

An adjourned meeting of the Board of Supervisors of Albemarle County, Virginia, was held on February 20, 2008, beginning at 1:00 p.m., in Room 241 of the County Office Building on McIntire Road, Charlottesville, Virginia. This meeting was adjourned from February 13, 2008.

PRESENT: Mr. Kenneth C. Boyd, Mr. Lindsay G. Dorrier, Jr., Ms. Ann H. Mallek, Mr. Dennis S. Rooker, Mr. David Slutzky and Ms. Sally H. Thomas.

ABSENT: None.

OFFICERS PRESENT: County Executive, Robert W. Tucker, Jr., County Attorney, Larry W. Davis, Clerk, Ella W. Jordan (afternoon meeting), and Senior Deputy Clerk, Meagan Hoy (night meeting).

Agenda Item No. 1. The meeting was called to order at 1:04 p.m., by the Chairman, Mr. Boyd.

Agenda Item No. 2. Work Session: Preliminary School Division Budget Overview.

Present from the School Division were: Chair of the School Board, Brian Wheeler, Vice-Chair, Diantha H. McKeel, Superintendent, Dr. Pamela Moran, Assistant Superintendent for Student Learning, Dr. Bruce Benson, and, Executive Director of Fiscal Services, Jackson Zimmerman.

Mr. Wheeler thanked the Supervisors for this opportunity to present the School Board's funding request for FY 2008-09. He and Ms. McKeel will both be making the presentation today using a PowerPoint slide show, and Dr. Moran, Dr. Benson and Mr. Zimmerman will be available to answer questions. After the presentation he will explain the School Board's contingency plan should additional revenues not become available. Their funding request is focused on the people in the classrooms, the people behind the front desks, the people driving the busses, the people maintaining facilities, and the people who coach the athletes.

Mr. Wheeler said in the classroom the most important factor driving student achievement is teacher quality. With the Supervisors' help with the compensation strategy and human resource initiatives, the School Division can move forward. Their Goal No. 3 is to recruit and retain the best workforce possible. Included is a request for competitive teacher and support staff salaries. With respect to professional development, the School Board is investing in the staff they have already recruited to work for Albemarle County, plus they want to provide new skills and new tools for long-term staff members to use.

Mr. Wheeler said the Schools' curriculum is called "Framework for Quality Learning." Their team is called the Professional Learning Community. That is something they invested in for professional growth of both teachers and administrators. He said a smart business invests a smart amount of money in professional development, but their investment has been flat, between three and four percent, because they have not been able to increase that amount.

Ms. McKeel said the School Board has a sense of stewardship for the community as does the Supervisors. For the School Board good stewardship is accountability in the way of student achievement and use of public dollars. As an example, last May they requested a Resource Utilization Study of the School Division. That was done long before the School Board knew the challenges it would face with this particular budget cycle. She has some information about the study that will be distributed at the end of this meeting. It is a timeline matrix showing how the Superintendent and School Board feel they might implement some suggestions from that study.

Ms. McKeel said in the way of student achievement, all of the County's schools are fully accredited. SAT scores are higher than ever. Currently 82 percent of the County's graduates attend some sort of college. Albemarle County was recognized by Expansion Magazine as a place where business is encouraged to locate because of workforce development and its high achieving school division. Sixty-four percent of middle, elementary and high schools were recognized by Governor Kaine for educational excellence.

Dr. Moran said Albemarle had two schools, Western Albemarle High School and Murray Elementary, recognized at the Governor's level for meeting top benchmarks for high performing students. There were a total number of 16 schools recognized and she is pleased that this division again exceeded expectations. It is above average in terms of the numbers of schools in the State which are top performers.

Mr. Wheeler said as to fiscal responsibility, in his transmittal letter with the budget document he noted many things the School Board has done to improve the budget process. First, Goal No. 5 in the Strategic Plan (efficient and wise use of resources) was set as a strategic goal. Then the School Board hired Dr. Moran as its Superintendent and charged her to lead the way on tough decisions. He showed a slide outlining some of the steps taken over the past year including cuts of \$3.4 million from last year's funding request. Last summer Dr. Bill Boshier from the Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute was hired to conduct the Resource Utilization Study; he spent five months "turning over every stone" in the School Division and also met with every principal and every member of the Supervisors.

Mr. Wheeler said the School Board is taking every recommendation and integrating it into the Division's continuous improvement plan. It was a very candid assessment. He gives credit to Dr. Moran because it is good for a "CEO" to ask an outside person to come in and challenge the status quo. At this time, he handed to the Supervisors a copy of the matrix mentioned earlier. It talks to about how the

School Board took each of the recommendations and tried to figure out which budget year they might impact. The public questioned whether anything would be done with the study. Within 10 business days of the School Board's work session on the Resource Utilization Study, Dr. Moran gave them this matrix outlining what would be done with the information. He said the last bullet on the slide says the School Board's operational funding request only increases by 2.6 percent, which is less than the CPI which was about 4.1 percent in December. He said school revenues from all sources, State, Federal and Local, as of early February only increased by 1.68 percent.

Mr. Boyd asked if that 2.6 percent is what the School Board budgeted this year, but is not relative to what they will actually spend. Mr. Wheeler said that was correct.

Ms. Thomas said the news coming from Richmond is only bad because there are two or three different budgets being considered at this time.

Mr. Wheeler said things are bad and only getting worse. The School Board will continue to update the Supervisors as they get information. Their funding request is \$151.75 million, a 2.6 percent increase. They recognize that in presenting this fiscally-constrained funding request they have to be more efficient. They do look at all areas of the budget each year in order to make the best recommendation possible.

Ms. McKeel showed on the screen a comparison of teacher salaries. She said the salary for beginning teachers now was the top of the teacher scale 10 years ago. The health insurance benefits are a joint board strategy and are in line with the competitive market. The increasing certification requirements the Schools must operate under restrict the School Board's hiring and placement of teachers to a greater degree than ever. There are increasing SOQ requirements which require FTEs. She showed a copy of their Standard of Accreditation mandates, pages and pages of mandates. The LEP positions (Limited English Proficiency) are mandated; the requirement is for 17 positions per 1,000 students. Technology is another area where there are mandates; it requires essentially two positions per 1,000 students. She said this is a technology-driven society; one of the biggest expenses in the Schools budget each year is maintaining technology for students.

Mr. Wheeler said the "No Child Left Behind" requirements are a mixed blessing in a positive way. They do get a lot of data which allows the School Board to make data-driven decisions about initiatives. Someone called in to a radio program this morning to ask one of the Supervisors why the School Board needs math specialists to teach teachers how to teach math. That was a new initiative last year because data showed that the Schools were not doing well in middle school math. Middle school years were added in SOL requirements by the Federal Government. That was good data so the Schools could make a course correction and get better instruction in classrooms. However, that comes at a cost; administering 30,000 tests takes a lot of staff time. The Federal requirements for Albemarle are pretty much of a break even proposition. They spend about as much to administer "No Child Left Behind" as the Federal government gives in total. The Schools would probably be better off telling the Federal government "thanks", but "no thanks" we do not need your requirements because we are going to do best practices anyway. He thinks that is important for the Supervisors to know.

Ms. Moran said a few school divisions tried to secede from that last year and the State Department said it was not an option for them to exercise; the Federal government said the whole State would lose their Federal money if anybody tried to pull out.

Mr. Wheeler said no matter whether it is Washington or Richmond saying what needs to be done, the School Board will eliminate the achievement gap, no matter what. That is the goal for the community.

Ms. McKeel said a main focus of the School Board for stewardship is meeting the challenges of student achievement. Albemarle County has an increasingly diverse educational marketplace. The responsibility of the School Board is to be the first choice for K-12 education in Albemarle County. The educated community and the taxpayers expect it and demand high academic achievement from the schools. Albemarle County is a school division with rural, suburban and urban schools. The County's demographics are changing a great deal. They just heard from the principal of one of the smaller outlying schools that the enrollment at that school is up by 40 students this year. In investigating this, one reason they found was that because of the economy people are moving back to Albemarle to live with parents and it has caused this increase in enrollment.

Ms. Thomas said the way the School System counts a child as homeless has to do with their not living in their own home. She was shocked to find about the 360 homeless children in the school system. She asked if that is the story behind some of that number. Ms. McKeel said it could be. In the urban area there is a change in demographics. For years at Greer Elementary the children were mostly drawn from University faculty. That is no longer true. Now the International Rescue Group is affecting the urban ring schools, as well as population shifts. Then, this year they are beginning to see the impact from the economy as folks are making different decisions and coming home to live with family.

Mr. Slutzky said to clarify the number Ms. Thomas mentioned, he does not think it is the number of homeless children in the schools, but the number who became homeless in the last 12 months. There is actually a larger number that is not being tracked which would fit in the definition of homeless.

Mr. Wheeler asked that Dr. Moran mention some of the things heard from the focus groups on the budget with respect to workforce development. Dr. Moran said the main challenge of the Schools today is workforce development for a younger generation of people. "Baby boomers" are exiting employment at a high rate so the Schools need to find a teacher workforce. This is more competitive than it was five or more years ago. The demand for workforce competency today is different from what was expected 20+

years ago. Whether it is working behind a cash register or even in construction, every employee needs to have a high level of competency. Some people are saying that in terms of workforce readiness, a community college degree is the new high school degree. The reality is that many careers demand post graduate degrees or certificate licensure.

Dr. Moran said this community needs to have jobs for the kids being educated for the workforce. How can the Schools ensure there are jobs for the people graduating from the schools so they have the resources to live and work in this community? How can the Schools ensure that the skills being taught are the kind of skills needed? She said Albemarle County has the most highly-educated community in Virginia. The reality is that the County also has a significant number of people living below the poverty line. Twenty-five percent of County residents make over \$100,000 per family, but about 20 to 22 percent are living below the Federal poverty line. She said the people who want the best of the best and extended opportunities, coupled with kids working below the achievement graph because they come out of families that do not have that same educational background and experience, is a challenge that not every school division in Virginia faces. It is a great challenge to have because it causes the Schools to have a different focus on how it spends resources.

Mr. Wheeler said that was a broad brush look at some of the Schools' challenges. He said the School Board asked Dr. Moran to prepare a funding request aligned with its strategic goals. Goal No. 1 is making sure that each student can be successful; that is a place where they need to help students more. Goal No. 2 is to eliminate the achievement gap by preparing graduating students to be high performers and ready to enter the workforce. Goal No. 3 relates to the workforce. Goal No. 4 is dedicated to continuous improvement. That means having Albemarle recognized as a world-class school business, not just a school system, but a business. The final goal, Goal No. 5, is to be as efficient and effective as possible.

Mr. Wheeler said he mentioned earlier the things they have done to improve the budget process. They are listed in his transmittal letter. He referred the Board to the chart on the screen, and said to look at the second to the last bulletin. This is where their work with the General Assembly has been important this last year. They invested time to work with the General Assembly delegation. He would like to give an update on what they learned about "cost to compete" and adjusting the Schools composite index.

Mr. Wheeler said he and Dr. Moran met with Delegates Toscano and Bell and House Appropriations staff. They asked why Northern Virginia localities can get extra help; they learned that the extra help they get is substantial - they get another 10 percent for teacher salaries and another 25 percent for classified staff. If Albemarle County got that extra amount from Richmond, it would total another \$3.2 million. But, there is zero chance of getting those extra funds. Mr. Bell suggested reviewing the composite index and how it is calculated to see if the County's Revenue Sharing Agreement with the City might be included in that calculation. He went to Richmond and testified in front of the House Appropriations Committee to make the case that this is a budget amendment worth pursuing. Mr. Bell put in a couple of versions and Mr. Toscano put in another version. Basically, he learned that there is zero chance of getting the composite index adjusted or to get any accommodation for the Revenue Sharing Agreement. If the effective value of property in Albemarle County was taken and the composite index formula adjusted accordingly, Local Government would receive \$2.8 million.

Mr. Boyd asked what reason was given for not doing anything. Mr. Wheeler said one response he got was "Why should we help Albemarle with a tough legal situation?" Another delegate asked "Why should we adjust the composite index to help one locality?" If Richmond fairly took into account what it costs to live here and fairly took into account how much Albemarle pays to the City of Charlottesville that would be another \$6.0 million for Local Government.

Mr. Rooker asked the reason behind the decision on Cost to Compete. Mr. Wheeler said politics was the number one reason. Creating another jurisdiction that would be an island not contiguous to other Northern Virginia localities was another reason. It has come down as far as Culpeper, but staff was candid and said the jurisdictions have been aligned with senate districts in the General Assembly.

