

Councilman Dick Ladd

Anne Arundel County Council

Fifth District

June 2014 Article

The County Executive's FY2015 budget request is now being considered by the County Council. The Council is scheduled to strike the budget and enact all necessary revenue legislation on June 6th.

The \$1.35 billion proposed FY15 budget is \$29.9 million, or 2.3%, more than the FY14 budget and proposes to use \$36.4 million in "one-time" fund balances. ("Fund balances" are generated from savings achieved during execution of the budget.) The \$1.35 billion operating budget proposal is 2% less than actual spending in Fiscal Year 2008 adjusted for inflation.

The proposed operating budget provides for the following increases over current year spending:

- \$7 million for increased enrollment (but no substantial "qualitative" programmatic improvements) in AACPS at the prescribed \$7,713 per student "Maintenance of Efforts" funding rate;
- 20 additional "badged" police officers to staff a "sub-station" at Arundel Mills Mall;
- 8 additional EMS personnel to provide additional, peak-time ambulance/EMS service;
- additional operating hours for County libraries;
- reductions in vehicle maintenance backlog and average age of the County vehicle fleet; and
- initiation of the Retiree Health Insurance Funding Plan.

Pay accounts were provided a 3% increase over FY14 funding levels and \$3.3 million to fully restore the Revenue Reserve ("Rainy Day") Fund.

Collectively these increases in MOE, out-year Retiree Healthcare Reserve, increased public safety staffing and pay increases account for the projected increase in FY15 tax revenue.

With increasing property tax assessments, the Charter's Property Tax Revenue Cap will limit the average property tax increase to \$11. This rate amounts to a tax avoidance of \$16.50 for the average property owner, what it is otherwise permitted to be: the rate of inflation or 4.5%,

whichever is lower. The income tax rate remains at 2.56%. There will be no increase in County utility rates for water, sewer/wastewater, or storm water management.

In the \$244 million capital budget, Severna Park and the Broadneck area schools are treated very well. Funding is provided to start construction (within a matter of weeks) of the new Severna Park High School and the renovation and expansion of Benfield Elementary School. Funding to replace the Arnold Elementary School is programmed for FY17. With the fall completion of the new Eastern District Police Station, much of our community infrastructure will soon be brought up to date. The upgrade of our storm water management infrastructure will continue to slowly improve our community waterways.

Importantly, the FY15 capital budget provides \$2.7 million for construction of Phase II of the Broadneck Peninsula Trail between Bay Dale Drive and Green Holly Drive; \$17 million for County road resurfacing/reconstruction, and \$2 million for two dredging projects after several years of anemic funding.

Elsewhere in the County, funding is provided for a new Police Training Academy; upgrades to the County information technology backbone network; and \$3.8 million for Phase 1 of the South Shore Trail, a new, paved multi-use trail utilizing the abandoned railroad bed between Annapolis and Odenton.

The proposed FY15 County budget can be viewed at:
<http://www.aacounty.org/Budget/FY2015.cfm>

I will be seeking additional funding to improve the effectiveness of our mosquito spraying program, to possibly eliminate the “wait list” for communities seeking to participate in the program, and to improve the public information program on treating breeding sites and conditions for mosquitos.

After considerable testimony and interest from the public on community grants, I would like to see the amount of grant funding in FY2015 increased. I believe there is wide support on the Council to revisit this issue and potentially increase the amount of funding this year.

Finally, I strongly urge everyone to vote in the June 24th primary election. There is nothing more important that you can do that day than vote if you have not done so during the June 12-19 early voting period at Severna Park Library.