditures, how the community has adapted to the pandemic and, potentially a change in needs in the community as they move forward.

Ms. Birch presented a chart representing what the first public hearing that evening was about, which was the proposed budget. She said this was the All Funds Budget, which is every dollar that comes through the County's coffers, which includes Schools, special revenue funds, and capital and debt financing. She said this was the big figure, at \$466 million.

Ms. Birch said the next slide showed the General Fund, which is usually where a local government spends most of its time, as this is where local tax dollars mostly come in, which could be seen in the largest piece of the chart, property taxes. She said it is also representative of the most discretionary fund that the government has. She said it is not like grant fundings, which typically have some sort of strings attached. She said rather, the discretionary pot is where the operations of the government are funded.

Ms. Birch said that this is where the County makes a contribution to supports its capital fund and capital projects. She said this \$30.5 million is from the General Fund, which is taken from local tax dollars and other revenues, and they invest in the future, which is what the capital fund is about. She the slide showed the FY 22 expenditures for the General Fund, and this was broken down to show that the largest transfer and investment that the community makes is in public schools.

Ms. Birch said the previous slides touched on the first public hearing, which was related to the FY 22 Operating and Capital Budgets. She said the slide on the screen showed the advertised tax rates that the Board moved forward with approving as advertised on March 18. She said this evening was the moment for the public to respond to that advertisement through a public hearing. She said what was of note, that was not shown on the screen, was that the tax rates are reflective of no change from where the County is currently. She said thus, the FY 22 budget does not have an increase in the taxes shown on the screen, and these remain the same.

Ms. Birch paused to remind the Board that there were two public hearings; one for the proposed budget, which would need to be opened and closed, and one for the tax rate. She asked if there were any questions from the Board.

There were no questions from the Board, and Mr. Gallaway opened the public hearing.

Mr. Gary Grant, Rio District, said he was using a signal outside of the Earlysville exchange that evening, as many areas of Earlysville did not have CenturyLink phone service or internet for the past couple of days. He began his budget testimony by asking why the all-Democrat Board of Supervisors is willing to saddle Albemarle taxpayers with a 17.4% budget increase over the current fiscal year. He asked why the Board is willing to take several millions of Albemarle taxpayers' approximately \$4.5 million budget surplus and spend it on government employee bonuses instead of returning this excess tax taking to the taxpayers.

Mr. Grant asked why the all-Democrat Board of Supervisors is willing to take excess taxes from real estate property owners and from those who rent from them in the form of reassessment increases to feed a spend-everything budget for FY 22. He asked why these Democrats do this to the public, and when they will tell them.

Ms. Lydia Brunk, 2500 Gladden Fields Lane, North Garden, Samuel Miller District, asked the Board that as they move forward in the budget process, they commit to provide funding for a right to counsel program in coordination with the City. She said the City recently agreed to allocate \$460,000 of its American Recovery Act money towards guaranteeing a right to counsel in eviction cases for the next two years, and it has expressed interest in a collaboration with the County. She said she likes living in the County, and she does not want to be the backwards neighbor of Charlottesville that does not take the necessary steps to prevent an eviction crisis.

Ms. Brunk said she has done work with the Cville DSA Housing Justice Committee, supporting tenants who have eviction hearings. She said she has learned firsthand how byzantine and hostile the legal system can be for anyone. She said although she thinks of herself as a fairly intelligent, well-educated person who has been putting a lot of time into understanding evictions and housing law, she is not a lawyer, and she still frequently gets tripped up trying to understand how to help a tenant and what they are legally supposed to do in their situation.

Ms. Brunk said landlords will do their best to take advantage of tenants' ignorance and the complexity of the system, in many cases. She said she has seen a rash of tenants who somehow never saw their eviction notices, and she has seen landlords tell their tenants they do not need to come to court, even though the tenant is still on the docket. She said then, of course, if the tenant does not show up, they are evicted automatically.