Dr. Moran said the formula used was backed into to justify each succeeding group added. Because Albemarle County is not contiguous (even though it is only one county away from Fredericksburg, Spotsylvania and Culpeper), movement from this district into a contiguous district that is recruiting from Albemarle is a critical issue.

Ms. McKeel said these are not bills that can be tracked for Cost to Compete; they are added on for districts to budget. Someone does not put forth a bill that is actually voted on. It is a rider to the budget. Albemarle would need to have someone put a rider on the budget and so far no one has been willing to do that.

Mr. Wheeler said he was glad he went to Richmond. He supports Albemarle's delegates for trying. It seems to be one of those things that need to be repeatedly asked for. He does not think the Schools should stop asking for it. The composite index adjustment makes more sense to them. The staff of the House Appropriations Committee is very opposed to cost to compete because they do not want to make exceptions in their process for the budget.

Mr. Boyd said that after hearing what transpired, it is what was predicted by the Legislators when they met with the Supervisors at the end of last year. It is exactly what they said would happen.

Mr. Wheeler referred to the next slide which shows the Schools' Long-Range (Five-Year) Plan. He shares an interest in seeing longer range numbers. This funding request is the School's first two-year

funding request. They are asking that the Supervisors appropriate only the first year of that plan. In the fifth year of the plan there is a \$4.7 million gap between projected expenses and projected, available resources. This is a topic for the joint boards to discuss. It reflects the biggest driver in the budget which is the Joint Compensation Strategy. This says to him that it is not sustainable. Every year they have been able to make it balanced, but they are getting to the point where there is less and less available to cut. They are about to start cutting bone. It will begin to impact education in Albemarle County in a negative way. If cuts were easy they would have already been implemented. He said that as the Board of Supervisors looks at a balanced five-year plan, they ask it to consider what their trend shows. Teacher compensation and classified compensation is the biggest part of their budget. This suggests that there is a need for commonality in these five-year plans to make sure both entities end up balanced.

Mr. Wheeler said before he goes to the next slide, Dr. Moran, in her funding request, started at \$2.7 million less than the adopted budget for this school year. Some positions were eliminated and initiatives no longer needed were eliminated. That is part of showing the Supervisors and the public that the School Board is serious about its Goal No. 5 which is to make efficient use of resources. Dr Moran has asked her staff to review their operations so they can continue to build each budget carefully.

Dr. Moran said that sometimes there is the perception that the School Board automatically starts from whatever they had in their appropriated budget the previous year, and builds from that. Basically they have been "scrubbing" the budget, and then building from that point to meet the strategic goals of the School Board.

Mr. Wheeler said the number one thing that adds to the budget is compensation. That comes from the Joint Boards' Strategy. Compensation totally overwhelms everything else being put forward. Most of the major new initiatives are compensation.

Ms. McKeel said in looking at growth (slide on the screen), the ones in their funding request are specifically mandates - Special Education, English as a Second or Other Language and Instructional Technology staffing. The last piece is student growth and is what the School Board has projected as the enrollment increase. It is a total of 73 new students for next year - 23 more students because they gained 23 more students this year than were budgeted for. It is important to know that they do not staff the schools to these projections. They wait until the September 10 enrollment figures are known and then staff to the number of children actually in the seats. If moneys are saved by not hiring teachers because of over projections, that money rolls into their Fund Balance.

Mr. Wheeler said they will also move an assistant principal from one school to another if enrollment at that school drops and stays below a certain threshold for two years. Dr. Moran said they might end up eliminating that position entirely.

Ms. McKeel said that causes angst in the community sometimes, but the School Board tries to be fiscally responsible unlike some school divisions who hire to their projections.

Mr. Rooker referred to the chart showing growth mandates and said it shows an increase in the current year in Special Education people based on Federal mandates.

Mr. Wheeler said he is also Chair of the Piedmont Regional Education Program (PREP). Their staff had made assumptions about some expenses. Albemarle sends PREP information about how many slots it wants to use in that special education program. The other divisions in PREP are not as quick doing that so they have to "ballpark" things early, but when it turned out that the PREP expenses were not going to be that great, the School Board backed them out. Albemarle has a joint venture with Piedmont Virginia Community College and Piedmont Futures. The School Board challenged their request for support and found that they have a fund balance they can use. Their request will be addressed accordingly.

Ms. Thomas said in one of her e-mails someone was challenging that request so it is interesting that the School Board did that.

Mr. Wheeler said another question is whether it should be supported at all. If it is supported, it will be at a lower number than originally requested.

Dr. Moran said CATEC's Director adopted the School Board's focus of trying to build budgets based on need versus maintaining programs. He is actually adding a couple of programs next year at CATEC but is only asking for about \$28,000 in new money, which is basically for personnel increases. In reality, he scrubbed a couple of programs at CATEC in order to add in others. It is a similar process and a cost savings for the Schools.

Ms. McKeel said the CATEC Board is always looking for programs that either do not serve the students well or are not serving businesses in the community well. They have created a partnership with the community to figure out exactly what workforce development CATEC and Albemarle County need to serve.

Mr. Wheeler said in reference to the almost \$6.0 million mentioned earlier for compensation, when the School Board was first looking at that, the estimate from Local Government for new revenues was \$73,000 toward a \$6.0 million initiative to support compensation. The day that funding request was approved Mr. Tucker was able to make additional funds available through the penny on the CIP.

Mr. Wheeler said the School Board then cut over \$1.0 million. The first thing they cut was in administrative staffing; they cut \$400,000 out of the Central Office which was a recommendation from the Resource Utilization Study. The study said things could be done more efficiently in the central office, so the School Board took action and asked Dr. Moran to incorporate that immediately into this funding request regardless of what revenues became available. These are difficult decisions because there are real people involved in these positions.

Ms. McKeel reminded the Supervisors that the School Board cut \$200,000 from Central Office last year, so this is an additional \$400,000 cut.

Mr. Wheeler said they made a \$500,000 cut in operational expenditures related to school bus replacements. The Resource Utilization Study recommended that they look at the operation of transportation. A lot of big buses are running long routes and are not full. The study said it could be done more efficiently and at a lower per pupil cost. He said Albemarle County is the fifth largest locality in Virginia so it just naturally has longer bus runs. The School Board has been concerned about the cost of 70 passenger buses so decided to take \$500,000 from the Bus Replacement Fund and at some point in the future make a decision as to how transportation can be done better.

Mr. Wheeler said that Dr. Carole Hastings paid a visit to another locality which has a better cost per pupil. She found that in this other locality they were using cars for shorter trips. Albemarle County's School Board has had a philosophy that the biggest, safest bus possible should be used, and that is what led to buying 70-passenger busses. However, there are positives and negatives if only one type of big vehicle is bought.

Dr. Moran said at one time the Schools used cars. The Director of Transportation said that for safety issues the Schools needed to stop using cars. Such decisions are not made quickly but it is worth looking at again.

Mr. Slutzky said that last year many people said there was "fat" in the front office, so "cut, cut, cut." He thinks it was said that 65 percent of those dollars were to go to classroom activities with the remainder used for administration. By leaving only 35 percent for administration it sounds as though the Schools might be administratively light, and this year there is even a further reduction. Mr. Wheeler said that is not the School Board's assessment at this point. Their assessment is that they can make some cuts and stay within the 75 percent range. The School Board is trying to put those dollars in the classroom where they will have the biggest impact on student achievement. Lt. Governor Bolling says the average in Virginia is 60 percent; the average school division in the state only puts 60 percent of its resources into the classroom.

Mr. Boyd said it is worth clarifying that some administrative positions are classified as classroom positions. Mr. Zimmerman said assistant principals are considered to be classroom instructional. The 74 percent number is determined by the State Account Code Classification structure required by the Auditor of Public Accounts at the state level.

Mr. Boyd said he was always told that a lot of school systems interpret that differently. Mr. Zimmerman said there is an enormous variation of interpretation, but positions like high school principals, assistant principals and school secretaries are considered to be instructional personnel. However, nurses are considered to be administrative so the classifications do not necessarily make sense.

Mr. Wheeler said the School Board took Dr. Moran's recommendations, made some cuts and added just \$263,000 in initiatives. Those initiatives are ones Dr. Moran did not think could be funded until next year, but the School Board made more cuts than they added, such as the Specialty Center Focus which is something the Resource Utilization Study said was important.

Ms. Thomas asked for an explanation of this program. Mr. Wheeler said it will be similar to a math/science center at one of the high schools. It could be an international baccalaureate program like those offered in some school divisions. It is for specialty programs, like a magnet school, but not turning over an entire school to a specific theme. The School Board is comfortable with this because there are now two charter schools in the County. Albemarle is the only locality in Virginia with two charter schools.

Dr. Moran said the Resource Utilization Study recommended that specialty centers be developed. It gives students more choices. Also, many school divisions use specialty centers as a way to balance and rebalance enrollments across schools as a way of readdressing redistricting issues, or even CIP issues.

Ms. McKeel said these specialty centers would not just be targeted at a high-end population. Data shows that international baccalaureate programs have helped some divisions with achievement gap issues. The School Board is having a workshop about this topic at the end of the month and she invited the Supervisors and members of the community to attend.

Mr. Wheeler said the School Board put it in the budget as a placeholder. They did this expecting a specific request from staff for a pilot program. They need to know how it could be phased in and measurable targets would have to be set. Then, if it did not work, the School Board would "pull the plug."

Mr. Boyd asked if this would be similar to the ROTC program at Monticello High School. That was a specialty program of a similar type and he knows it has struggled in the past. Dr. Moran said it is still struggling.

Ms. McKeel noted funding for the Enterprise Center. She said it is a school for students who are having behavior problems. There has been a real change in the last of couple of years in the students coming in with disciplinary issues. There are students in the schools that are not letting other students learn or not letting teachers teach. The School Board found that they do not have the programs or the tiers of offerings necessary. Rather than expelling or suspending these students and have them "go to the mall" or become a problem for the community, the division has to fund programs specifically for some of these children to help them get their GEDs or their high school education so they can get "back on track." It does not serve anybody for the Schools to send them out into the community with long-term suspensions or expulsions.

Ms. McKeel said until now the Schools have only been mandated to do this for Special Education students, there have not been programs or the funds needed to deal with children not entitled to receive special education classes.

Mr. Rooker asked how other school divisions have dealt with this issue and if they have been successful. Dr. Moran said they have found that when kids get disconnected from school by being expelled or put into long-term suspension, it is difficult to get them back on track. Kids who do not have parents with the resources to find them a placement outside of a public school either become a dropout or go to a correction center. To educate a kid in a correctional center costs about two and one-half times the County's per pupil cost. The School Board is trying to build some structured system so if a child cannot exist in a public school setting, they will be able to provide them support such as homebound support or linking up with Region 10. These services would be provided so these children might get back into Albemarle's schools.

Mr. Dorrier said there are programs such as the Boys' and Girls' Club that are not part of the school system but which offer structured programs for these kids. Dr. Moran said they have talked with the Boys' and Girls' Club about the potential to help run some alternative programming. They do not feel they want to get involved at this time. Some kids do go to the Southwood Center because they can get off of a bus at that location.

Ms. McKeel said people may ask why the School Board would add programs if it does not have enough money for existing programs. It is because the School Board has seen some of these cases for years.

Mr. Wheeler referred to slide 14. It shows that Dr. Moran started with a budget of \$152.9 million. The School Board made some adjustments and when they approved it unanimously on February 7, it was down to \$151.7 million with a funding gap of \$1.3 million.

Mr. Boyd asked if the administrative staffing deletion of \$400,000 is essentially just freezing existing jobs. Dr. Moran said it actually eliminates positions.

Mr. Boyd asked if they are open positions. Dr. Moran responded by saying there may be one position that is still open.

Mr. Wheeler said the School Board was \$1.31 million short at the time it approved this funding request and that was thanks to Mr. Tucker's last minute adjustment with CIP resources. However, the final total is an ever moving target.

Mr. Slutzky said it is only fair to note that the Supervisor's have not embraced taking that penny off of the CIP transfer. Mr. Wheeler said he realizes that, but the School Board used that money to help balance its budget.

Mr. Dorrier said he had a question about the School's connection with Piedmont Virginia Community College. Albemarle is teaching some college courses in the high schools using high school teachers. Therefore, PVCC gets the benefit since it does not have to pay that high school teacher. Dr. Moran said it's essentially a "wash." The Schools do not pay PVCC tuition for those courses and Piedmont does not have to pay teachers to teach those courses.

