

REMARKS

FISCAL YEAR 2023 BUDGET RECONCILIATION AND ADOPTION

THE HONORABLE CALVIN S. HAWKINS, II

CHAIR, PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY COUNCIL

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 1, 2022 (*as prepared for delivery*)

Good Afternoon! I have the privilege of reporting that the Council has by consensus today, adopted the new and balanced **\$5 Billion** County Operating Budget.

It's been a tough couple of years. Despite our extraordinary challenges, this new spending plan, which I continue to call "The People's Budget" gives Prince Georgians more hope for our future than at any time since March 2020. By all indications, this fiscal year will be better.

Last year, my remarks announced an adopted County Budget that would cautiously begin the process of creating a path forward from the impacts of the devastating, historic and unprecedented global pandemic. Over the last year, we have begun to focus on the many opportunities before Prince George's County.

I applaud County Executive Angela Alsobrooks and her Executive and Budget teams, as well as our Council Administrator Robert Williams and the Legislative Branch budget team for our collective achievement with this budget. We need this kind of solidarity now, more than ever.

Budget adoption is certainly among the most important duties of the Legislative Branch and this Council, and every year, the Council's appreciation for our partners in this process grows deeper.

Madam County Executive, please know this Council holds in high esteem, your firm and decisive leadership, and commend your committed partnership with us as we work together to move Prince George's County forward.

Acknowledging the skillful budget leadership of Chief Administrative Officer Tara Jackson and Budget Director Stanley Earley, the Council appreciates the careful and thorough assembly of the budget document handed down to us in March.

Thank you all for working together with us to ensure that County Government resources are refocused on shared priorities for education, public safety, economic development, quality of life and environment, healthy communities, youth development, and a strong, sustainable, and *inclusive* recovery from COVID-19.

I want to express our gratitude for the strong support of our federal and state partners who have moved in lockstep with us along this journey to ensure key investments as our County rebounds. You've been right there on the frontlines for Prince Georgians, especially when we needed you most, and we look forward to your continued leadership to ensure the federal and state resources necessary to support the County's recovery.

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As we welcome the new leadership of Planning Board Chairman Peter Shapiro, I want to take this opportunity to also extend a special note of gratitude to recently retired Planning Board Chair Elizabeth Hewlett and the Park and Planning team. You have been tremendous partners as we move forward with excitement to now implement the County's new Zoning Ordinance – the first such update in 50 years.

I want to thank the stout-hearted people of Prince George's County for your extraordinary resilience and partnership with us to keep our communities safe and well. Through testing, vaccinations, boosters, and following the guidance for masking, physical distancing, and hygiene practices when appropriate, you are making our progress possible.

This virus is tough, and we must keep at it. We don't know what path this pandemic will take, but if we continue to work together and remain vigilant, we will continue moving forward safely together.

I was once a County employee, and I know firsthand the commitment it takes to do the job well, and the extra dedication required to serve through times such as these. To each of you – Thank You. Your excellent service to County residents and to us is second to none! You are giving new meaning to the phrase – “other duties as assigned,” and we thank you. Among the wisest investments we can make is in our County employees, who will see a measure of appreciation in this budget.

My colleagues and I on this Council are proud to have the privilege of collaborating with all our partners, especially on this budget. In the words of Nelson Mandela, “Our human compassion binds us the one to the other – not in pity or patronizingly, but as human beings who have learned how to turn our common suffering into hope for the future.”

I offer my personal and sincere gratitude to my colleagues serving on this august body - my co-leader, Vice-Chair and District 9 Council Member Sydney Harrison; District 1 Council Member Tom Dernoga; District 2 Council Member Deni Taveras; District 3 Council Member Dannielle Glaros; District 4 Council Member Todd M. Turner; District 5 Council Member Jolene Ivey; District 6 Council Member Johnathan Medlock; District 7 Council Member Rodney Streeter; District 8 Council Member Edward Burroughs III; and At-Large Council Member Mel Franklin, for your teamwork and significant contributions to the success of this FY 2023 budget document – the result of our continued commitment to a sound and responsible fiscal strategy.

Please join me in a round of applause for Council Members Taveras, Glaros, and Turner, as we honor their service and expertise on behalf of the residents of Prince George's County. This is their last budget adoption as a member of this County Council, but we will benefit from their contributions far into the future and for generations to come.