Ms. Brunk said there is currently an eviction moratorium in place, which is great, unless one does not know they need to bring documentation of their eligibility with them to court. She said rent relief is also great, unless one's landlord wants them out no matter what and will not cooperate by giving them the documentation they need to apply. She said of course, one could then sue the landlord in theory, but if they are out of money, frightened of eviction, and struggling to keep their head above water, this is much easier said than done.

Ms. Brunk said eviction is a traumatic event that can follow a person for a long time, probably for the rest of their life unless they are very lucky. She said she has observed cases where families are evicted over less than \$500. She said if one has paid their rent in full on time for years and one month, has a family emergency and comes up short, and they have been trying to crawl out of that hole for a few months and has not quite made it, the landlord can jerk them around about a payment plan and try to evict them.

Ms. Brunk said then, the tenant is suddenly thrust into a legal universe of obscure, opaque legalese and courtroom etiquette. She said the landlord likely has a lawyer or team of lawyers while the tenant is there by themselves, just trying to stay in their home. She said the tenant deserves a fair chance on an even playing field and should not be out on the street just because they did not know the right thing to say to the judge.

Ms. Brunk said they are looking at a crisis on their hands when the protections that tenants currently do have expire. She said a right to counsel is crucial for the community.

Mr. Javier Raudales said he is a longtime resident of the Samuel Miller District. He said he wanted to demand that the Board of Supervisors take an initiative to allocate funding for a right to counsel in eviction cases for County residents. He said right to counsel for those facing the eviction system is imperative to justice in the community at large. He said Albemarle County normally has an eviction rate that is similar to the City's, and when the eviction moratorium ends, both are at risk of an eviction crisis. He said an eviction crisis can quickly become a homelessness crisis, and it is in everyone's interest that this is prevented.

Mr. Raudales said he works primarily with immigrant families, mostly of Latinx descent. He said they have faced the brunt of the impact of the pandemic due to forces outside of themselves, such as illness or economic crises, that have affected the community he supports. He said a right to counsel will allow tenants to avail themselves to the rights they have.

Mr. Raudales said that since last fall, Charlottesville DSA has been observing the eviction hearings that they have been provided access to. He said in both courthouses, no tenant who has had an attorney was evicted. He said that with a right to counsel, they not only ensure tenants understand their rights, but they can also create an incentive for landlords to negotiate.

Mr. Raudales urged the Board to support a budget that includes right to counsel for those in the community facing eviction. He said it is imperative to the safety and public health of the community that all community members can navigate the County's legal system.

Mr. Sid Patel, 1760 Rio Hill Center, Rio District, said he wanted to speak regarding the tobacco and cigarette tax increase. He asked if this was the right time to speak on this.

Mr. Gallaway asked Mr. Patel to go ahead, as this is related to what will be ongoing.

Mr. Patel said the reason he wanted to oppose the cigarette tax was that last year, the cigarette tax had already been increased to the entire state. He explained that increasing the cigarette tax in Albemarle will result in smokers going to nearby cities to shop for cigarettes. He said for the County to increase the tax to 40 cents, or \$4 per carton, may not look like much, but it is big, especially since

COVID hit many people.

Mr. Patel said if an increase is happening statewide, this is fine. He said perhaps the County is looking to get more revenue, but on the other side of things, many people are hurting right now, and they will see if Ruckersville may have a better price. He said putting a tax increase on all the tobacco stores, gas stations, and everyone selling cigarettes locally will result in smokers going out of the city to shop for their cigarettes. He said instead of the County gaining revenue, in the long run, there is a chance of perhaps losing the revenue.

Mr. Patel said he would like Board members to look very carefully at not increasing the cigarette tax.

Mr. Gallaway closed the first public hearing and moved to the next one.

Agenda Item No. 3. **Public Hearing: Calendar Year 2021 Tax Rates.**

Mr. Gallaway opened the public hearing.

Mr. Gary Grant, Rio District, said he would give his tax rate testimony. He asked why the all-Democrat Board of Supervisors is willing to inflict a tax increase on Albemarle taxpayers for FY 22 instead of holding Albemarle taxpayers harmless in a new fiscal year by supporting an effective, also known as "lowered" tax rate, of 82.6 cents per \$100 valuation instead of the 85.4 cents per \$100 valuation rate.