Mr. Dorrier said he knows the program has been growing over the last few years and more and more high school students are taking college classes. He wonders if the Schools could work out an arrangement with PVCC so funding would show up on the books and the Schools could get some credit for it. Dr. Moran said she thinks Dr. Friedman would say Piedmont would be pleased to give the Schools credit if it agreed to pay them tuition for the kids taking the courses. One positive thing about this program is that presently there are more than 2,000 Albemarle students taking college courses when 10 years ago there were only 300. Governor Warner said three years ago that it was critical that kids leave high school with some college credits, and that is happening at schools all over the state. The Schools believe this is not just an amenity, but is essential in this day and age and is valued by the community and families. It also helps to ensure that the kids are workforce ready.

Mr. Dorrier wondered if that could be used as a method of getting state money from the Legislature. Mr. Wheeler said he does not have an answer to that question. One of the things the School Board is looking at as a source of revenue is working with Piedmont College to recognize that they are making heavy use of the School's buildings. At this time they are using those buildings free of charge in the evenings. They are looking at the potential of charging to use their facilities.

Mr. Rooker asked if anyone can take those classes or are they only for County kids. Ms. McKeel said in the evening anyone can take courses. At Monticello High School there are 19 PVCC classes taught in the evenings. Right now PVCC is not charged for janitorial or custodial services or electricity.

Mr. Dorrier asked if these are PVCC teachers teaching these night classes or high school teachers. Ms. McKeel said they are PVCC teachers who come in and use the School's classrooms in the evening. Dr. Moran said that essentially Monticello High School and Albemarle High School become satellite campuses for PVCC in the evenings. Ms. McKeel said the School Board has partnered with PVCC, but when there are tight budget times this would be a way of generating additional revenue.

Mr. Dorrier said none of that shows up on the books. Ms. McKeel said it does not show as a loss which it what it is.

Mr. Rooker asked if any discussion has been initiated with PVCC. Dr. Moran said the School Board opened the door on that conversation about a year ago. They have tried to see it as a benefit to the community, just like allowing the YMCA to use their facilities. A lot of people use School facilities and are able to do it in terms of being a donation to the community. She said Mr. Zimmerman tracks that for the Schools. In reality the Schools may not be in a position where it can extend community hospitality considering the increased costs of Building Services. Right now they have put all schools on notice that custodial positions will not be replaced if there is a vacancy (there are frozen positions at this time). Already, teachers are complaining about their trash cans not being emptied as often as they would like. The reality is that the School Board needs to look at every potential revenue enhancement that might help offset the cost of running the schools.

Mr. Wheeler said he would now show slide 15 which gives an update on what is happening with State revenues. Since the School Board approved this funding request, they have learned that because of Governor Kaine's recent choices, the Schools are expecting \$0.5 to \$1.0 million less in State funding. This puts their expense/revenue gap between \$1.8 and \$2.3 million. It has increased since the School Board took its action. The Schools are expecting additional bad news that may lead to another \$250,000 being added to that number.

Mr. Wheeler said to wrap up he will thank the staff of the School Board for all its work in putting together this budget. The School Board is asking unanimously that the Board of Supervisors support this funding request. They understand the Supervisors are facing difficult decisions, but the School Board revisited its budget process while being true to its goals, and its Strategic Plan, and being as fiscally responsible as possible. They made some tough choices just to get the request to this point. He said this is a good time to break for discussion and come back to the contingency plan later. If no additional revenues become available, the School Board has discussed other cuts, but they have not been prioritized.

Mr. Dorrier asked the status of the proposal regarding charging for riding buses. Mr. Wheeler said that is in the contingency plan. The School Board has looked for other sources of revenue, so to make sure they looked at every possible idea, they looked at school bus fees, athletic fees, and fees for use of facilities. There is not a specific proposal about charging for transportation. However, Dr. Boshers' report said they should run a more efficient transportation system. One of the ways to do that might be to have a sign-up system where parents would sign up and commit to a seat on the bus.

Mr. Dorrier asked if the buses are full now. Mr. Wheeler said they are not, they are very empty. That is one of the School Board's concerns. The School Board considered having people sign for a seat on the bus, but if they only wanted to use it a couple of times a year, no progress would have been made. Having a fee might flush out the people who were actually going to use a bus.

Mr. Slutzky asked if the School Board also looked at charging a fee for student parking. Mr. Wheeler said that at this time, there is a fee of \$35 a year for a high school student to park at their school. They would have to think about how high that fee would have to go to change behavior.

Ms. McKeel said the School Board has not made a decision about any of these options. They will consider them when they know more about revenues. Dr. Moran said if the Supervisors hear that the busses are only partially full, in reality about 88 percent of kids enrolled in the Schools have used a school bus one or more days. Some students use the bus only one or two days out of the year on an emergency basis, others ride everyday, etc. The School Board worries that if a registration form were sent out, most parents would register their child even if they never intended to use the bus service at all.

Mr. Boyd asked if the School Board had considered pulling back some of their routes. When his kids were in school the bus did not come to their house, but now it does. They only had to walk a block and a half; he does understand that there are security issues now. Mr. Wheeler said he has received only about five E-mails concerning this since it was noted in the newspaper. The School Board gets complaints that the bus is not close enough to a house, or the child has to walk too far, but now people are saying they would be willing to walk if they do not have to pay to ride the bus. The Resource Utilization Study said the subject should be studied; the Transportation Department is committed to updating their routing software and the way routes are established.

Mr. Rooker asked if they know how many seats are actually used on a daily basis. Dr. Moran said they maintain a manifest. The Schools are required to monitor usage because of safety issues as well as just keeping track of where kids are.

Mr. Rooker said if the Schools considered switching any routes to a car or van system that information would be needed. Ms. McKeel said this is a big county. Some children ride one way for over an hour. It is important to not put children on buses for long periods of time if possible. It is a balance but six percent of the Schools' budget is in transportation costs.

Mr. Wheeler said the bigger issue in the budget concerns compensation. It might be possible to get a couple of hundred thousand out of a bus fee, and that might make that six percent a little smaller but more efficient.

Mr. Boyd asked the amount of the Schools' Fund Balance last year. Mr. Wheeler said that Fund balance is gone. Because tax years and fiscal years are not aligned, they are taking a hit this fiscal year. Staff's recommendation is that the School Board apply the vast majority of the Fund Balance to eliminating that shortfall.

Ms. McKeel said it is important that people know their Fund Balance is essentially a "rainy day fund." The money not spent in different categories in the budget rolls into the Fund Balance. It is essentially a savings account from the prior year. She thinks the Fund Balance will be about \$283,000.

Mr. Boyd asked if there is a year's lag on that amount. Ms. McKeel said there is always a year's lag on it.

Mr. Zimmerman said at the end of the past year, their Fund Balance would have been \$4.5 million if operations had been shut down on June 30. They appropriated approximately \$1.0 million of that Fund Balance for the current fiscal year so there was \$3.6 million available for use. The Schools have a \$3.0 million shortfall in local revenues for the current fiscal year. There is an estimated State shortfall of over \$430,000.00, but that may grow substantially in the upcoming month. Then, there are staffing freezes they will count on to ease that situation, plus some operational budget reductions in order to make the current fiscal year. Assuming all of those things happen and they get dollars from them, they estimate there will be between \$200,000 and \$300,000 available from the Fund Balance.

Dr. Moran said they were able to build that Fund Balance higher than normal due to the hiring freeze; also there were freezes on spending that began in the winter months and continued until the end of the fiscal year. They basically built that through lapse as well as through things they did not buy. The rollover of that has been a "rainy day fund." It will probably take 10 percent of school and departmental budgets just to finish this year.

Mr. Rooker asked if they can cut teachers in the middle of the year. Dr. Moran said there are school districts around the country that have done so as a result of similar financial issues, not just "riffing" classified staff but also "pink-slipping" teachers.

Mr. Slutzky said Albemarle County has strived to elevate its competitiveness in Virginia by comparing itself to other districts, and has also targeted and made a commitment to being in the top quartile of teachers. He asked if even talking about "riffing" people is contrary to the County's whole initiative for keeping good employees and attracting new ones. There is an overall perception in the marketplace as to whether or not a good applicant will want to come to Albemarle County or a good teacher will want to stay in Albemarle County. At the end of the day the School System is about teachers teaching children. It is "playing with matches" when talking about the stability of Albemarle County's workforce and he is worried about that. Mr. Wheeler said that is why reducing that \$1.8 to \$2.3 million gap is so important. That will allow the School Board to accomplish that part of its goals. He said the next slide concerns their contingency plan, and it is scary.

Mr. Rooker asked if the \$1.3 to \$1.8 million revenue is made up there would not be need for any "riffing" of teachers at that time, the School Board would actually be adding teachers to the extent that they are mandated. Mr. Wheeler said that is correct. Dr. Moran said there would be no riffing of people based on budget considerations. There would be other reasons riffing would take place.

Mr. Dorrier said some school boards around the country link up with the private sector. There is a school system near Chicago that has a work study program with businesses in the local community, and high school students actually work jobs after school or even during school hours. It is a win/win situation because they get money for it, and the students get training and employment. He was impressed by that. Also, in Hanover County they have hired some principals who were former CEOs of businesses. This has worked to the advantage of the school system and the business community. He wonders if the School Board has any emphasis in that direction.

Mr. Wheeler said they do and he thinks they can do it better. That is also a place where Central Office resources can make a difference. It takes people building relationships that will help the whole division. The School Board gets grants and commitments now from different major employers. Recently the School Board recognized State Farm insurance for its work within the School Division. The National Radio Astronomy Observatory is doing a project with them that is related to robotics. There are already some areas of collaboration.

Mr. Dorrier said he thinks that should be part of the School Board's strategic plan. Dr. Moran said they have work studies through their career technical education program.

Mr. Dorrier said he thinks it should be for the honor students. Dr. Moran said they have honor students that get an early release for work study programming. Ms. McKeel said she thinks Mr. Dorrier must be thinking of internships.

Mr. Dorrier said he is also thinking about a partnership with businesses. Right now everything is dependent on the government to fund the system. It seems to him that if they could rely some on the private sector there would not be these crises every year.

Mr. Rooker said he does not think anyone has come up with a model yet where businesses contribute directly to the school system. Ms. McKeel said there are a lot of wonderful partnerships within this community.

Mr. Boyd said there are some time constraints this afternoon, so he asked that Mr. Wheeler finish the presentation.

Mr. Wheeler showed a slide depicting the School Board's Contingency Plan. He said the revenue gap is between \$1.8 and \$2.3 million based on what is known at this time about State revenues. The items being shown are not prioritized. The School Board asked Dr. Moran to help prepare a Contingency Plan and the slide shows \$3.8 million in potential cuts. If any of them were good ideas, the School Board would have already implemented them. His personal opinion about the list is that any item chosen would negatively impact education in Albemarle County. The first impact shown is to reduce compensation. He said the School Board could revisit teacher compensation raises.

Mr. Wheeler said the second impact pertains to operational reductions such as in professional development, computer replacement and support staffing. They backed away from changing some initiatives the School Board put into place because data indicated they needed extra resources in the way of math specialists, reading specialists and school counselors. They could save \$600,000.00 by retreating from some of those areas. The School Board looked at the possibility of programmatic reductions; they could look at electives in the high schools. This is an area the Resource Utilization Study said is important to review. The schedules in the high schools need to be looked at and also what is being offered. The study indicated the per pupil cost in the high schools is the most "out of whack."

Mr. Wheeler said the School Board prefers being deliberate in its review of this subject. It needs to work with the public and get them engaged so they can understand why changes are needed. Getting all of the high schools on the same schedule is something that can be done. Switching to a block schedule is also something that can be done. All of those things take a lot of work with the community. However, if necessary, they could balance this budget by just making that change next year. He does not think it is the most effective way to implement such a change. In the Research Utilization Study Matrix that was handed out, that was something to be considered in a future year. He said Instructional Staffing is the biggest item the School Board could change (\$1.5 million). It could increase class sizes; they did a little of that last year at the high school level. Increasing class sizes means they would need fewer teachers. This is a people-oriented business, so the biggest way to save money is to look at where there are people.

Mr. Boyd asked if that stood out in the RUSC report; it has stood out for years as the overall teacher/pupil ratio is much lower than most other school systems. Dr. Moran said not at the elementary level.

Mr. Boyd said he was talking about the overall level of the School System. Ms. McKeel said that at the elementary level they are actually in line with where they should be. In the high schools the system has allowed electives that families and students want. Because there are a different number of electives in the different schools that drives up the size of core classes because of the way the schedules work. What the Study indicated is that the School Board should consider reducing the number of electives in order to drive down the size of core classes such as math and science. They cannot make these sorts of decisions in a month.

