



Supervisor

Caleb A. Kershner

Catoctin District



Loudoun County
VIRGINIA



Budget Public Hearings on Thursday & Saturday

Dear Catoctin residents,

Loudoun County's [proposed FY 2023 budget](#) has arrived! Now it's going to be presented to you at a series of public hearings. This is your chance to show up and weigh in on the tax rate and the expenses that are being proposed.

I think this would be a great year to set our tax rate at the equalized tax rate - i.e. the tax rate that would leave an average property owner with the same tax bill they had last year. The equalized tax rate is important to consider in a year like this one, when residential property values in Loudoun have been experiencing large increases. In Catoctin, residential and commercial real estate valuations increased 18%, mostly on residential homes. Countywide, residential real estate values increased anywhere from 8.7% to 16% over last year's values.

Our Board must recognize that we are living in an economy that has seen its highest rate of inflation (7.5%) in the last four decades. This means that every dollar earned is worth 7% less than the dollar earned last year. According to one Moody's Analytics study, the average household is spending an additional \$276 a month because of inflation.

Keeping the tax burden on homeowners stable makes good fiscal sense for FY 2023. It's especially prudent this year, because in addition to facing huge increases in home values, and the resulting huge increases in their tax assessments, residents are also facing unbelievable cost increases for basic needs thanks to that skyrocketing inflation, such as:

- **Food (meat, poultry, fish and eggs): 12.2%**
- **Energy: 27%**
- **Gas: 40%**

- **Used Cars:** 40%
- **Dry Cleaning:** 8.5%
- **Bank Services (checking accounts):** 14.4%
- **Car & Truck Rentals:** 29.3%
- **Hotel & Motels:** 23.6%
- **Rent:** 3.8%

Unfortunately, the proposed FY 2023 proposed budget doesn't consider any of these important economic factors that affect our day-to-day lives.

Instead, this proposed budget will set our tax rate at \$0.895 cents, a full 5 cents higher than the equalized rate of \$0.845 cents. I disagreed with this guidance when it was first proposed, and voted against it, but a majority of the Board overruled me and directed the County Administrator to aim for this higher tax rate. That's a decision that needs to be reversed.

Keep in mind that during last year's budget deliberations, the Board decided (over my objection and against my vote) to fully fund every priority of every Loudoun County department's resource requests at the end of the FY 2022 budget, resulting in a budget that grew by \$19.3 million and added 155.14 full time (FTE) employees.

This year's proposed budget adds:

- \$15 million in base budget adjustments,
- An increase of \$15.1 million in total for employee compensation,
- Another 253 positions in 22 departments,
- An increase of \$38.1 million to fund the debt service and capital needs of the County Government and LCPS, *and*
- A year-over-year increase of \$53.7 million in the local transfer to LCPS.

However, the School Board's adopted budget, which they presented to the Board of Supervisors, requests a \$75 million increase for LCPS in spite of their enrollment decreases.

I have adamantly opposed any consideration of this increase until Superintendent Ziegler releases the outcomes, findings of failure, and proposed solutions from LCPS's independent report on the recent assaults in our schools.

We need a healthy level of transparency from LCPS's board and administration before we can make wise decisions about how to fund them this year. That transparency is vital for students and their families. It's also vital for the many teachers and staff, who have been working so hard for their students and their

schools. Before we pour more funds into LCPS, we need to shine a light on how their administration is operating, and get them to a point where they can make sound decisions going forward.

Please join the Board at this week's public hearings on the budget. This is your chance to speak up and tell the Board about setting a healthy tax rate and making good decisions about expenditures. The sooner we hear from you - and the more of you we hear from - the better.

This Week's Budget Hearings

Dates and Times for the Public Hearings

We will have two public hearings on the county budget on **Thursday, February 24**. The [first public hearing](#) will start at **3:00 PM**, and the [second one](#) will start at **6:00 PM**.

We will also have a [third public hearing](#) on the county budget on **Saturday, February 26**, which will start at **9:00 AM**.

How to Attend & Participate

To Participate: You can sign up in advance to speak at one of these public hearings by calling 703-777-0204. When you sign up, you can do so to speak in person or to give your comments online. If you pick the online option, county staff will send you a WebEx link and login instructions.

To Attend: You can attend the meeting in person in the Board Room at the Loudoun County Government Center, 1 Harrison St, SE, Leesburg, VA 20175. The meetings will also be livestreamed from [the Board's meeting videos page](#).

[View the Budget](#)

Sincerely,

Supervisor Caleb A. Kershner

*Catoctin District Supervisor
Loudoun County Board of Supervisors
Loudoun County, Virginia*

Supervisor Caleb Kershner | caleb.kershner@loudoun.gov

Catoctin District | 1 Harrison St. SE, Leesburg, VA 20175

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