Mr. Grant asked why the Board is willing to inflict a tax increase this calendar year on Albemarle taxpayers of 2.8 cents per \$100 valuation instead of supporting no tax increase on Albemarle taxpayers.

Mr. Grant asked why is it that the all-Democrat Board of Supervisors is willing to inflict a tax rate increase on some of the most financially vulnerable residents of Albemarle County this calendar year; those owning or renting property in Albemarle's urban residential areas, where reassessments rose an average of 3.1%, rose the highest in the Jack Jouett District at an average of 3.3%, rose an average of 2.4% in the Samuel Miller District, and rose an average of 2.5% in the White Hall District.

Mr. Grant asked why Supervisor candidates Mr. Gallaway and Ms. McKeel are in support of tax increases on property owners and renters in the Rio and Jack Jouett Districts, where they want to be reelected. He asked why these Democrats do this to the public and when they will tell them.

Mr. Jay James, City resident, said he is a board member and volunteer for an organization that has applied for funding for FY 22. He said it is a local nonprofit called The Bridge Ministry, and it serves men who are dealing with life-controlling issues and are indigent, criminal defendants who are court-ordered by the Albemarle Circuit Court to enter the program and successfully complete it, or otherwise face returning to incarceration. He said the program has an 86% success rate.

Mr. James said he knew the Board was familiar with the organization and with his advocacy for it. He said what he would say that evening may not change anything in terms of the final decision, as he knows there is a formulaic process, but he felt compelled to share a few things with the Board.

Mr. James said The Bridge Ministry has been in the community for 25 years serving this type of populous; people who have been disproportionately impacted and have been dealing with incarceration, homelessness, and a lack of vocational skills, and helping them become productive citizens in the community.

Mr. James said the question has been raised because "ministry" is in the organization's name, and he knew that Ms. Price and staff had raised that question. He said The Bridge Ministry was deemed reliable by the state and was inspected by state personnel with the Department of Corrections. He said per diems were approved and at one point, probation and parole at District 9 was using The Bridge Ministry on a regular basis and paying per diems from state funding to an organization. He said for them to do that, there could not be any church and state separation concerns.

Mr. James said The Bridge Ministry is not a church, and it is not owned by a church even partially. He said it is owned by an individual by the name of Mr. William Washington as the sole owner and proprietor, who founded the organization. He said it is a rehab facility, and therefore the Department of Corrections personnel have put faith in using it over the years.

Mr. James said there are several concerns, as an organization that is new to the area and has been serving it for 5-6 years has been funded, while an organization that has served this populous for 25 years was not funded. He said when it comes to the faith element, it is not a church, but it is a rehab facility, and the faith aspect is that they help people with impossible situations overcome them and benefit from the rehabilitation program.

Mr. James said when he looks at organizations that were not funded out of the 32 in the ABRT process, it is all human services. He said he used to be in fundraising for the Albemarle-Charlottesville SPCA in terms of their events, and he noticed that in the FY 22 budget, the SPCA was recommended for \$652,000. He said an organization like his and five others were not recommended for funding, and it concerns him because these human services are critical. He said in a \$444 million, the County could not

find other funding for these human services, yet for dogs and cats, who he loves greatly and does support, they have \$652,000 in the budget.

Mr. James said these were his concerns, and he wanted to thank the Board for their service and time. He said he was hopeful that even if it did not make a difference with the six Supervisors, the community would pay attention to his remarks.

Mr. Gallaway closed the public hearing and brought the matter back to the Board. He said for both public hearings, the Board appreciated those who signed up to give comment that evening. He said the Supervisors could make any reactions to comments they heard that evening or to other items.

Ms. Palmer said she always appreciates everyone who comes forward to share their concerns and suggestions. She said she would like if the Board to ask the County Attorney to, at some point, in written form, comment on the situation with the request for legal representation in evictions. She said perhaps this would be the County Executive, and she was not sure who would be appropriate to answer that. She said she would like to know more about if the City is doing this and if there had been any financial requests made there.