Mr. Boyd said he thought it was suggested that the School Board set a minimum per class and that could be done easily. Dr. Moran said that is one area where they plan on going and working inside the school communities. For the parents who demand the top extended opportunities that are presently offered even if there are only seven students in a class, the School Board needs to work within school communities to see if there is an alternative way to provide that class.

Ms. McKeel said that goes back to what Mr. Wheeler was talking about. The Schools might be able to offer those electives in a different way, distance learning for example, but the different schools must be on the same schedule and other things need to be put into place.

Dr. Moran said the three County high schools believe their schedules are the best so time would be needed to work that out.

Mr. Boyd said he is glad to hear the School Board is moving in that direction because these problems were present when he was a member of the School Board.

Mr. Rooker asked if the School Board plans on getting all the high schools on the same schedule at some point. Dr. Moran said the School Board is focused on that as a priority.

Mr. Wheeler said in the handouts he gave the Supervisors earlier he broke out one item, Operational Reductions, to show how the School Board came up with that \$500,000 number. It gives all of the specifics that created that number.

Dr. Moran said she listed for the School Board \$4.0 million plus in reduction options beyond what was taken off. She said that staff does not know what will happen at the State level. With local revenue

shortfalls it looks like it will be somewhere in the \$2.0 million plus or minus range. They also know there is the potential that next year will not be much different from this year. The reality is that the \$4.0 million in reduction options may become the next round in the following year if they need to go through two years of deep cuts in terms of budget balancing. She told the School Board that nothing should be eliminated from consideration.

Mr. Boyd asked if some of these things are being factored into the School Board's five-year projections. Mr. Wheeler said "yes."

Mr. Boyd said the School Board has seen the Supervisor's Five-Year Financial forecast. He said Mr. Wheeler has indicated that they did a two-year budget this year. He asked how much of a shortfall they expect in the second year. Dr. Moran said they do not have revenue projections for the next year.

Mr. Zimmerman said they have not received any updated revenue projections since October, 2007, so the second year revenue numbers remain the same as projected in October. There was an agreement made that those numbers would be updated after the budget cycle moved forward. As far as a five-year forecast in terms of revenue, they are in a state of flux and are dependent on County staff.

Mr. Boyd said revenue projections are not going to change within the next six months. Mr. Zimmerman said they have had a \$2.0 million decline in local revenues since October, so he assumes the five-year forecast would change rather significantly because of that.

Mr. Rooker said if those numbers were updated today for next year there would probably be a lower revenue number. Mr. Wheeler said the number on page A-45 for next year shows a \$3.9 million deficit.

Mr. Slutzky asked if that number was based on October's revenues. Mr. Zimmerman said it was based on October's revenue declined by two points or \$2.0 million.

Mr. Rooker said one thing stood out in Mr. Zimmerman's letter with the budget request. He said it would be helpful for the School Board to have a decision from the Supervisors sooner rather than later in order to build a budget and get teacher contracts lined up. He asked the latest date the Supervisors could provide a good revenue projection and the tax rate.

Dr. Moran said the State of Virginia establishes April 15 as the date for issuing teacher contracts. Prior to that date the School Board has to approve the list of nominees for those contracts. That happens at their last meeting in March in order for HR staff to have the time necessary to prep contracts to go out on that deadline. Because of spring break, the School Board does not meet until too late to do that. That means that by the first couple of weeks in March they have to be able to notify those people who are not going to receive contracts. Because of the situation with revenues, should the School Board need to increase class sizes or make program cuts, they would need to hand "riff" letters to teachers by March 5 so HR can get a nominee list together and issue contracts.

Dr. Moran said the people with the highest risk of being "riffed" are the least senior teachers – those are the teachers the most effort was put into recruiting, training, mentoring, teaching the curriculum, focusing on the performance appraisal system, etc. If there should be any change in revenues after handing them the letters, they are lost to the system and the Schools have lost a people investment in those educators. That is an issue for the School Board in terms of fiscal prudence. This sends a message to colleges and universities that graduates should not consider working in Albemarle County because this is the kind of treatment given to the least senior teachers. The Schools used to have a routine riff process they used year after year but the School Board eliminated it because they were able to get that strong compensation strategy in place.

Mr. Slutzky said even if "riff" letters are sent out on the fifth, they would still be sending a signal to the marketplace that Albemarle County does not have a job stability environment. Dr. Moran said that is the issue for the Schools.

Mr. Rooker said in order to avoid the problems just described the Schools need an answer on or around March 2. Dr. Moran said that is correct.

Mr. Boyd said he agrees with a lot of what was just said, but this is not necessarily a new problem for the School Board, it occurs every year. Dr. Moran said that in January of the previous year, the School Board had put money aside because the Supervisor's put them on notice that the tax rates were likely to change. The other thing that is different is that this year the revenues are so low they do not have any "wiggly room." Recently, there have been good revenues year after year. She suggested that Ms. Kimberly Suyes, Director of Human Resources, speak to the date that contracts must be given.

Mr. Tucker said the Supervisor's work sessions on the budget begin on March 10 and potentially end on March 19. Staff will have to know by that date what tax rate to advertise for the public hearing on April 2. If the letters could be held until the middle of the month, the Supervisors would have a better sense of what the total budget will be. Dr. Moran said she and Ms. Suyes have discussed how March 5 is the drop-dead date for this year.

Ms. Suyes said it is not her drop-dead date, but in order to meet their deadline date there are certain requirements that have to be met, such as notifying employees in writing of HR's intent.

Mr. Tucker said he can see the concern, but the Supervisor's do not actually set the rates until April 9.

Mr. Rooker said he does not understand the March 5 date. What is it that drives that date? Dr. Moran said the principals need information about their staffing for the next year so they can prepare their "riff" list and give it to Human Resources, who then prepare the letters. The big driver pushing that earlier date is the preparation time for the letters and then preparing a nomination list. Ms. Suyes then explained the process used by HR.

Ms. Thomas said on or about March 17 is when the Supervisors will decide what to advertise as the real property tax rate and it is not guaranteed that is the rate that will be adopted. If the Board set the tax rate before advertising and holding a public hearing, the public could quite rightly said the whole thing is a sham.

Mr. Boyd said he would suggest the School Board prioritize ways they might make up for shortfalls in their budget. He thinks that instead of "riffing" teachers, there should some contingency in terms of not hiring as many teachers.

Dr. Moran said the School Board no longer has an opportunity to move teachers around because of increased certification requirements under the "No Child Left Behind" Act. If teachers are not endorsed in a particular content area, then the Schools do not meet AYP standards which could be a serious financial hit for the division. The School Board's hands are tied.

Mr. Boyd said two of the Supervisors have to leave this meeting so hopefully there will be another chance to discuss this at a later time.

Mr. Rooker said a problem here is that the Supervisors can pick a rate to advertise, but ultimately it can only adopt that rate or one that is lower. Dr. Moran said the School Board took Mr. Tucker's recommendation about the shifting of the CIP penny, and that is included in the School Board's request. Whatever the Supervisors pick as the tax rate is the revenue they will use to make their determination. If it changes they will make changes at the point where the School Board has to adopt its budget.

Ms. McKeel said the School Board has not prioritized anything at this point because they felt priorities might have to change depending on the cuts made.

Mr. Slutzky said the Supervisors asked Mr. Tucker and Dr. Moran to come up with a budget even though it had not decided on a tax rate. This year Mr. Tucker said a tax rate of 68 cents would result in "x" amount for his budget. Last year he gave the Supervisors a proposed budget based on an assumption of 74 cents and the Supervisors chose a different rate so cuts had to be made. He wonders if between now and March 17 the Supervisors might give the School Board a number to use for budget purposes with the caveat that there might be an increase or a decrease depending on the actual tax rate. Right now everyone is operating on the assumption that the tax rate will be 68 cents.

Mr. Boyd said it would be disingenuous to the public if the Board started making these decisions ahead of time.

Mr. Wheeler said the Supervisors have a list of initiatives about which the School Board made assumptions. This is an initiative related to public education in Albemarle County and the School Board is saying it needs to make up from \$1.8 to \$2.3 million. The School Board needs to know whether the Supervisors think that is something that can be done.

Mr. Boyd said the problem is that the Supervisors have been stepping in for the State continuously for years. He does not know how much of that burden they can keep putting on the populous because they can not pick up the entire State allocation.

Mr. Rooker said the Supervisors emphasized this when they met with the local legislators last year. He has called every one of the legislators individually in addition to the meetings they had.

Mr. Dorrier said traditionally figures have always shifted. For instance, initially there will be a huge gap and then by April it has evened itself out. He does not know if that will happen again this year, but figures are constantly moving.

Mr. Rooker said it is more difficult when the figures are constantly moving downward. There have been some times in the past when in midyear it was learned that the revenue picture was better than expected. That is what enabled the Supervisors to lower the tax rate as much as they did last year.

Mr. Boyd said a lot more could be discussed but the meeting is out of time. He thanked the School Board for sharing its concerns with the Supervisors.

Agenda Item No. 3. Recess. At 2:52 p.m., the Board recessed.

Agenda Item No. 4. Call to Order. The meeting was called back to order at 6:04 p.m. in the Lane Auditorium, by the Chairman, Mr. Boyd.

Agenda Item No. 5. Pledge of Allegiance.
Agenda Item No. 6. Moment of Silence.

Agenda Item No. 7. **PUBLIC FORUM** to receive comments on the proposed FY 2008-09 County Budget. (Notice of this meeting was published in the Daily Progress on February 17, February 18 and February 19, 2008.)

Mr. Tucker said he appreciates this opportunity to provide the public with a preliminary overview of his FY 2008-2009 Budget recommendation. He noted the process this budget work will take, including hearing dates and work session dates. He said everyone is aware of the housing market slow down that is impacting the local economy as well as that of communities across the State and nation. This budget is responsive to current economic conditions while still focusing on Albemarle County's essential services to the greatest extent possible. He said the community has some challenging budget choices ahead of it. He will start this overview with the primary goals which shaped this budget. These goals were endorsed by the Board during its recent Five-Year Financial Plan discussions.

Mr. Tucker said these goals were met with varying degrees of success in the proposed budget. He will point out that these goals were the fundamental guidelines staff used to build the budget. Obligations and commitments are funded while continuing to support essential services and make progress toward strategic planning goals. This budget tries to maintain competitive compensation, a continuing commitment to essential public safety improvements and a continuing commitment to the County's capital program. With this budget the County will maintain its AAA bond rating, maintain the School Division allocation and balances the budget within available revenues.

Mr. Tucker said there are a couple critical elements he would like to highlight; it was felt that these were important to bring to the public's attention. First, much of the mandated growth in obligations and commitments has been funded through reductions in other operational areas. In order to meet these obligations and still balance the budget within available revenues, significant reductions had to be made in County expenditures. Second, even in challenging financial times Local Government has a fundamental responsibility to provide for the health, safety and basic well-being of the residents of the community. This budget does that. Third, there are challenging budget choices ahead so it is imperative that the Board's financial stewardship focus on efficiency and achieving desired results. This budget incorporates reform and efficiency efforts and staff will continue to focus on those efforts in the years ahead.

Mr. Tucker said that last, this budget is built on the current tax rate of \$0.68. But, as everyone knows, the County actually operates on a \$0.58 tax rate since ten cents goes to the City of Charlottesville through the Revenue-Sharing Agreement. He showed a slide on the screen and noted that there are three major components to the budget: the Operating budget, the Capital budget and the Revenue-Sharing funds that go to the City. The total proposed budget is \$331.4 million. The total budget increase is about \$26.0 million over the budget for the current fiscal year. However, \$20.0 million of that \$26.0 million increase is attributable to the Capital budget which includes three major school renovation projects at Brownsville and Greer elementary schools and Albemarle High School.

Mr. Tucker referred to the pie chart of total revenues being shown on a screen, and commented that the majority of the County's revenues are made up of property taxes - 40 percent of the budget. Other Local Revenue amounts to about 21 percent; State Revenue is about 23 percent; Federal Revenues at about four percent; and, Bond Proceeds at about 11 percent. The County is required by State law to assess properties at 100 percent of fair market value. While that is market driven, the reassessment process is an objective analysis of a property's actual worth in the marketplace. Albemarle County has consistently ranked among the top jurisdictions in the State in statewide assessment sales ratio studies conducted by the Virginia Department of Taxation. This means the County's assessment should be as close as possible to the actual sales price of properties.

