

## FY17 Budget Community Engagement Summary

*This document includes all of the questions and comments received at the community outreach events supported by staff during the FY17 budget process – including Community Meetings, webinars, and “live Tweet”.*

### Questions

#### **Are we doing anything about growth or are we just reacting to it?**

Our community has great schools, a high quality of life. Albemarle is known around the state for our growth management policies, that we keep our growth into our development areas, and without those, our growth rate would likely be higher. Our population rate of growth is considered moderate – not high.

#### **The slide about costs our community incurs that others do not included Bright Stars – isn’t that a grant-funded program?**

Bright Stars receives grant funding from the state and some local foundations, but that covers less than half of the cost of operating the program. The balance is funded with local revenues.

#### **What is causing the divergence in slope between projected revenues and expenditures?**

The cost of meeting mandates and obligations for both local government and schools is growing more rapidly than our revenue sources, which rely primarily on real property tax revenues. Real estate growth is growing less quickly than cost for mandates and obligations.

#### **What’s the median home value in Albemarle today?**

\$285,000

#### **How does the presence of UVa effect our budget?**

Albemarle County doesn’t have any direct expenditures to UVa. While there is no tax revenue from the University, it’s generally understood that its presence drives our economy, which positively effects our budget, including tax revenues from meals and lodging.

#### **When was the last efficiency study done?**

2008

#### **It seems to me that the County is well-run, well-managed – why are we reluctant to raise the tax rate?**

The conversation we’re having now is just that. The tax rate has gone up 10 cents in 10 years. Raising real property tax rates is one option, but how far we go and how fast has to come from the Board and the community. What future do we want and how do we get there? We need to see what the priorities are for spending. The case can be made that our tax rate is not adequate to support the levels of service people want.

#### **What is the city’s tax rate?**

95 cents per \$100 assessed value. The City also has taxing authority that Albemarle does not. The city can tax cigarettes, they can tax meals and lodging at higher rates than counties can. The state legislature does not allow counties the same authority as cities.

#### **Clarify the percentage of revenues received from local revenues – on one slide it indicated 60% of revenue is from real estate, but another says 44%?**

Local revenues are 44% of overall revenues, with 60% of local revenues from real estate.

**So you're proposing a 2-year budget for this year – that will coincide with elections?**

The two-year budget process will begin with CY18, which happens to coincide with the presidential election.

**Our community has 135,000 people and we have two governments, two police departments, etc. I think we may be in a place where we could have efficiencies. Is there any movement there?**

This budget specifically proposes that with the efficiency study. Details are still not worked out, but the County Executive and the City Manager have spoken about it. It might not be combining school systems, but it might include something like a joint purchasing office. Regional services are where the country is moving and we think we can do more here in Albemarle.

**Can you talk about the impact of the change in proffer policy by the General Assembly?**

In the future, proffers will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. The justification for a proffer is much more stringent now. We're still assessing the impacts of this, but it will severely limit the proffers coming to the county.

**How does the rate compare to neighboring counties?**

Albemarle's rate is much higher than our neighboring counties, with the exception of Fluvanna, which is proposing a rate of 94 cents this year, mostly because of the high school. It is good practice to look at peer counties around the state, however, and our rate is roughly in the middle of those.

**What about other revenues? How are those coming in and how do they compare to other counties?**

Federal and state revenues have been level across the Commonwealth. Other communities for a larger commercial tax base have been able to keep their real property tax rates more stable over the past several years.

**What's Albemarle's mix of residential/commercial revenues? Can you assess commercial properties differently than current practice to bring in more revenue?**

Right now Albemarle's mix is around 80:20, we're looking to change that through the newly-created Office of Economic Development. Our methods for assessment for real estate and business are somewhat limited by legislation.

**Why is the Woodbrook expansion not in the CIP?**

During the CIP process, which precedes the annual budget process, that redistricting could alleviate the issue. As the School Board has worked through their process, they have more recently indicated they would like to do something beyond redistricting, either through an expansion or a new school – neither of which were in the CIP.

**Why did the School Board determine redistricting was not a sufficient solution?**

The School Board determined through their review process that it would not be a long-term solution to growth.