Mr. Gallaway asked if it was acceptable for this item to come back.

Ms. Palmer replied that this was her request. She said having this in writing would be fine to the Board unless there was information to share at that time. She said whatever was most reasonable for staff would be fine.

Mr. Kamptner said he would want to check and see what and how the City did. He said he was aware that they did something, but he did not know the particulars.

Ms. Price said this was the same area that she was going to ask about. She said she knew there had been discussion on it, but she could not recall exactly where it was. She said she, too, was interested in the situation regarding some sort of legal support for community members facing eviction.

Ms. McKeel agreed with Ms. Palmer and Ms. Price. She said she spoke with Mr. Jim Hingeley about this when the Board first received an email, and it may be helpful in Mr. Kamptner's work as well as something from Mr. Hingeley around this issue. She said if she remembered correctly, the help for evictions contains a sunset clause for once the pandemic is over. She said she would be interested in more information about the program as well. She said she appreciated everyone who came to speak to the Board that day.

Ms. Mallek said her question was also about counsel for evictions. She said she was looking at the emails, and there was no dollar amount listed. She asked for this to be included when information is shared as part of the proposal.

Ms. LaPisto-Kirtley concurred with her fellow Supervisors and thanked the public for their comments.

Mr. Gallaway asked Mr. Bowman if he was available.

Mr. Bowman replied yes.

Mr. Gallaway said he knew that the 17% year-over-year increase question came up at an earlier community meeting and again that evening. He said this was one that was asked and answered during one of his townhalls, so he thought it would be appropriate for Mr. Bowman to answer that item that evening if he was prepared to do so.

Mr. Bowman said he could speak to that. He said the total County All Funds Budget that Ms. Birch described refers to the General Fund and Schools Fund, which are part of day-to-day operations, but also includes grants and other special revenue funding. He said it does include a significant piece that can vary year to year for capital and debt funding.

Mr. Bowman said to give perspective on how this impacts the 17% increase, when they look at revenues specifically related to their use of fund balance and borrowed proceeds, which are primarily the funding sources of the capital program, which refers to construction and facility maintenance projects that are multiyear in nature, of the total \$69 million in the proposed budget, using round numbers, approximately \$42-\$43 million of that is between those two categories.

Mr. Bowman noted that of the fund balance, as part of the "3-6-6" management plan that started when the pandemic began, staff took an approach to slam the brakes on spending and be very conservative in their approach at the end of FY 20. He said as a result, this created a fund balance that was available to strategically invest as the economy began to stabilize, when they were out of the worst of the pandemic situation in total. He said this was not to say that individuals and businesses have not been impacted, but looking at the total impact on County revenues, the economic picture has continued to improve from where they thought it would be a year ago.

Mr. Bowman said a portion of the one-time funding for both local government and schools is being reinvested strategically through the pyramid that Ms. Birch shared at the beginning of her presentation to ensure the County's financial foundation, to support economic stability and community

support, and to support workforce stabilization.

Mr. Bowman noted that when looking at revenues such as property taxes and other local taxes, there is an impact where when comparing to the FY 21 budget, they were about less than a month into the current pandemic and did not have much information as to what the impacts would be. He said staff took some revenue projections, and the road they took was more pessimistic than how things turned out to be. He said revenues were certainly impacted when looking at meals tax and transient occupancy tax, which are below where they were in the prior year, but the impact has not been as significant as staff believed it would be about 12 months ago.

Mr. Bowman said part of the revenue increase they are seeing is not just the growth that is projected to occur next year, but the growth that is happening from a lower starting point in the start of FY 21.

Mr. Bowman said another point of note was state revenue. He said the School Division is receiving about \$5.2 million in additional state revenue based on the updated state budget. He said this in combination with the change in the capital program, both cash-funded and debt-funded, and looking at the lower starting point with the economy in the pandemic, are the primary reasons that make up the 17%. He said as Ms. Birch mentioned at the start, much of the focus is in the General Fund because year to year, it is more typical of what is an apples-to-apples comparison.

