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The county's social services department heads identified homelessness prevention services and services for those with intellectual disabilities as most in need of additional funding.

Martino said the county could pay for these programs by increasing the computer and peripherals tax, or data center tax, from \$1.30 per \$100 of assessed value to \$1.35 per \$100 of assessed value, which would add \$800,000 to the general fund.

Martino said the board could create an additional \$3.4 million in general revenue funds by increasing the county's motor vehicle license tax from \$24 to \$33 for cars and trucks, and from \$12 to \$20 for motorcycles.

Unchanged in the county's proposed budget is an increase of real estate property tax rates from \$1.125 to \$1.145 per \$100 in assessed valuation, which would generate \$49.8 million in addition real-estate tax revenue in 2021.

If adopted, the proposed hike would result in a \$242 annual increase in the average annual residential real-estate tax bill. The average tax bill would rise from \$4,190 to \$4,432 under Martino's budget, or by about \$20 a month.

In February, the board decided to advertise a tax rate of \$1.17 per \$100 in assessed valuation, an increase that would fully fund the school division's budget in concert with other proposed tax and fee hikes. The tax increase would generate an increase in real estate tax revenue of \$65 million.

Under the advertised rate, the average residential real-estate tax bill

would rise from \$4,190 to \$4,529, for an annual increase of \$339 or about \$28.25 more a month.

Now, the board will have to decide which tax and fee hikes they'll adopt.

At-large Chair Ann Wheeler (D) said at last Tuesday's meeting that the county's proposed budget, with Martino's new recommendations, is a step in the right direction.

"I see the schools and the social programs, especially the ones that we are going to need over the course of the next six months, as the backbone of our community," Wheeler said.

Wheeler said the board of supervisors should not approve a budget that cuts county services or further scales back school funding.

"We did that in 2008 and we never recovered," Wheeler said.

Some supervisors were skeptical of the recommended changes to the budget. Supervisor Pete Candland, R-Gainesville, said he was disappointed Martino had not offered additional options to consider.

"We're looking at a budget proposal from the county executive that would raise new spending for the county and schools by over \$40 million, and will increase taxes to do it," Candland said.

The supervisors will resume budget discussions on Tuesday, April 14, and on Thursday, April 16. Both dates are slated for budget public hearings. The board directed Martino to devise a way for residents to participate electronically in real time. More details are expected before the meetings take place.

Reach Daniel Berti at dberti@fauquier.com

COMPUTERS, from page 2

"We will determine this through [a] phone survey in multiple languages. Most of our high schools do not provide laptops to students to take," Gulotta said.

"The school division will also provide high school students with devices by first removing them from school classrooms where we can," Gulotta added. "We expect we may be able to use a couple thousand from existing stock."

If the school division is able to fulfill the need for computers among high school students, staff will begin working through the other grades "especially if additional funds are provided by the county," Gulotta said.

"PWCS has 91,500+ students. The number of families with no technology is currently unknown, and again we will work to contact all families in their home language to determine need," she said.

The school division is also planning to make internet hot spots available in several school parking lots for students who do not have internet connections at home, Walts said.

Continued instruction

Walts provided more information about instruction plans for the remaining weeks of the school year during the meeting. Walts said the third quarter will be extended until Friday, April 24.

Students will be able to redo work and retake tests to improve their third-quarter grades up until that time, Walts said.

Formal lesson modules will be uploaded to the county school division's website starting after spring break. Fourth-quarter instruction will be optional and will not be graded, Walts said.

Grades for the school year will be based on students' coursework for the first three quarters.

On May 1, seniors with all graduation requirements satisfied will be declared to have met all graduation requirements, while seniors with remaining requirements will be granted an extension for credit recovery, Walts said.

In May and June, the school division will begin using the online "Canvas" learning management system for students in kindergarten through 11th grade to deliver online lessons according to schedules set by school principals.

Finally, on June 12, K-11 instruction will conclude, and diplomas will be mailed to graduates.

The school division has canceled graduations for now but "will continue to seek methods of celebrating our graduates either virtually or in-person," which could include an in-person ceremony in August, depending on the status of the virus, Walts said.

Reach Jill Palermo at jpalermo@fauquier.com



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Fighting the coronavirus requires a strong immune system

School closings, sports event cancellations, food hoarding... We live in a new Coronavirus-induced world. Yet some personal health facts remain unchanged.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) offer good advice for preventing community spread and personal infection: apply social distancing, sanitize surfaces, wash your hands, don't touch your face. But, there's more...

Does anyone wonder why uncounted numbers of infected people develop no symptoms and only 20 % of symptomatic people require hospitalization? It's because they have an effective immune system able to fight off the virus. But the CDC does not talk about that, perhaps for fear of offending powerful animal food industries.

Fortunately, good advice on boosting our immune system is readily available on the internet from trusted sources like WebMD and Healthline. And the advice is always the same:

- Increase consumption of fruits and vegetables, including citrus fruits and leafy greens
- Refrain from dairy, other fatty animal products, and sugar-laden foods
- Maintain daily exercise of 30-60 minutes
- Minimize your stress level and get adequate sleep

Did I mention that this advice works great for all other nasty bugs as well?

MICHAEL NACCOMBS
Manassas

In support for Aliscia Andrews for Congress

I would like to express my public support for Aliscia Andrews. Aliscia is running for the Republican nomination in the 10th Congressional District of Virginia currently held by Jennifer Wexton.

I met Aliscia a few times while she was on the campaign trail for the 10th District, but I am very convinced that she is the best choice to take on Jennifer Wexton this November. Aliscia has an excellent grasp of issues facing Virginia's

10th District and our nation, and displays an incredible work ethic. I especially appreciate her strong support of the second amendment and her unapologetic pro-life values. If elected, Aliscia will work for the residents of the 10th district, because that is her number one priority.

On Nov. 3rd, please cast your vote for Aliscia Andrews.

ALICIA GLOSS
Manassas

Letters to the Editor

The Prince William Times welcomes letters to the editor from its readers as a forum for discussion of local public affairs subjects.

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