**How can we expand public transportation from outside the urban ring?**

Jaunt provides some transit service outside of the urban ring currently. The proposed FY17 budget includes a new route to Hollymead and to 5<sup>th</sup> Street Station.

**Who are we really benefitting when we offer language immersion but refuse adequate translator services?**

Albemarle local government offers language assistance in many of our divisions, including police, social services, and emergency communications. Albemarle County Public Schools and the School Board develop and approve the public school's line item budget.

**How are you initiating the WIOA (Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act)? Through public agencies or educational institutions?**

Piedmont Workforce Network is responsible for WIOA in our region, more information is available by visiting their [website](#).

**Does the County have a set increase in expenditures per person?**

County Departments prepare their annual budget requests based on needs, not population growth.

**Is the quality of employee healthcare decreasing as costs have increased?**

No.

**Does the land use / funds disproportionately support households that are already affluent? Why is that defensible if so?**

The Land Use Policy benefits Albemarle County by providing landowners with a financial incentive to keep rural lands in rural uses – it alleviates development pressure to subdivide land, provides a break to landowners engaged in agricultural or forestry activities, preserves open spaces, and helps keep critical habitat intact.

**Is there a way for residents to query and find out “how do I benefit from County programs?”**

The [2015 Annual Report](#) shows how Albemarle County spends \$1, including on education, public safety, human services, parks & recreation, etc. See page 9 to learn more.

**Are reassessment values depressed because of a glut of housing? Have there been too any units approved?**

Reassessment values are in-line with national trends.

**Comments**

It would be interesting to know why Montgomery County has relatively fewer expenditures per capita than the other peer counties in Virginia.

Your baseline for real estate values begins in 2007, which was at the peak of real estate values. You should look further back for a more realistic look.

Pot holes and trash on Earlysville Rd and Dickerson Rd!

VDOT maintains the roads in the County. However, you might consider adopting a stretch of those roadways, more information is available by visiting their [website](#).

Concern raised about the Woodbrook Elementary School design funding and eventual construction and impacts on the Woodbrook neighborhood.

Concern raised about the rate of increase on reassessment of the resident's property.

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Concern that the Route 29 Solutions construction and increased assessments/tax rate will lead to home values depreciating in Albemarle County.

Central Virginia Restorative Justice asked for funding to be restored.

A resident offered that a bond referendum may be needed to fund future capital needs.

A woman who reads my blog suggested a possible cost-saving measure to me today for Albemarle's FY2017 budget. I had told her that an efficiency study was going to involve a consultant, was going to be done in conjunction with the City of Charlottesville, and that the price tag in Albemarle's budget was \$125,000. She immediately said instead of hiring an outside consultant that existing staff from Charlottesville should do the study of the County and provide the County with a report and existing staff from the County should do the study of the City and provide the City with a report. I thought her suggestion was worth forwarding to you. Makes financial sense to me and also has some cross-training and partnership attributes to it.

CDD per capita looks substantially larger than any other jurisdiction. Time to cut.

Interesting that the health insurance cost increase so much. Another indication of the failure of the Affordable Care Act.

I love County Parks.

The slides should clarify if the home value shown on the slide showing tax bills over the past several years is using the average home value or the median home value.

The County should clarify that the real estate assessment growth is not uniform throughout the County – many homeowners have a higher rate of growth in tax bills because of higher assessment rates.

The County has a structural imbalance. The comprehensive plan may be a reason for that - perhaps 5% development area is not a sufficient base.

The land use program is a \$16M program that supports wealthy land owners in rural areas, but we are struggling to find any money to support urban area residents with the infrastructure needed. That is not equitable.

The County should do more to raise awareness of and reduce or eliminate the Revenue Sharing Agreement:

- Send a press release whenever we write the check to the City
- Any time the City backs out of an agreement, as with RSWA, the County should reduce the Revenue Sharing payment by whatever funds are expended
- County should ask state legislators to look at the Agreement
- County should hire an attorney to fight the Agreement in court, paying a percentage of the savings if the case is successful.