Mr. Bowman offered the next phase of the courts project as an example. He said the \$25 million was not part of last year's budget but is part of this year's budget and will not be part of it next year. He said this is not anything to do with Albemarle County, but it is the nature of capital projects.

Mr. Bowman paused to take any follow-up questions.

Mr. Gallaway said he appreciated the response and asked if anyone had a follow-up question for Mr. Bowman.

Ms. Birch said she had one more data point to add. She said looking at the General Fund year over year, it was only a 4.8% growth. She said this is a more reflective number for the impact on the local economy and taxpayers. She said much of that growth is also part of the conservativeness they had on the revenue side, and so it is not a total impact on a resident or taxpayer but rather, it is more reflective of staff's conservative projections.

Ms. Price said if she understood this correctly, the 17% is mathematically accurate but very misleading when trying to apply it to the totality of the situation. She asked if it was a substantially lower effective increase over last year's budget.

Ms. Birch said yes.

Mr. Bowman agreed. He said with some of the benchmarking against other localities in trying to understand trends, while the budget is always an interesting point of information because it does tell a story, the General Fund tends to be the measuring stick that staff watches more closely.

Ms. Price said the particulars, then, become extremely important in terms of the pieces of the calculation rather than just the total figure at the end.

Ms. Birch added that in the years the County issues any sort of bond financing, with this year being one of them as staff is preparing to issue those in the coming months, this bond financing will also inflate the number. She said for example, if the County issues \$20-30 million in bond financing, they must account for those proceeds. She said if they issue it this year but do not issue it next year, which is the plan, to do this every other year, this will also show some of the swing and what Mr. Bowman was talking about with respect to the capital budget.

Ms. Birch said it is not a steady number, and much of that is driven by the bond proceeds amount that goes into the coffers, which is a one-time action because they did something to pay for it for the capital projects they have.

Ms. Price said this will be important next year to get those totals again.

Mr. Bowman added that he did not want to sound dismissive of other funds and aspects of the budget, as they are important, and the General Fund does include the local contributions to the School Division and to the capital debt program. He said the School Division is growing by 5.2%, and the capital portion is \$30 million or so that Ms. Birch referenced earlier in the presentation. He said these are the components that are ongoing pieces of the capital budget that are reflected in the General Fund.

Mr. Gallaway thanked staff for the explanation, adding that it is important to understand and clarify these things as the questions are asked. He said his remark would be the answer to one of the questions that came up in public comment that evening. He said the "when" was now, and the "why" is the budget book. He said when the Board talks about the tax rate they set, whether they raise it, keep it the same, or lower it, and in terms of the revenue they brought in and the taxes they collect, then turn around and spend, the "why" is all in the budget book. He said it is in the salaries they pay, the positions that they choose to fill, the capital and projects that they determine they are going to pursue, and the Strategic Plan, which is where they prioritize what they are going to spend those dollars on.

Mr. Gallaway said the “why” is all right there, and the beauty of that is that it is in the document and accounts for everything. He said the Board has had discussions, taken votes, and said what their priorities are. He said they have had public meetings with the community. He said he is asked all the time about the tax rate, even by people who do not even live in the County, and the way he answers the question is that it is in the budget book. He said how they program the spending of those dollars is the answer to why there is that tax rate.

Mr. Gallaway said it is then up to the public to decide, in this case, if the Supervisor’s priorities and decisions are in line with theirs. He said as one of the speakers mentioned, it is an election year, and the public will determine whether that is the case or not. He said this is the answer, in his opinion, for the question he believed the constituent deserved a response for.

Mr. Gallaway asked if there were any other comments on the public hearing that evening.

Ms. Mallek said she wanted to add a thought about the bonuses because she has also received calls from constituents who said that they did not receive bonuses, and their retirement did not go up. She said she has explained that in the majority, or at least half, of the years she has been on the Board, there have been no raises for many different reasons, including efforts to survive the recession and for the Board to be conservative as possible.

