

Planetarium, from page 1

National Defence Education Act. About \$10 million has been invested in facilities and equipment. The continuing costs to operate the facilities are small, on the order of \$300,000 per year. This figure includes the annual cost of maintenance for the two SPITZ A4 and seven SPITZ A3P projectors. The planetaria are staffed by nine full time directors. All are specialized teachers and are responsible for operating the facilities and providing instruction. For more details go to www.fcps.k12.va.us/DIS/OHSICS/planet.

The adverse economic pressure on the FCPS system, due to growing enrollment and reduced funding by the Commonwealth of Virginia, has contributed to an unprecedented public school budget deficit. The County Board of Supervisors, are scheduled to meet on 22 April (a week in the future as this is written) to approve some sort of budget for the FCPS. If the County Board does not make good the entire school budget, using part of the county's "rainy day" fund (for example) to make up the

deficit, a shortfall of \$65 million will exist. To address this potential shortfall, the Superintendent of Schools proposes terminating the Planetarium Program along with

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other items. (See "Potential Budget Reductions," www.fcps.edu/news/list.html.)

Please note that the "savings" listed in this budget for terminating the Planetarium Program (\$800,000) is contrived. Most of this amount is pay for the planetarium directors, who would be retained for other assignment. The "real" cost, more like \$300,000 per year, breaks down to less than \$8 per year per student (grades 4, 5, and 6). If the planetarium program goes, the ele-

mentary school classroom teachers won't be able to fill the gap, so the students will suffer the loss in this part of the "core" curriculum. Last year support from NOVAC members, acting individually as concerned citizens, blunted a previous threat to terminate the planetarium program. If you are interested in having a say in this issue, consider contacting your local representatives. *

Timetable

May 6, 2002

School Board budget work session

May 13, 2002

School Board public hearing

May 20, 2002

School Board budget work session

May 23, 2002

School Board adopts FY 2003 Approved Budget

New observing site for members

NOVAC has completed negotiations for a new observing site—Camp Highroad. This site will be available for use on May 1, 2002.

Name: Camp Highroad

Rules and regulations

- 1. Unlimited access to the observing site. No time restrictions**
- 2. No advanced notification required.** However, request that members e-mail Rick Dawson (Director) at rick@camphighroad.org through May to give the Camp advanced notice so they can get used to us.
- 3. Plan is to install a NOVAC flag (similar to a mail box flag) at the turn off to the**

observing field to alert Camp personnel that we are observing. First observer in turns the flag up; last observer out turns the flag down. Once this is done, no further notification required.

- 4. In gratitude for use of the observing field, NOVAC will provide outreach events at the Camp. In addition, NOVAC will assist the Camp in maintaining their telescope(s).**
- 5. Use of Camp Highroad is for NOVAC members and their guests only.** The public is not permitted unless specifically approved by the Director.
- 6. Loud radios, alcoholic beverages, and/or loose pets are not permitted.**
- 7. NOVAC is requested not to drive across the fields. If driving to a different field, drive close to the tree line, not across the field. Once at the designated field, cars should be parked as close to the dirt roads as possible.**
- 8. We may be requested to use a different field than the prime field when some of**

the fields are planted with crops or in the case of a large camping group at the Camp. This information will be placed on the Web Page and the e-mail list server.

- 9. NOVAC members will clean the area of all litter prior to departure.**
- 10. Camp Management may revoke this agreement at any time due to the lack of adherence to the camp's rules and regulations.**
- 11. NOVAC shall provide Camp Highroad a Certificate of Insurance to cover the Camp from liability issues.**
- 12. It is permissible for a NOVAC member to camp overnight at the observing site at the conclusion of observing. This is not permission for general camping; rather it permits the member to sleep at the site until morning, when it is safer to drive home.**
- 13. NOVAC will provide a Portajon at the observing site and will be responsible to pay all associated costs. ***