Fairfax Schools Provide Data for Budget Study

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The Fairfax County School Board has decided in closed session to send the county government information which might be used to cut the school budget.

County Executive George Kelley had requested detailed answers to 23 questions more than a week ago but School Supt. S. John Davis delayed answering until meeting with the school board. Fairfax has a $294.5 million budget this year, with a $15.4 million deficit, and Kelley had said he wanted a closer look at the school budget.

The policy decision to send Kelley the answers to 22 of the questions was made by the board last night as it met privately in a classroom after a public meeting at Glen Forest Elementary School.

The 23rd question, which concerned school contract negotiations, has no valid answer, Chairman William Perlik said. He justified the closed session on the ground that the questions affected personnel.

Under Virginia's Freedom of Information Act, personnel matters can be discussed in executive session but policy decisions must be made publicly.

The school board and the county government have often been at odds, but this was the first time a county official had formally requested specific information and school officials did not immediately supply it.

Davis said he started to gather the answers after receiving Kelley's memo March 16. He said it was partly due to his "inexperience" that he wanted to meet with the school board before releasing any information.

The county does not have the authority to tell the schol board how to spend its money, but it does determine how much money the school board receives.

In its earlier public session the board announced it was reducing its operating budget request by $1.6 million to $79.7 million.

The reduction came after the board decided not to buy certain instructional material and made cuts in various office accounts. The school system received $10,000 more state aid and $661,000 more federal aid than expected.