Ms. Mallek said another important thing to mention was the complete disruption to staff in operations, productivity, and service to the community when the County loses much of its experienced staff to other communities. She said she has been told by representatives from other counties that they would love to hire away Albemarle’s staff because they know there has been lots of training going on, and this is a service culture to the community that they would love to be able to benefit from.

Ms. Mallek said she thinks this bonus is an important stop gap to keep the workforce together as much as they can, and everyone benefits from their continued service.

Ms. McKeel said she had a request, and she did not have to have the information that evening. She said one of the comments was that the Board constantly has a “spend-everything” budget. She said in reality, they set aside a good deal of money to make sure they are careful, and they look to save money in case there are bad events, like a pandemic. She asked if there was a way staff could provide the Board, in a very simple way, bullet points about where the County has saved money rather than simply spending it. She said she thinks this would be very helpful because they know they have done this over the years.

Ms. McKeel said there are processes that automatically put money aside for emergencies, and a short summary of some of that would be very helpful.

Ms. Birch said staff will be providing this quite naturally, as they are going to the bond market in the next two months. She said staff will have some two-on-tuos with the Board in anticipation of a May 19 Board discussion and decision around a bond resolution. She said in the entire process of working with the ratings agencies, staff has to convince them that the County is worth of a Triple-A rating, and they have three of them. She said one of those will be about where the County’s savings are, how they have been able to weather the pandemic, and what they are doing to stabilize their revenues as they do not know how they will perform.

Ms. Birch said staff is currently working through this process and will come before the Board to present that information.

Ms. McKeel said she would appreciate having this information in a simple way where she, as a Supervisor, can share it with her constituents. She said the Triple-A bond is much more complicated.

Ms. Price said one thing for constituents to appreciate is that with the three different bond rating agencies, the highest rate one can get is a Triple A. She said when Ms. Birch speaks of a Triple-AAA, what she is really talking about is that the County has achieved, from all three of those credit reporting agencies, the highest bond rating that a government organization can attain. She said by keeping this, the costs of financing are substantially lower for the County. She said it is just like having a good credit score as a consumer, the higher the credit score, the lower the interest one pays, and the more available funds will be when needed.

Ms. Price said as Ms. McKeel had just talked about, there were two things in terms of the stewardship that County staff does exceptionally well under Ms. Birch’s leadership as CFO and throughout the County. She said they are careful with how they spend their money, but they are also very careful about what is going on. She said what may appear to be a surplus may actually have just been good stewardship over the time of the year.

Ms. Price said as Ms. McKeel and other Supervisors mentioned either that evening or on other occasions, the Board does maintain a strategic reserve, which is the County’s “rainy day fund.” She said she thinks it is very important for community members to understand that it is because of this good financial stewardship that the County is in the good financial position it is in and allows them to get the best rates when they need money for capital improvement projects.

Ms. McKeel added that she has been involved in Albemarle County Government and School

Board for a long time, and the County has had its Triple-A bond rating for a long time. She said they have been taking good care of taxpayer dollars the best they can. She said she would be interested in knowing how many years the County has had its Triple-A bond rating because she knew it had been a long time in the big picture.

Note: No action was taken at this meeting. Action was taken at the May 5, 2021, meeting.

Agenda Item No. 4. From the Board: Matters not Listed on the Agenda.

Ms. Palmer said that Friday and Saturday (April 29-30) were Household Hazardous Waste Amnesty Days, meaning one could go out to Ivy MUC and get rid of yard chemicals and pesticides that have been hiding in the back of the garage or basement for years. She said this is a great, free way to do that, and one could see the website for any other details. She said this would take place from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., with the commercial drop-off being on Thursday.

Ms. McKeel said many of the Supervisors had attended the kickoff that day for the "Let's Talk Albemarle" project. She said a van will be going around the County to keep everyone connected. She said she wanted to thank staff because this was an ingenious idea that she greatly appreciated. She said she hoped the Board would receive updates on how that vehicle is used, adding that it will be fun to follow.

Ms. Mallek said she hoped the County would be able to have parades this year, in which case she hoped the van would come so that people could see it.