Mr. Tucker said this is the first year of Albemarle County's annual reassessment process; prior to this assessment, properties were assessed every two years. The 2008 reassessment, for the first time in recent memory, reflected decreases in the value of a majority of residential properties resulting from a weakening of the residential real estate market being experienced locally as well as nationwide. The assessed value of commercial property and the value of vacant land has continued to increase resulting in a slight increase in overall assessed values, measuring approximately 0.014 of one percent. This figure stands in stark contrast to an annual average rate of increase of just under 15 percent for the previous biennial reassessment period.

Mr. Tucker said as to revenue highlights, General Property taxes (real estate and personal property taxes), are down one tenth of a percent. Combined revenues from State and Federal sources are down 2.8 percent for Local Government operations. Revenues in this budget include \$1.0 million in funds that would result from full implementation of an Emergency Medical Service Revenue Recovery Program the Board has confirmed several times during the past year as an alternative revenue source. In essence, it is a fee for emergency medical transport that would be collected from the insured's insurance provider and would help reduce reliance on real estate taxes.

Mr. Tucker said the School Division makes up about 63 percent of the expenditure budget. General Government is at about 33 percent with Revenue-Sharing being four percent. On the Capital side of expenditures, School projects account for almost two-thirds of the budget; General Government is at one-third.

Mr. Tucker said there are several significant items that drive this budget. The funding agreement with the School Division (60 percent) is maintained. There are increases in obligated expenditures such as in School Debt Service, the Regional Jail, and Revenue-Sharing with the City. There are significant reductions in Federal funding for the Social Services Department – there is a slight offset by State increases but the majority must be made up by an increase in the local share. Also a priority for public safety improvements such as firefighters for the proposed Pantop's Fire/Rescue Station and additional police officers is funded.

Mr. Tucker said a market salary increase of 3.35 percent for classified employees has been maintained, while the School Board has recommended a four percent increase for teachers. In order to bring forward a budget which is balanced within available revenues, a number of adjustments had to be made. There is a continuation of 13 frozen positions from the current fiscal year and also a one-cent reduction is proposed in the transfer of General Fund revenues to the Capital Program; this will not impact the current Capital Program through the year 2012. Staff realized operational savings and efficiencies through review of current programs and services by the elimination of four positions in General Government. The computer replacement cycle is being extended from three years to five years. Requests for vehicle replacement were eliminated and other savings have also been implemented. Staff is relying on \$1.0 million in additional revenue that would result from full implementation of a new EMS Revenue Recovery Program.

Mr. Tucker said even in challenging financial times, County government is obligated to fulfill its value of stewardship and maintain its progress toward the Board's strategic priorities by ensuring the continued delivery of essential services within available revenues. While this year's budget reflects minimal new revenues, staff is focusing available resources on critical functions and the items shown on the PowerPoint chart are just some examples of how the budget choices support the County's values. Funding is provided for the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, in the amount of about \$250,000.00. There is continued funding for expanded transit routes at a cost of about \$700,000.00. There is continued funding for the Bright Stars Program at seven elementary schools, and funding is provided to approximately 50 different community agencies with an average increase of about four percent over the current year. Also \$1.6 million is dedicated to the Acquisition of Conservation Easements (ACE) Program. Additional funding is provided to support the Bryom and Preddy Creek Parks. Funding of approximately \$0.8 million is provided to support the Storm Water Control Program. The County continues to support Energy Star and other environmental best management practices. The total operating expenditures are kept to a 2.1 percent increase over the current fiscal year. This budget holds Local Government departmental increases below two percent on the average. The real estate tax rate is maintained at \$0.68. There is continued funding for the Tax Relief for the Elderly and Disabled program.

Mr. Tucker said he would close by summarizing some highlights of the budget. Mandates and commitments are met to the greatest extent possible within available revenues and, except for public safety priorities already identified by the Board, there are no program enhancements. The budget reflects savings through reductions and reform and efficiency measures and it invests in the County's future through the Capital Program. He said the full budget should be available on the County's website after February 29. Then, on March 5, the Board will hold its first public hearing. After completion of work sessions, the Board will hold its public hearing on its budget and the proposed tax rates on April 2, 2008. On April 9, the Board is scheduled to adopt the FY 2008-09 County Budget and set the tax rates.

Mr. Boyd said he wanted to take a minute to thank everyone for coming to this meeting. It is important that the public participate in their government and the Board likes this type of participation. He noted that members of the Albemarle County School Board are present tonight. Before opening the public hearing he reminded everyone of the Board's guidelines for speaking. He then invited members of the public who had signed up to speak to come forward.

Mr. Salvatore Giordano said he is a parent, a voter, a taxpayer and a teacher. He feels this so-called budget crisis is a sham. Anyone could have seen it coming and many predicted it would. It is an artificially-created budget crisis that was knowingly perpetrated on the citizens of Albemarle by the Board of Supervisors. It was created when the Board caved in to the minority of voices at last year's budget meeting who cried the old slogan of tax oppression even though Albemarle has one of the lowest tax rates in the area. It was created when the Board willfully ignored the majority of voices at that same meeting who called for maintaining the \$0.74 tax rate and fully funding educational needs. The Board has an opportunity to learn from its mistake and redeem itself in the eyes of the community. If it does not, as the pay scale for teacher's lags behind in future years and the gap between Albemarle and competing counties gets larger, the School System will lose good teachers. Albemarle will become a stepping stone, a place where new teachers get experience before moving to higher paying positions elsewhere. Teachers with experience are better teachers; they have had time to refine their methods and can use their experience daily in their classrooms to inspire children. He is still working toward that point in his career.

Mr. Giordano said he is disappointed with the double talk from the County. On the one hand it extorts the virtues of the County's World Class School System and educational excellence. Then, it refuses to adequately compensate those who dedicate themselves to it. That shows a lack of respect for teachers and has led him to consider moving himself and his family to a county where educational excellence is not simply a matter of idol rhetoric, but a clear priority as demonstrated by meaningful funding. Last year the six-cent tax reduction saved him \$200.00. He would give it back to insure that the School System is what it claims to be and to know that teachers are satisfied and are gladly engaging in the instruction of children, and are 100 percent committed to preparing children for life as adults and for fulfilling a career of their own. In the end that is what it is all about.

The audience applauded at this time, and Mr. Boyd said that this meeting will last well into the night if there is that amount of applause after every speaker. Apparently the audience missed that part of his explanation concerning the Board's rules for holding public hearing. The Board frowns on this type of response, but people are welcome to stand to show support for the speaker.

Mr. Keith Drake, Chairman of the Albemarle Truth in Taxation Alliance (ATTA), said his comments will be in contrast to those of the previous speaker. ATTA's message last year was that they wanted to educate people on State law. When the assessments rise, the tax rate is lowered and that is where the budgeting conversation about should begin; last year that beginning point was \$0.58. Currently, there is H.B. 1009 in the General Assembly (currently in the Senate Finance Committee) which will require truth in taxation on tax assessment notices and on tax bills in the future. He congratulated Mr. Tucker because last year his budget has a 28 percent increase and this year it has a zero percent increase, and he appreciates not balancing this budget on the backs of the taxpayers.

Mr. Drake said the Chair of the School Board said two days ago that the School Board's funding request is only a 2.6 percent increase over last year and they had already made substantial cuts are committed to making future cuts. If the budget has increased, how are they making cuts? What he really means is that the School Board is not asking for as much as they originally wanted. It is not a cut, and they are not doing with less. Tonight the Board of Supervisors will hear a lot of teachers and a lot of folks from the School Division ask for more compensation. He said they believe that many of the School's teachers deserve higher compensation; however, their solution is to raise the tax rate. He thinks there are ways to pay teachers what they deserve other than raising the tax rate. As an example, last year the School Budget was cut nearly \$0.5 million for salary increases for the most experienced teachers, but the School Division then turned around and spent \$1.5 million to pay teachers and other staff to retire early, with no stings attached. Then there is constant talk about the problem of retaining the most experienced teachers. This is working at cross purposes.

Mr. Drake said the ATTA feels the County Government, the Board of Supervisors and the School Board have not been provided with the information they need to run the government as a business. That is the goal of the ATTA. He encouraged everyone in the room to join them to figure out ways in which they can help the County become better stewards of the taxpayer's money. He said ATTA is going to hold a town meeting in the Lane Auditorium next Monday night and he urged everyone in the public to attend.

Mr. Dale Varga said he has 30 years of experience in finance including teaching finance at the college level. While he is for good government, good schools and having teachers being well paid, he would like to applaud the Board in their effort to reduce expenditures and bring spending under control in areas where it is possible. He knows it is a difficult process for staff and administrators, but he asked that the Board continue the process. He volunteered to do whatever he can to help; as a citizen he would help at no cost to the County. What the Board is doing is the right because it is something that has to start from the top and work its way down. Once the Board develops a culture for that, it will be able to resource all its major initiatives while being careful to reduce expenditures in areas that do not affect the major services provided. He hopes the Board is successful doing this as they complete the budget process this year.

Mr. Paul Accad said his children attend Stone Robinson Elementary School. He supports full funding of the School Board's budget request; his major reason for this recommendation is that the Schools did not create the challenging funding situation that exists. The Schools did not create Albemarle County's high cost of living, which the state does not account for in its funding formula or the County's Revenue-Sharing Agreement with the City. It did not create various national and State unfunded mandates and rising ESOL costs. Lastly, the School System did not create the rise in benefit costs and fuel costs. He said the flat revenue situation the County finds itself in is probably going to be a short-term situation; it is clear the Federal Reserve caused the unusual rise in housing prices and they have publicly stated they will do whatever it takes to stop the decline in housing prices. That would not work everywhere in the country but certainly would work in Albemarle because its large employers are expanding not contracting. It is important that the Board remember this is a short-term situation.

Mr. Accad said he thinks it is in the County's best interest to avoid bad policy and bad publicity. To charge students to ride a bus or to play on an athletic team would be something it would take the County a long time to live down. Finally, he asked that the Board consider that the County's population is now in a majority growth area and he believes growth area residents expect top notch services and schools. He thinks the Board needs to show it will support those services and schools at whatever reasonable cost it takes. In conclusion, he thinks it is too early to force the School Board to make cuts that would take two to three years to recover from, no matter what the future holds.

Ms. Mary Huffard Kegley Scott, parent of a student at Meriwether Lewis Elementary and President of the Public School's Parent Council, spoke next. She said she is joined at this meeting by many education supporters. She asked that they stand to show support for education. The Parent Council developed a lapel sticker that says "Strong public schools equal strong communities." This is what they want for Albemarle County. The community depends on a well-educated workforce. The community has it now and needs it in the future. A basic and critical ingredient for the education system is to maintain its competitive market for all teachers. There is no one more important than the classroom teacher.

Ms. Scott said not advertising a tax rate this month will lead to the potential loss of teachers. Employees of the School System are its most valuable resource; teachers with lower seniority will not have the luxury to wait and see if they can afford to stay with Albemarle. The School Board has identified areas for further reductions, such as: increasing classroom sizes, charging a fee to participate in athletics,

charging a fee to ride the school bus, no new text books and eliminating electives, etc. Such cuts will have an impact on the students.

Ms. Scott said the County's 2007 Report to the Community described the results of the 2006 Citizen's Survey. That survey showed that 99 percent of the respondents felt providing quality education is very important. She asked that the Board embrace its leadership function and fully fund the community's number one priority, the education system. The students and community cannot afford to lose ground on the many successes accomplished to date.

Mr. Boyd said he would like to thank the audience for its silent show of support; the Board notices that also.

Mr. John Baldino said at this afternoon's meeting the Board of Supervisors heard one of his quotes from years ago. As an old history teacher, he would like to tell the story about Henry Ford increasing wages. (It can be found on the County's podcast recording system on the website). He said Albemarle County needs to pay wages sufficient for people to live here. The money being paid at this time needs to stay in this community and not go elsewhere to other localities' tax resources. Last year the Board lowered the real property tax rate significantly, so he thinks it needs to consider an increase in taxes sufficient to fund sufficient salaries for all of its employees, not just teachers. There are a number of classified employees who are virtually living "on the edge." The lesson that should be learned from Henry Ford is to pay people sufficient wages so they can afford the County's product.

Mr. Charlie Trachta, a parent and resident of Albemarle County, said for the first nine years of his son's schooling he came to these budget meetings to support public education. But, when he entered high school he found that the public education system is not one system, but many. During those first nine years he saw a system which tried to give every child every chance to be successful. The difference in high school may be because the students are now teenagers and the administration at Albemarle decided that a part of a teenager's education should be that life is not fair. The County is in a budget crisis; any day now the Country will find that it is in a recession. The only way to survive when money gets tight is to cut out the fat.