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I also want to thank our newest Council Members – Edward Burroughs and Johnathan Medlock for coming in and rolling up their sleeves to get right to work, and I acknowledge with deep appreciation the enduring contributions of former District 6 Council Member Derrick Leon Davis, to the fiscal and economic development of Prince George's County.

Each Council Member continues to be a tremendous asset to this County, and certainly to this critically important budget process.

The economic growth we are seeing; yet another Triple-A Bond Rating from Wall Street; and the reopening of our schools, government, businesses, and places of worship offer concrete evidence of our County's solidarity through the very worst of times.

**FY23 Council-Initiated Budget Investments - Highlights**

This Council is guided by two pressing obligations – first, to respond to the needs of Prince Georgians, especially our most vulnerable residents; and secondly, to make the best use of the County resources entrusted to us, distributing those resources equitably.

Our residents were heard throughout this budget process, and we have exerted our best efforts to deliver a budget document that addresses the changing priorities and growing needs of our community.

This year's budget negotiations were marked by fruitful collaboration, providing the framework for several important Council-initiated enhancements to strengthen our County's final FY 2023 spending plan. Here are some highlights:

**EDUCATION**

I have been proud to witness in-person graduation ceremonies for our schools! Congratulations Class of 2022! With a 12.2 – percent increase for the Board of Education, this budget continues to invest a vast majority of County revenues in education. We agree with the County Executive's **\$2.63 billion** spending appropriation, including continued support for a unique P3 Alternative Financing Program for school construction projects in the County – the first of its kind in the nation.

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

In another important step toward improving police accountability, the Council has ensured an additional one million dollars in FY 23 spending to support 'use of force' tracking. Also, in continuing efforts to boost the fight against rising cases of violent crime, the Council added funding support for new police recruit hiring incentives, new enforcement technology, and new personnel in the Police Aviation Unit.

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## CORRECTIONS

Council budget enhancements support strategic planning and design to create a new Public-Private Partnership supporting capital improvements for corrections facilities. The Council also added monies to increase other important supports for incarcerated residents, including stipends for various religious representatives to address the various faith and spiritual needs of incarcerated residents.

## RE-ENTRY INITIATIVES

Successful reentry programs give former offenders opportunities to support themselves through legitimate and productive work, reducing recidivism and improving public safety. The Council moved an additional million dollars to support the implementation of the County's Re-Entry Program. The Circuit Court also received a financial boost to expand the capacity of its reentry courts.

## EXPANDING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

Local, small, minority and women-owned businesses form the backbone of our economy. With a \$5-million boost, the Council increased operating expenditures to provide critical assistance to support these businesses and with a three-year grant and loan program to promote transformative economic recovery and expansion for small and minority businesses in the County. Additionally, the Council directed federal American Rescue Plan Act funds to support the FSC First Level Up Program, providing small businesses with access to capital, training, and mentorship to elevate opportunity and accelerate post-pandemic recovery.

## MENTAL HEALTH

The Council increased funding in the FY 23 spending plan, for the County's five Youth Services bureaus, expanding mental health outreach for the County's young people.

## AGING IN PLACE

The Council has ensured that eligible seniors aging in place, will be getting some much-needed support with essential services including snow removal, tree removal, and basic home repairs, through the establishment of a 'Senior Support Services' program.

## ENVIRONMENTAL

Funding for additional environmental protections and clean communities was also included in the final budget plan adopted by the Council, with appropriations for illegal dumping surveillance cameras and support for a staff consultant for the implementation strategy for the County's Climate Change Action Plan.

### **Additional Council Enhancements:**

The Council also increased funding for cybersecurity enhancements at County libraries; established and funded a six-year program schedule in the County's Department of Public Works and Transportation for local County road repairs; and, supported immigration legal defense efforts in the Office of Human Rights, as well as provided funding support for labor trafficking unit to investigate incidents and enforce County's law against labor trafficking

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I want to offer another word of thanks to every stakeholder and champion for Prince George's County.

Tough times aren't over yet, but things are getting better, and I am a strong believer that when it's time to tell the story, Prince George's will be remembered as the bold, forward-focused community that worked together and got it right.

This concludes my remarks.

God bless you and God bless Prince George's County as we continue to move from strength to strength.

Thank you.

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