Ms. LaPisto-Kirtley said it was obvious that the County has been very good stewards of their finances, spending, and savings during the pandemic. She said she thinks staff has done an extraordinary job, but most importantly, she thinks they have to recognize that they have still given service to the community. She said this was top on the list, in spite of the pandemic, and with all the financial concerns in being conservative in how they spend their monies.

Ms. LaPisto-Kirtley said that Saturday (May 1) at Darden Towe Park, beginning at 10:00 a.m., milkweed seed will be planted around the park. She said there will be no mowing (only once a year) and they would have a natural habitat, so that they can have a natural habitat where the milkweed plants will thrive. She said they are calling the project "Save the Monarch" because it is all about the monarch butterfly. She said there is a natural migration path that goes through Darden Towe Park. She encouraged everyone to join her for the event, which would take place over a couple of hours.

Mr. Gallaway said as a follow-up to Ms. McKeel's comments about "Let's Talk Albemarle," the book *Monacan Indians: Our Story* is being delivered to Little Libraries at seven different parks. He said the book was written by Karen Wood and Diane Shields, and they were lucky to have Ms. Shields there that day to participate in the ribbon cutting and the first delivery of the books to the libraries.

Mr. Gallaway said Ms. Mallek may want to piggyback on his comments, as he believed that at that point, having a public soap box, there are plenty of residents who have complained, and rightfully so, about CenturyLink's lack of service, which is probably more than just in the Earlysville section, but they hear about it quite a bit there in terms of both phone and internet going down. He said he knew Ms. Mallek had brought this up before and stomps her feet at the state level at every chance she gets.

Mr. Gallaway said the fact is that the Board is in a position to make comments on it because especially over the past 13 months, if people did not have access to their phone or internet, they could not participate in Board meetings. He said this is part of the reason why the virtual meetings have been so successful because people have been able to participate from their home. He said if bringing it up helps to shed some light on it, he is willing to bring it up as often as he can because this company needs to know that they need to abide by the fees they are receiving and the rates they charge and deliver the proper service to their customers.

Mr. Gallaway said Ms. Mallek had an update about trying to go to NACo and asked if she had any comments.

Ms. Mallek said she thinks constantly talking about it is a good thing, and the telephone part of the CenturyLink operation is what is regulated in a very small way by the SEC (Securities and Exchange Commission) in Virginia, while the broadband connectivity is not. She said it is the hand they are dealt by the General Assembly. She said she is very grateful for all the work that Ms. Price and Ms. Palmer, as well as Mr. Mike Culp and Mr. Trevor Henry, are doing to be able to help find other ways to get connected as quickly as possible throughout the County.

Ms. Mallek said she agrees that it is not right to be taking people's money and not providing the money that they pay for months and months for delayed delivery. She said she worries that the County should not be getting into that trap, either. She said she is grateful that they are going in more complete directions and looks forward to updates as far as how they will be reacting to the new federal law and federal money, going forward. She said she knows people in the Scottsville area have been down as well for weeks or days at a time, and it is truly difficult.

Ms. Price said as a CenturyLink customer adding her voice to that, she attends all meetings virtually from the County Office Building because of the unreliable service out in the County. She said

she appreciated Ms. Mallek's comments as Mr. Culp, Ms. Palmer, and the Broadband Authority are working hard to do what they can to improve what they know is a problem.

Agenda Item No. 5. From the County Executive: Report on Matters Not Listed on the Agenda.

There was none.

Agenda Item No. 6. Adjourn to May 5, 2021, 1:00 p.m., electronic meeting pursuant to Ordinance No. 20-A(16).

At 7:00 p.m., the Board adjourned its meeting to May 5, 2021 at 1:00 p.m., which would be an electronic meeting held pursuant to Ordinance No. 20-A(16), "An Ordinance to Ensure the Continuity of Government During the COVID-19 Disaster." Information on how to participate in the meeting will be posted on the Albemarle County website.

Chair

Approved by Board
Date 02/15/2023
Initials CKB