Mr. Trachta said from personal experience he can say that administration at Albemarle High School is indeed very fat. There are five principals and an athletic director. Is this top heavy, highly-paid administrative staff really needed? For example, at the beginning of swim season the head coach died unexpectedly. Some said the Athletic Director was supportive of the team, but he knows that some of her actions caused it to be difficult for some of the children to deal with that situation. At their first meet after the coach's death, two things happened. First, the AD allowed an outside group of parents to interact with Albemarle's swimmers. The bigger blunder was that the AD left before the meet was over. The swimmers stood in their wet swim gear on that winter night and the AD was not there to help the Assistant Coach and team parents find a way to get the team back to Albemarle High School since the school bus that brought them there left and did not return. He asked that the Supervisors not penalize the students or teachers but rather to tell the School Board to look at the administration and cut out the wasted fat. In PTO literature parents are being told that without money string program will be lost and/or have larger classes - cutting even one of these administrators could pay for these things. He thinks the Board should tell the School Board to bring it a new and qualified budget, one that does not penalize students or teachers but cuts out the wasted fat.

Mr. Robert Hogue quoted Alan Greenspan, former Chairman of the Federal Reserve, as saying "wasteful spending by the government is hurting the economy." He thinks the County needs to reduce the number of its employees and services, too. A lot of citizens receive little benefit for what they pay in taxes. There should be fees paid for use of the rescue squad, the County parks, and the Library - it is cheaper to rent a book than to buy a new one. Schools should charge kids for riding buses. Schools in other states charge for transportation and athletic fees. He thinks the School System is top heavy and more cuts could be made. Every year there is a call to raise salaries for teachers. When looking at raises across the United States last year, private and public sectors together, the average raise was less than one percent. The economy is in bad shape. In the past, the Board was warned about the dot.com bust and the housing crisis. Now economists are warning people about personal debt and the major affect it will have on the economy in the next generation. Many Albemarle County citizens are hurting financially and have had to cut their spending. It is past time for the County to cut its spending and lower its tax rate.

Ms. Ann Geraty thanked those who responded to her e-mail about the school budget. She asked that the Board of Supervisors fully fund the School budget. Her daughter got an excellent education at Western Albemarle High School, and she credits that to the quality of the teachers she had. When her daughter was looking for a college they visited friends in North Carolina and they were astonished that the School System in a wealthy and educated county does not have an international baccalaureate program. She thinks such a program is needed. She is a teacher, and although she is not full time, she still works 50 hours a week and spends about \$3,000.00 of her own money each year on school supplies which are not covered by the budget - she knows that most teachers do the same thing. She does not think there is fat in the School budget. Teachers are dedicated and pour themselves into their jobs. It is unfair for teachers to worry year after year as to whether or not their positions are going to be funded. These are the children who are going to build the future and if they are not prepared to compete in a world where knowledge is increasingly important, then we will have failed the children and ourselves.

Ms. Dawn Greco, a taxpayer, parent and Parent Council representative, urged the Board to support the School Board's Budget. Because of shortfalls in revenue tough decisions will need to be made, but she asked that the children and public schools not be short changed. Strong public schools make strong communities. When talk turns to increasing class sizes, having to ruff teachers, or cut P.E.,

Art, Music or Guidance Counselors, in order to make the budget, she feels the community is failing to do what is right and necessary for the schools. She thinks Dr. Moran and the School Board have pared down their budget to the bare essentials. The schools "tightened their belts" in the face of last year's tax cut and have done so again in light of the projected loss of revenues. However, there is a point where lack of funds jeopardizes the quality of schools. While tax increases are never popular, they are sometimes necessary. If providing the schools with the money they need means the tax cuts given last year must be rescinded, then so be it. Not everyone at this meeting has a child attending a public school but each person at this meeting would be impacted if the public schools languish. She implored everyone to think about the kind of future wanted for the community. If competitive salaries cannot be paid to teachers, the Schools will fail to recruit and retain the best and brightest teachers for its classrooms. In classrooms with too many kids, even the most talented teachers will be stymied. Without up-to-date textbooks and technology, the children will fall behind those from other jurisdictions which will hamper their ability to compete for college admissions and jobs. In the end, a thoroughly educated workforce will cost the County more in terms of the additional services they will require to remain self-sufficient. Without top notch public schools, new businesses will not be attracted to this county who could further diversify the tax base and make it less dependent upon property taxes. If the County does not spend money now to insure that the youth are prepared for the future, it will pay a higher price later. She hopes the Board will consider doing whatever it takes to fund the public schools.

Ms. Margie Shepherd said she is a resident, a teacher and the parent of four children who went through and graduated from Albemarle public schools. Last spring as State money tightened and the housing market slid downward, the Board of Supervisors chose to lower the tax rate six cents. That six-cents cut over \$9.6 million, \$6.0 million just from the schools. When some Board members were asked about the shortfalls, they blamed it on the housing crunch. It was not the housing crunch, it was the Board. The City had the same crunch and then had to decide what to do with a \$5.0 million surplus. The Board has a chance now for a "do over." It should restore that six cents and stop the money break that is threatening the validity of excellence in the schools and the community. She received a notice from Building Services yesterday that due to budget cuts each teacher may only have one trash can in their classroom. She does not care about it but wonders if this is really who the County is. Albemarle County ranked 58th in income in the whole country right between Boulder, Colorado, and Palm Beach, Florida. Albemarle County is No. 9 in the State and it has the lowest tax rate of those nine, not even considering the ten cents that goes to the City. Of those other nine, last year two of those counties kept their tax rate while the other raised their rate. Why did the Board cut six cents; did it get a prize for being cheap? Employees are being cut, programs are being cut, people are leaving and not being replaced, initiatives not going anywhere, and for what? They all got "sold down the river" for six cents. She asked that the Board restore the six cents and stop the deluge.

Ms. Amy Gore said she is a taxpayer and a representative of the Parent Council of Crozet Elementary School. Six years ago her family decided to relocate to Albemarle so their children could attend Albemarle County Schools. Every child in a public school is being asked to compete in a world market. The County has the responsibility of making sure each child has every tool necessary to meet that burden. She thinks the County needs to fully fund the School budget because it is only through a vibrant and dynamic public education will it be able to attract the kind of employers and industries that this County needs in order to survive. They need to fully fund the School budget because it is only through well-educated workers that the current residents will be able to maintain their current standard of living. Also, the budget needs to be fully-funded because in the future everyone will be completely dependent on these students solving the problems being created today by short-sightedness.

Miss Emma Gore, a fifth grader at Crozet Elementary School, said the budget needs to be raised because the type of programs being cut are ones that get kids motivated. When they are not motivated, kids do not want to learn so learning stops all together; when that happens it becomes a really big problem. She asked the Board what will happen to the economy and to Albemarle County if there is a problem.

Ms. Melinda Whitehurst said she is a resident, a member of Ivy Creek United Methodist Church and a member of IMPACT. She came to support making affordable housing a budget priority. She works with families who have children younger than four years of age. Many of these families struggle to find a safe affordable place to raise their children. This is so difficult that it often forces these families to be transient. When parents are worried about rent, it is difficult to promote learning and develop secure bonds with their children. Recently she polled the families she visits and her co-workers about affordable housing. A co-worker said it is terrible, especially for families living paycheck to paycheck. In her family both parents worked full time, yet they were homeless for five months this fall when they lost their housing due to the landlord's parents moving to town. They looked for seven months before finding an apartment they could afford. According to statistics from Albemarle County Schools becoming homeless is not unusual. The County had 320 children become homeless during the school year last year. Recently the Albemarle County Housing Voucher list was opened for three months and 700 families applied. She urged the Board to make affordable housing a priority in the budget. At the least, all children in the community deserve a place to live. As the parent of three children in the public schools she asked the Board to fully fund the School Board's budget request. Although the County would never be able to pay what school workers are worth, it still needs to pay them competitive wages. Small class sizes are a priority of families and can be the deciding factor when families who are able to choose where to live do so. Also, she urged the Board to attend IMPACT'S meeting on March 10 at University Hall.

Mr. Travis Harris said he is a resident of the County and involved with IMPACT. The need for affordable housing has reached crisis proportions, especially for those who make less than 30 percent AMI. The Board heard statistics by the previous speaker, and he wished to share a personal testimony. He grew up in that situation. His mother was a single mother raising two kids. He went to five different

elementary schools and three different middle schools. It was hard to maintain, to survive when wondering what he would eat, what he would wear, and most of all, where would he live. He knows this is a tight budget year and there are many priorities on the list, but he would just like to say that even one homeless child is too many. He asked that the Board make housing affordable for those who make less than 30 percent AML a priority.

Mr. Brian Wheeler, Chair of the Albemarle County School Board, said he speaks tonight on behalf of the School Board and its 2,300 employees. He asks that the Supervisors fully support the funding request unanimously approved by the School Board earlier in the month. The School Board knows the direction State revenues are taking; they are in a nose dive. As of today they believe their funding request needs between \$1.8 and \$2.3 million to be fully funded. The School Board's almost \$152.0 million operational funding request represents a 2.6 percent increase over last year, which is less than the rate of inflation. As the Supervisors know, their biggest initiative is \$5.9 million for compensation and benefits. In late January the only funds coming to the School Division from Local Government in the way of new funds were an additional \$73,000.00 which does not go far on the joint-goals. The Supervisor's Strategic Objective 1.1 says that by June 30, 2009, it will increase collaborative efforts with the School Board to assist the School Division to achieve recognition as a world-class education system.

Mr. Wheeler said the community is at a crossroads when it comes to funding public education. Which path will the two boards choose? The School Board has done its job in the face of financial challenges and their fiscally-constrained funding request gets them within \$1.8 to \$2.3 million of being balanced. When he gave his presentation to the Supervisors earlier today, he focused on how fully funding this budget will support its workforce and on the ways the School Division is demonstrating fiscal responsibility. However, he was surprised that at the end of the discussion there was little interest in providing directions to the School Board now as to whether this revenue gap will be eliminated. It is his personal opinion that in October, 2007, and in January, 2008, it was clear the joint boards supported a four-percent teacher salary increase. The bottom line is that the Supervisors accepted the November revenue assumption that did not account for full funding of the compensation goals, at least not those on the School Division's side.

Mr. Wheeler said that spending money does not guarantee success in the classroom, but cutting programs and employees that are successful will have a harmful impact on public education in Albemarle County and the joint goals may never be achieved. On a personal note, he wanted to give his support to Chief Miller and the School's resource officers. They really appreciate their support.

Ms. Traci Kelsey, a parent and a teacher in Albemarle County, came to urge the Board to consider supporting the schools. Although she loves being a teacher, she wants the Supervisors to recognize that being a teacher is the hardest job anyone can have. Meeting the needs of 21st century teachers has become increasingly complex. Because of this she urges the Supervisors to support them as they present this budget request.

Ms. Patricia Severson said she is a member at-large of the Albemarle Parent Council, a grandparent and citizen of the County. She works for JABA and runs a program called FISH (Friends in Schools Helping). They go into the local public schools and work with the teachers who link students that have been evaluated as being at-risk. This is a volunteer organization which focuses on the elementary schools in the way of Language Arts, Math and ESOL. Their main mission is to help teachers, students and the public schools. Because they are in schools daily, they understand the importance of the Math and Literacy Specialists. They do not want to disturb the integrity of the Albemarle Public School System after it has spent years building a reputation. She comes from the Northern Virginia area and they knew the reputation of the Albemarle County Public Schools. Statistics show that 70 percent of households now do not have school-aged children. How will the County attract families with school-aged children if a system charges families to ride to and from school? How about the students who want to join athletic teams but come from families who cannot afford it? She said Dr. Moran was hired as Superintendent of Albemarle Schools because of her experience, her expertise, her talent and her skills. One of Dr. Moran's duties is to set up a proposed budget annually. The community has an obligation to keep and maintain the talented staff and administration in the schools. She urged the Supervisors to let the School Board do its job and support its efforts to educate the children.

