

Talbot County Taxpayers Association, Inc.

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2 May 2008

Talbot County Council
Talbot County Courthouse
11 North Washington Street
Easton, MD 21601
410-770-8010

RE: Talbot County Proposed Budget for FY 2009

Dear Council Member:

The Directors of the Talbot County Taxpayers Association representing their membership commend the County Council and County Manager for several significant accomplishments during preparation of the proposed FY 2009 budget and during execution of the FY 2008 budget.

We are concerned revenues projected for FY 2009 and beyond may well be considerably less than earlier projections, especially revenues derived from county income taxes, recordation taxes, transfer taxes, and development impact fees. This potential impact on both Operating and Capital expenditures will require skilled and careful fiscal management to weather the economic storm expected to intensify over the coming years.

Our review of the proposed budget produced two areas of major concern:

- The Board of Education's (BoE) request for FY 2009 funding is excessive in our opinion. In an era when we are witnessing a slow but steady decline in overall Talbot County student population according to the Maryland Department of Education's county-by-county analysis through CY 2007 and our BoE's projection of below 4400 students for the coming school year. It is in light of this information that we ask County Council to consider most carefully the need for an 8.5% increase in the BoE's budget for FY 2009 over FY 2008. We encourage the Council to scrutinize thoroughly, every proposed expenditure in the BoE's budget to ensure there is proper justification. Though we strongly support an annual increase in classroom teacher's salaries and other classroom teacher benefits, we are not supportive of the continued increase in the non-academic employee ratio to classroom teacher. It appears to us TCPS is becoming top heavy with Administration and non-classroom-specific employees at a time when overall student population is on the decline.

- Our second area of major concern is the capital expenditure of \$6,000,000 for a multi-sport facility to be built at the Talbot Community Center (TCCC). Our Association opposes this expenditure for the following reasons:
 1. There has not been a Statement of Need nor a requirements study made available to the public that our research produced. Thus, there is no known documented need upon which to base the significant expenditure of taxpayer dollars on a facility we believe is extraneous to Talbot County needs at this time due to many other priorities competing for scarce resources. To wit: Public Safety, roads and grounds, classroom teacher's salaries, vocational training.
 2. Though Department of Parks & Recreation intends to provide scheduled transportation to and from this new facility, from after school until late evening, we do not concur with an expenditure of taxpayer dollars for such an enterprise when transportation insurance, fuel, maintenance, and personnel costs are all experiencing exponential cost increases.
 3. Though we are aware of some limited discussions between the Easton YMCA and our County staff about the planned expansion of indoor sport facilities at the "Y", there has not been an adequate exploration of alternatives for the multi-sport facility planned for the TCCC. Some argue the "Y" could change leadership and close the door on use of their facility. If this is a widely held view, the question should then arise as to what are the legitimate alternatives and to what extent have these been explored and reported to the public with the end result being selection of the TCCC site? We are not aware of any such efforts.

There are a number of lesser issues about which we would be pleased to present at the 6 May public hearings or prior if that is more convenient. In closing, the Association's Directors wish to thank Mr. John Lehner, County Finance Officer, for his time, effort, and responsiveness in helping us understand the complexity within the County's FY 2009 proposed budget.

Respectfully submitted,

Owen Wormser
President
Talbot County Taxpayers Association
410-745-0138
Attachment: Lesser Issues List for Discussion