The Cost of Everything, the *Value* of Nothing

Stafford County Citizens' Budget Advisory Committee (CBAC)

2026 Annual Report to the Stafford County School Board

Presented by Dr. Alicia Hunter

Stafford County Public Schools

Inspire | Empower | Excel

February 10, 2026

Citizens' Budget Advisory (CBAC) Committee

Advise the School Board by elevating community perspectives on how resources are evaluated and allocated—ensuring alignment with Stafford Schools' Strategic Plan and supporting a high-quality, effective, and efficient school division.

- Analyze the budget to determine alignment to the Strategic Plan
- Review departmental budget requests
- Advocate at the local and state levels for financial support for the school division.

Committee Members	
Name	Magisterial District
Cliff Heinzer Vacant	Aquia
Monica Bryant-McGuire - Vice Chair Brandon Barbee	Garrisonville
Michelle Chaudoir Dan Palmer	Falmouth
Dr. Alicia Hunter - Chair Ashley Turner	George Washington
Nusrat Chowdhury Vacant	Griffis-Widewater
Heidi Ballard - Secretary Naveed Javed	Hartwood
Greg Cohen Vacant	Rock Hill
Nam Nguyen Tessa Vabnick	Student Representatives

CBAC's Purpose

2025

- **Review departmental needs**
- **Advocacy for financial support**
- Receive Presentation of JLARC Report
- Try to present to or meet with BOS

2026

- Analyze the budget to determine alignment to the Strategic Plan
- **Review departmental budget requests**
- **Advocate at the local and state levels for financial support for the school division.**

2025 in Review
Response to the JLARC Study

- Established the **CBAC Legislative Subcommittee**
- Participated in the **Stafford County Schools Legislative Summit**
- **State Representatives** have a clear directive on funding support from Stafford citizens
- **CBAC bylaws** are being updated for **community engagement guidelines**
- Citizens input informed hiring a **dedicated lobbyist**

2025 in Review
Community Voices Influenced BoS

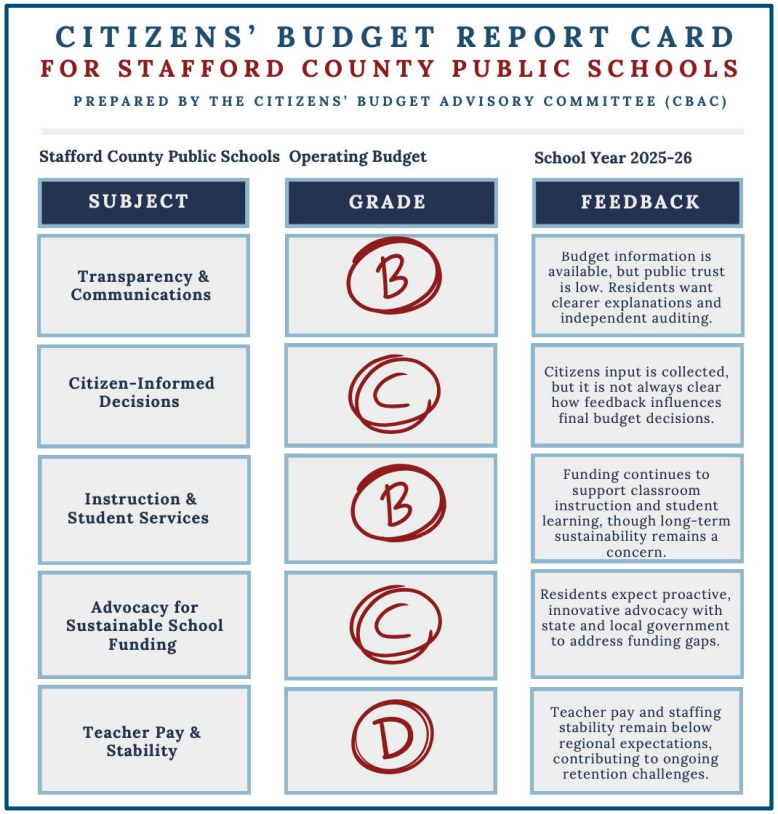
- BoS **funded more than Stafford County Schools initial budget request** for the 2025-26 school year
- Increased **citizen participation** at BoS public hearings
- Established a dashboard to track and synthesize **citizens comments**
- Met with the 2025 BoS Chair about **viable local revenue opportunities**

2025 in Review
Advocacy for Financial Support

- CBAC/CIPAC budget information booths at **majority of Stafford County Schools open houses** (*second year of partnership*)
- Collaborated with Stafford County Schools Communications on **budget messaging**
- Updated Stafford County Schools **budget website** to make school funding easier to understand
- Mountain View HS LEAP **students** participated in a Budget Simulation with Stafford County Schools Budget Team
- Launched **budget-focused survey** to shape School Board's budget priorities

Citizens' Budget Report Card

- Community snapshot of **budget engagement** and trust
- Looks beyond funding totals to transparency, voice, and alignment
- Designed to support dialogue and improvement



CITIZENS' BUDGET REPORT CARD

FOR STAFFORD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

PREPARED BY THE CITIZENS' BUDGET ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CBAC)

Stafford County Public Schools Operating Budget — School Year 2025-26

SUBJECT	GRADE	FEEDBACK
Transparency & Communications	B	Budget information is available, but public trust is low. Residents want clearer explanations and independent auditing.
Citizen-Informed Decisions	C	Citizens input is collected, but it is not always clear how feedback influences final budget decisions.
Instruction & Student Services	B	Funding continues to support classroom instruction and student learning, though long-term sustainability remains a concern.
Advocacy for Sustainable School Funding	C	Residents expect proactive, innovative advocacy with state and local government to address funding gaps.
Teacher Pay & Stability	D	Teacher pay and staffing stability remain below regional expectations, contributing to ongoing retention challenges.

Report Stafford County At a Glance
Virginia Rankings



Source: Niche.and Stacker

5
Best Counties for Families

10
Best Counties to Live

121
Per-Pupil Spending

Citizens' Recommendations

Strengthen Public Trust and Transparency

1. Conduct a 10-year efficiency study and engage an independent auditor
2. Proactively explain budget lines increasing more than 10% from the previous year
3. More detailed naming conventions for budget lines
4. Establish annual community budget surveys to track understanding and trust

Address Structural Funding Gaps

5. Advance legislative priorities focused on state funding gaps and unfunded mandates
6. Partner with the Board of Supervisors on viable local revenue options
7. Research Henrico and Chesterfield for innovative ideas

Citizens' Recommendations

Prioritize Teacher and Staff Compensation

8. Lobby for state compensation funding that keeps pace with inflation and regional competition
9. Increase staff compensation for teachers, school-based administrators, and support staff

Plan to Sustain Student Enrollment

10. Invest in speciality programs and workforce development
11. Center schools in Stafford County's Brand Identity and County Strategic Plan

Continue to Improve Communication & Alignment

12. Assign clear ownership of budget messaging to Communications

Questions