Mr. Tom Olivier said he is Conservation Chair of the Piedmont Group of the Sierra Club which he represents this evening. The Piedmont Group has over 1,200 members. It is concerned with the long-term protection of the local environment. They believe budgets should support necessary government services. They believe that setting tax rates first and then asking what necessary government activities are fundable is a recipe for government that does not meet its responsibilities. They appreciate that revenues has been affected by changes in the real estate market, but environmental protection is basic to the well-being of the community. At present, climate change, growth of the human population and other factors threaten local natural systems. The County cannot now neglect environmental protection efforts whatever the state of the real estate market. There is evidence that the revenue shortfall has already harmed County long-term planning efforts. Hiring replacements for open staff positions has been frozen. Workloads attached to now open positions have been shifted to remaining staff. As a result, the County's Natural Heritage Committee, which is charged with developing a long-term protection plan for County biological resources, currently has zero staff support. The new Community Rural Area staff support position, which would help develop local markets for County agricultural production, remains unfilled. They note that this position which is called for in the Comprehensive Plan remains frozen even as \$250,000.00 sits in the Business Opportunity Development Fund with no specific purpose. The Natural Heritage Committee has requested increased staff support for Fiscal Year 2008-09. The Sierra Club urges the County to find the funds to support this increase. They also urge the County to demonstrate its commitment to the Comprehensive Plan by funding the frozen Rural Area Support position. Finally, make

it clear that the “elephant in the room” is growth of the population. Costs of growth range from expanding school budgets to infrastructure. Those who promote growth cannot validly claim to be apostles of fiscal discipline. The cost of growth cannot be allowed to drive out support for environmental protection or other vital functions of government.

Ms. Mary Spencer, PTO Co-Chair from Meriwether Lewis Elementary School, spoke on behalf of her fellow PTO members (she asked that those present stand to show support for her statement), and many Meriwether parents. They understand that even though the School Board has already made major cuts in its proposed budget for next year, and has used all of its reserve funds for this year’s budget, there is still a shortfall of about \$1.3 million and further cuts may be needed. They understand several drastic steps are being considered, from charging a fee for riding the school bus or playing high school football, to creating even larger class sizes, to reducing the amount of money needed to buy new textbooks. These proposed measures send chills down the PTO’s collective spine. She said Meriwether Lewis Elementary School desperately needs full-time Music, Art and P.E. teachers plus a full-time assistant principal. They recognize this need because in spite of the fact the school is over the required amount of students this year to get these positions full-time they are only part-time or not at all. This was because of unanticipated growth at Meriwether Lewis. She said it has been a tough year with part-time Music, Art and P. E. teachers who had to “jump through hoops” to get all of these children taught and not enough time. The principal of Meriwether Lewis (who has been with the County School System for 32 years), had to do her challenging job with no assistant and 441 children to watch over. She was afraid the situation would force her to retire early, but she stuck it out and is retiring as planned at the end of this year. This school desperately needs and meets the enrollment requirements for an assistant principal as well as full-time Music, Art and P.E. Teachers. She urged the Supervisors not to cut these positions.

Ms. Amo Gunsallus said she is a second grade teacher at Agnor-Hurt Elementary School. She likes teaching there because it has a diverse environment. However, because it is so diverse they also have a lot of different needs. One-third of her class is made up of ESOL children. They get a lot of extra help and are making a lot of progress. If there are cuts in the budget so they cannot give these children the help they need, what will happen to them? Also, she has several special education children and wonders what would happen to them if the budget is cut and these children could no longer get the extra help they currently get every day? Also, she works hard to get these children to come along and wonders what might happen to her position. She understands from her financial advisors that the average increase after the tax cut last year was about at \$180. That is not a huge savings so she will ask the Supervisors to raise the tax rate in order to fully fund the School Budget. She hopes there will be a time when they do not have to come before the Supervisors every year and do this - that would be wonderful.

Ms. Betty Kent said she has been a member of the public school community for approximately four years; her two children are currently enrolled at Agnor-Hurt Elementary. Her son is on the autistic spectrum with many challenges to face. She donates as much time as she can to guarantee that her children and their peers receive all that is rightfully theirs. Albemarle County prides itself on community structure, but spends as little as it can financially to secure the futures of so many. Each generation is expected to accomplish more than the one before and are given a meager allowance to reach goals academically and socially. There is a crisis in the school system that will continue to augment if serious intervention is not implemented. She calls out as a parent with rights, and for the children who do not know what to ask for. She said the children of the community deserve attention. Spending money on a dinner out may be a superfluous act but spending money on a child’s education will only reap rewards. Classroom size does grow with community growth, but this community needs to respect that larger is not always conducive. With classroom growth comes classroom diversity.

Ms. Kent said it is expected that all children receive the same opportunity with regard to education. If 15 out of 22 children demand one-on-one attention, where will the teacher look for help? She feels it is the Supervisors’ responsibility to give what is needed to these children and the future of their promise. She said there are many private schools in the area. Why? Because they want to be certain that their children receive a good education. It is not fair for the financially-challenged family to not be offered the same dreams for their children. She asked if it is fair for a special needs child to have no options. She grew up on the principle of fair and equal. Adults have an obligation to offer equal opportunity to all regardless of financial standing, race or gender. As a taxpaying citizen she feels it is unjust to put her in a position to look elsewhere when this County has the potential to accommodate all of the needs of the area children’s education. As a taxpayer, she has a right to say where her money is spent. She asked that the Supervisors look at the face of every child in the school system and tell them there is not enough money to give them the opportunity to be all he or she can be.

Ms. Mary Kelly said she spent 22 years as a teacher in Albemarle County. The six-cent cut last year created a mentality of scarcity in the County. The biggest issue is a living wage. The kids she works with have the biggest learning, housing and relationship challenges. She hopes the Supervisors are considering raising the tax rate because it is not just affecting just education, but the whole community. The health of this community is equal to the health of its least fortunate member. She asked that the Supervisors raise the level of everyone’s experience in the community by raising taxes, working on affordable housing, and working on affordable wages. As a teacher she has friends who are considering what moves to make in terms of whether to buy a house or relocate. The issue of affordable housing is not just an issue for poor people but also for starting teachers coming to the community who want to have a family and settle down, but are not sure they could afford to buy a house here. She asked that the Supervisors reconsider raising the tax rate to raise the level of abundance so that citizens will not have the mentality of scarcity or frugality.

Ms. Charlotte Wellen said she is a National Board Certified teacher at Murray High School. She appreciates the County helping to fund that process for her and appreciates that the State cares enough

to fund a ten-year raise for teachers who get national board certification. That is one of the reasons she did it. She is one of the lucky teachers who managed to find some affordable housing in Albemarle County. She wanted to pay her mortgage so looked for other methods other than quitting teaching. She then found that the State also tends to cut that money for payment to these teachers when they move the money elsewhere. She looked in other nearby states and found that in North Carolina they fund National Board Certified teacher's almost 30 percent of their salary every year. That is a way they value these teachers. Now, she wonders why she lives in Albemarle County and struggles to pay for her house when she could pick up and move. That is the decision she is now considering.

Ms. Wellen said she has worked with the AEA for all of the time she has been in the County. She has seen them come begging many times to the Board of Supervisors asking that the tax rate go beyond the sixties and into the seventies. They cheered the year it was finally increased to \$0.74. That was the goal they had about 14 years ago when she first came to the County. Then the Supervisors dropped it back to what it was when she first arrived in the County. That was very frustrating. There are many programs like the International Baccalaureate Program that have not been implemented. There are many programs like this the County could have but is cutting back instead of expanding. She said Dr. Pam Moran has incredible ideas about how to expand the School System in many ways, but she is being told to cut back on trash bags. She is frustrated by this situation. She understands people wanting to keep the tax low, but it is important to think about the future. Right now education is hurting; it has been for a long time. She said the Supervisors are in a bad spot, and she hopes it makes a good decision.

Mr. Carlos Pezua said he is a Spanish teacher at Albemarle High School and at Murray High School. However, tonight he wants to talk about math and numbers. He understands that a six-cent property tax cut on his home, which was assessed at \$200,000.00, represents \$120.00 a year. Before he became a teacher, he worked as a waiter. He served many of the people here tonight who routinely spend \$120.00 on a dinner. He pleaded with just five of the Supervisors to consider this because it is ridiculous to cut education programs of any kind. The most important thing in the world is education of the children. If these children are not educated they will grow up to be supervisors who make decisions like this that do not hurt just them but their children and future children. He asks that just five of the Supervisors not just approve the School Board's budget request, but actually increase it. Money is being blown on all kind of things and Albemarle County is one of the wealthiest communities in the country, por favor más dinero para las escuelas (please more money for the schools).

Ms. Kirsten Miles, a parent of children at both Scottsville Elementary School and Monticello High School, spoke. She has volunteered in six different school systems (in city, county and small university towns) over the last 20 years. A teacher at Scottsville Elementary stood up to be a DI coach and gave her the confidence to co-coach. She used those strategies at Walton Middle School as a substitute teacher in the SOL class to connect the children with their classmates in nonverbal activities. The connection that teacher made with both her students and Ms. Miles is something she has tried to pass along. She mentioned a teacher at the middle school who had a student who just entered the public school system from a home school environment. This child had no friends and wrote stories involving fellow students in crime scenes. The teacher encouraged this student to share his stories with his classmates and in doing so became incredibly popular. The child is now a well-adjusted high school student. The Gifted Teacher at Walton Middle School led a field trip one year but had difficulty finding fathers to accompany the children on the field trip. This teacher reached out to some of the School's custodial staff who had never been to the beach, never been on a boat, and never been out of Albemarle County. She asked that the Supervisors take a moment to think about what those children experienced seeing those people experiencing those firsts with them. The connection the teachers make in the community is best done when they have the time, the energy, and are not overloaded with large classes, and have the support they need to extend themselves outside of just ordinary teaching. She asked that the Supervisors support the School's budget and while doing so support the entire community.

Mr. Peter Wurzer said he will speak about the fiscal environment the County is in right now. He gave a PowerPoint presentation entitled "Span of Management, County Departments", and the Voluntary Early Retirement Incentive Program. When he reviewed the County's organization charts, he saw that the County has six positions that have one direct report, 13 positions with two direct reports, and nine positions with three direct reports. When he came into business 35 years ago, a 1:5 recording ratio was probably about right. With technology and greater productivity on everybody's part, staffing today is 1:8 or even 1:12. He said a picture is worth a thousand words. He noted the chart for the Albemarle County Parks & Recreation Department. He said there is a director who has only one direct report. He does not know what is going on, but they are grade 19 and grade 23 jobs the total of which is about \$230,000.00 in expenditures. He said the Voluntary Early Retirement Incentive Program is a countywide program open to everyone over age 50 with 10 years of service, it pays five years worth of health care insurance or a lump sum equivalent. It is considered a retention tool. This is a Supervisor issue and not a School Board issue because it is a countywide program. There is a request for \$2.4 million for early retirements which would be a four-percent increase for every teacher in the School System now. He questions why the County would spend \$2.4 million to encourage the most experienced employees to leave. In the case of teachers who are in short supply, they should be paid to stay, not paid to leave. He asked that the Supervisors get involved in the details. He asked that it to look at the budget and its line items. Until a more thorough review of current spending is done, do not ask him for more money.

Ms. Maury Brown said she is a daughter of two educators, a sister to one, a parent to three kids in the County School System, and she is a librarian and English teacher who works in two of the County's high schools. This is her first year at Western Albemarle High School. She understands the Supervisors want data and she has some to give. In the last two weeks eight VCR's broke and there is no money to replace them. The average age of their library collection is 21 years old when exemplary benchmarks are half that. They do not have money to purchase database resources for online research. The tables in the

library are 30 years old and literally held together with duck tape. They have computers on boxes for student use because they do not have tables to put them on. The clocks in the building blink 12 a.m. ceaselessly. Students are in the hallways trying to get a wireless connection because they cannot get a connection in the classrooms. Several classes have to borrow desks from each other to cover the already large class sizes. There are 31 children in AP Government, 29 in Spanish, and 40 in Latin I. There are no Literacy Specialists at Western Albemarle regardless of the fact that they have a double digit percentage of kids who need one. This is current status before looking at cuts in the budget.

Ms. Brown said she knows there will be budget cuts because the costs of things like fuel and heating are up. With revenues relatively flat something has to be cut. Before looking for new money, perhaps the budget should be examined to look at what is absolutely important. Qualified personnel are needed in the Schools to work directly with the students and the materials they need to learn. Every year teachers have to fight for infrastructure, for their jobs, for their children and she does not understand it because it is fairly simple. The Supervisors are either for creating strong schools, strong police, strong emergency services, funding safety and preparedness, and the future, or it is not. If the Supervisors are not prepared to sponsor education, then countries like China and India who are investing in education to drive their economy and prosperity, are.

Ms. Emily Shepherd said she came tonight to speak about four issues concerning the School System. One would be enlarging classes, two would be elimination of electives, three would be the student's future, and four would be athletics and busses. She and her classmates do every athletic sport possible at Western Albemarle that is offered. If the School Board is going to charge for these activities, students will not want to "bug" their parents for more money because they do not have jobs and cannot afford it on their own. As to the idea of eliminating electives, some students come to school everyday because they look forward to choir, band or art. She knows one student who dropped out because he wants to be an artist and the school does not offer sufficient programs for him to want to stay. When she grows up she would like to do something in the Fine Arts field. However, that is something which is overlooked in numerous schools. She said they do not have good funding for band. She has had to fundraise for six different band trips this year alone. The positions the School Board is thinking about eliminating are sometimes the people the students connect to. If these positions are eliminated, the students may not understand many subjects because this would eliminate many of their mentors and friends. She is just a kid, but knows wrong from right. The students at Western Albemarle talk about the Supervisors everyday and have had long debates about the issues they wrestle with. She hopes the Supervisors will choose wisely.

Mr. Matt Haas said he is the Principal of Albemarle High School. He understands that Albemarle County is in a fiscal crisis and that the Supervisors have difficult decisions to make. He wanted to offer some information regarding the impact of not fully funding the needs of students from the high school perspective, in particular increased classroom sizes at the high school level. He then gave a very long list of statistics regarding class sizes at Albemarle (statistics can be found on the Podcast on the County's website). In spite of class sizes, he thinks his students, as well as those at Monticello and Western Albemarle, will continue to achieve the way they have in the past because the teachers work hard with them. However, he is worried about a 1.5 student increase next year because at this time Albemarle has 156 teachers and 1,740 students.

Mr. Dave Rogers, Principal of Sutherland Middle School, said he speaks tonight on behalf of the "Building Level Administrators' Association." He said they endorse the School Board's budget as presented. A world class educational system is the County's vision. He will present some information regarding the reductions the School Board has considered. Some speakers tonight mentioned reorganization and trimming the fat. The County needs to look at ways to do its work more efficiently. The School Board has already done that in the budget presented to the Supervisors. What does that cause? It includes a reduction in staff which will create some savings, but the same amount of work will have to be done. Because the same amount of work needs to be done, the work is decentralized. That means that besides serving as a principal and serving on many committees he might be put in charge of coordination of some system wide program as well. If that came about he would do his best but is not sure that maintaining all those things would be world class. They need to think whether cutting the fat is simply that, and how to reorganize and plan for that. Also it must be realized that when making cuts there is a tenure system in the schools and changes would create a domino affect across the school system potentially. Cuts are being considered that would displace a number of teachers across the school system. A change in class size is also a way of reducing staff. He explained what would happen to his classes with an increase in students. Program reductions are being considered but they have to offer certain programs. In the elementary schools there are combination class considerations across grade levels that are facing some teachers. He asked that the Supervisors look at this carefully to see what the impacts of these cuts are. They appreciate the Supervisor's efforts and endorse the School Board's budget as presented.

Mr. Eric Hahn said he is Vice-President of the seventh grade class at Henley Middle School. He has heard that the strings and extra curricular programs are threatened. People who do not have money cannot provide private lessons for their children. Colleges are looking for well-rounded students who at school joined music and art programs at their school. He questions why everyone would have to put out all of their energy to drop just six cents of school taxes, which would be almost \$6.0 million for the School Board's budget. He thinks the Supervisor's should have kept the tax rate as it was previously and then everyone who came to this meeting would not have had to do so.

Mr. Jay MacMichael said he does not know the members of the Supervisors, but he was told that some members wanted to cut the Schools budget, but he does not believe that. He has been a resident of Albemarle County for the last 20 years and has taught at many schools. He does not know enough

about money to tell the Supervisors how to solve their problem, but he has a solution. He asked if the Supervisors have ever considered selling candy, magazines or peanuts. His daughter came home from middle school with seven magazine subscriptions and when he asked her if her class was going on a field trip she said "no." Apparently these fundraising monies were going into the General Fund, which struck him as funny. Maybe the Supervisors could consider that because there is a money problem. The Supervisors are in a tough spot and lowering taxes sounds great. He is sure the Board does not want to cut funds for education. Everyone understands Dr. Moran is trying to cut the budget. He and his wife are teachers and are not asking for raises, but as parents of two daughters they are not sure how they will be able to put them through college with the budget they have. He knows a lot of money needs to go to the Schools. He knows the School Board is trying to make cuts, but he could not live with the six-cent cut, he does not understand it.

Dr. William Sterrett, Principal of Woodbrook Elementary School, said he is asking that the Supervisors provide full support this year, particularly as there is focus on strengthening teacher salaries, keeping class sizes low, and strengthening the division's Math Specialists initiative. As a Title I School, Woodbrook received a half-time Math Specialist this year which has strengthened their math focus and increased math collaboration across all grade levels. There are some great teachers at Woodbrook. Last year they had several vacancies, so together with his teacher leaders, they interviewed over 55 candidates to fill 11 positions. He does not want to do that again this year. Professionals must be retained because their experience is a valuable resource. Categorically, sending out "riff" letters at this time of the year is demoralizing to staff and takes focus off of instruction. He applauds the School Board's Chairman for his thoughtful proposal and hopes the Supervisors will consider it. He asked for the Supervisors continued full support of Albemarle County's schools, staff and students.

Mr. Steve Gissendanner, a representative from the Albemarle Education Association, was the next to speak. Last year five-year projections showed declining revenues but the Supervisors choose to reduce the real estate rate to a level, which after subtracting the ten-cent Revenue-Sharing money for the City, left Albemarle with one of the lowest tax rates in Virginia. Current revenue projections are just as bleak, yet he read Monday that some members of the Supervisors are thinking about buying land for businesses and funding a \$100.0 million transit system. A few weeks ago, The Daily Progress referenced one of the Supervisor members as suggesting that the schools have too much of a "wish list". In actuality, the School Board's budget has one new program, IB Development, and a change in an existing program for disruptive students. The Supervisors have seen the cuts proposed to deal with the \$2.4 million shortfall and this is on top of previous cuts. The Supervisors have known for years that the Joint-Board Agreement on compensation will take new money each year. The Supervisors agreed to this compensation strategy based on a market sample, yet it seems surprised when the schools expect the funds. The Supervisors may not know that this compensation strategy still leaves teachers with 30 years experience and a master's degree, making \$25,000.00 less than their counterparts in Prince William County. Compensation is a cost driver, but there are countless other mandates with increasing costs. By law, Special Education student costs are determined by the needs that show up at the door, not by the budget. The increasing ESOL population mandates additional staffing. State SOL testing increasingly requires computers, internet and support staff. Also, the No Child Left Behind Act is resulting in increasing costs; this program has to be fully implemented by 2014, no excuses. He then told several stories about children who will not be cheap to educate. It can be said that mandates to educate children are driving up the cost of education, but he prefers to say it is the children who are driving up the cost of education. In any case, it is the Supervisor's job to fund education.

Ms. Karen Urgo was called but was not present at this time to speak.

Mr. Boyd said that was the end of the list of those who signed to speak. If there are others present who wish to speak, he asked that they come forward at this time.

Mr. Thomas Myrtle said he and his wife are residents of the County. They can empathize with the thoughts of most of the speakers tonight even though they seem to be at odds in some cases. His family owns three properties in the County so when taxes go up, they feel it. Insurance goes up when the value of properties go up; it takes more money to insure them. They have seen increases in the cost of their rental properties. They can empathize with the individuals who spoke about affordable housing. Obviously, if mortgage costs increase because of tax increases, that makes housing less affordable. They rent two properties to Section 8 folks; they are happy to be able to provide housing for them. They empathize with those who are less fortunate and not able to find affordable housing in this County. This does not just include poor people, but the working poor and the middle class who are slowly getting squeezed out as well. His wife is a school teacher so they can also empathize with the need to fund the schools. They are caught between because they would like to see the schools funded, even though they do not want taxes increased, and would like to see the poor be housed. He is not proposing either a tax increase or a decrease. He would like to propose that the schools be funded but it be done by looking back to about 2001 before the housing boom because the County did not have all the extra revenue it has today. Not only does the County have extra revenue because of the increase in the value of houses, there are all kinds of new houses and new shopping centers that add to the revenue base. He asked how the County got by before it had this revenue boom. How would the County get by today if there had not been the housing boom? Obviously the County is spending more money than it used to. He said if someone got a raise, would they put that money in the bank and save it or would they increase their standard of living. It seems to him that over the past five years Albemarle County has increased its standard of living.

Mr. Ian Sol, a recent resident of Albemarle County, said he is not different from others who have looked at Albemarle County as a place to move to. It appears to be a growth county. He and his wife chose Albemarle because of the educational system for their six-year old child who attends Brownsville Elementary. Even in good years there is never enough money in the budget because there is always

someone who wants to do something else. In bad years, the basic question is setting priorities. His recommendation would be to look first and foremost at education with affordable housing being close. Education is the future. Hopefully, this is a short-term problem the County is going through. It would be a major mistake to make a short-term decision about funding that could have a long-term impact. He noticed in the overview of the proposed budget an item regarding purchasing \$1.6 million in conservation easements. He may be wrong and there may be some conservationists in this room, he is an environmentalist, but at the end of the day what is the more important priority. If there is a shortage in funding this education plan, \$1.6 million may be found in not going ahead with purchase of conservation land. Somewhere in the 309 pages of the proposed budget there is a line item talking health care cost increases. The Supervisors are desperately looking for a 2.6 increase for education, and that item which will cost \$842,000.00 is the nine percent increase in health care costs. If that is not wrong, he does not know what is. He urged the Supervisors to fully support education funding.

Ms. Catherine Bergman said she had four daughters who went through Albemarle's school system. She is a long time bus driver and she represents the bus drivers. She said they support the budget Dr. Moran has put together. She asked the School Board earlier that they not cut the classified department. When the classified package is cut, it cuts the bus drivers. She and her husband have been driving a bus for Albemarle County; her husband has been driving longer than any other employee (46 years). Between them they have given 85 years of service to the County driving school busses. They have always had to work several jobs just like the teachers. They try to encourage the new drivers to stay with the Schools and give dedicated service because they need to love their job in order to stay. She does not know if any of them will stay as long as she and her husband have, but if the County can keep the present drivers and entice others to come by offering them an incentive, this County will be in a better place.

Mr. Gene Burton said he has been driving a school bus for over 40 years. He does not want the Board to cut the School Board's budget because it is his wish to drive for the County until he is 100 years old. He asked that the Supervisors support health insurance because that helps him as well.

Mr. Daniel Walter said he is a lifelong resident of Albemarle County and went through the public school system. He is a developer and a builder in the community. He owns property in the County. A tax rate increase would not hurt him. He encourages it because his sister is a teacher who will be cut back to half-time next year and probably will not be able to afford her house. This is sad because he feels that all of his success was due to Albemarle County and its public schools. He said each citizen and the Supervisor members owe it to themselves and the children to do this.

Mr. Steve Koleszar said he is a School Board member who fully supports the School Board's budget request. He came tonight to speak as a citizen. The Schools have needs, but the rest of County services are not up to what he considers to be a world class system. He read in the newspaper that there was another accident on Rio Road because this County cannot afford to have safety crosswalks on its streets. Albemarle County has tremendous infrastructure needs. He has been participating a little with IMPACT. There are people in this County who cannot get free dental care so they go to Buckingham. One of the earlier speakers tonight said there were 600 applications for Section 8 housing assistance in this County. How is the County going to fund those needs? They are going to get greater if the economy continues to go down. He asked how the Supervisors can meet those needs if it does not tap into the resources of this community. There is a tremendous need for better transportation and for better social services. This County is not living up to its potential. We need to do better. For a long time this County was affluent enough that it could get by with adequate services and keep a low tax rate. Now the County is in a position where it is going to have to choose. Is this County going to be one that has great services for its citizens or is it going to be a County with the lowest tax rate around? He thinks it is a clear choice. Is Albemarle going to build for a future where everybody can prosper or is it going to save the wealthiest and most affluent a few bucks on their tax rate?

With no one else rising to speak, Mr. Boyd said that will end this comment period. He asked if any member of the Board of Supervisors wanted to make comments now, or would they rather just take all of this in.

Mr. Rooker said the Supervisors have a lot to think over; the Schools Board's budget was just received today. A series of eight or more work sessions are scheduled so the Supervisors have their work in front of them.

Ms. Thomas said the Board has a lot of this kind of public comment session. There is an articulate and committed group of citizens, whichever side they are on, in the County. Few communities offer opportunities such as this. She appreciates everyone who came to this meeting and participated. Sometimes she does not like little children being used, but the children who spoke tonight were spectacular.

Agenda Item No. 8. From the Board: Matters Not Listed on the Agenda. There were no other matters to be presented tonight.

Agenda Item No. 9. Adjourn. At 8:05 p.m., with no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned.

Chairman

Approved by the Board of County Supervisors

Date: 01/14/2009

Initials: EWJ
