

**Public Facilities Review Committee
Abingdon Elementary School Expansion
Meeting Summary
Wednesday, January 21, 2015**

Attendees

<i>PFRC Members (√ = present):</i>	<i>Arlington Public Schools (APS):</i>
√ Steve Sockwell, Chair	Ajibola Robinson, APS
√ Christopher Forinash, Planning Commission	Scott Prisco, APS
Jeff Certosimo, Housing Commission	Paul Lund, HCM
Elizabeth Gearin, Parks & Rec. Commission	Maureen Wiechert, HCM
Nancy Iacomini, Planning Commission	Andrea Swiatocha, HCM
Christopher Slatt, Transportation Commission	Alia Anderson, Toole Design Group
John Miller, At-Large	Forestry
√ Heather Obora, APS	
√ Todd McCracken, APS	<u>County Staff:</u>
√ Jason Widstrom, Fiscal Affairs Adv. Comm.	Michelle Stahlhut, DCPHD
√ Terri Prell, At-Large	Marco Rivero, DCPHD
√ William Staderman, Disability Advisory	Lisa Maher, DES
√ Christine Ng, E2C2	Vincent Verweij, DPR
√ Jason Widstrom, Fiscal Affairs Advisory	Bethany Heim, DPR
√ Ed Hilz, Urban Forestry Commission	
√ Kent Duffy, Fairlington Civic Assoc	
√ Guy Land, Fairlington Civic	
√ Kim Malinowski, Fairlington Villages	Cynthia Kunz
√ Terry Placek, Fairlington Villages	Dan Green
√ Bobby Crider, Courtbridge I	Adriea Husker
√ Joan Buhrman, Courtbridge II	Steve & Linda Robinson
Charles Matta, HALRB	Bonita Bayand
√ Andrew Schneider, Transportation Comm	Linda & John Solheim

APS Presentation:

The design consultant, Hord Coplan Macht (HCM), gave a presentation providing details from recent BLPC meetings, results of the “Grading the Options” exercise, and a discussion of circulation and building options.

Background

HCM provided details on a solution to the issue of fire access to the site without using the Ft. Reynolds Park secondary access route. A new, emergency access and turn around area would be located on the school site parallel to the south building façade. This emergency access and turn around area has been incorporated into all circulation options. The emergency access and turn around area will be compliant with State and County fire codes (including a minimum, 20 foot wide fire lane). The design team and County staff will work concurrently to address any modifications to the emergency access and turn around area if needed. By pursuing this access option, it protects important open space (Ft. Reynolds Park space and school play space) and trees southeast of the school site.

Alia Anderson, Toole Design Group, provided an overview of current safety concerns and traffic/pedestrian conflict points.

Discussion of Options

HCM reviewed the concept design options, and consolidated the options into the “Field Loop” or the “Lot Loop” option. The Field Loop option provides circulation around the existing green space, and the Lot Loop includes a bus turnaround adjacent to the existing parking lot, and provides pick-up queuing in the parking lot itself.

HCM outlined the benefits and drawbacks of each option, and Alia Anderson, Toole Design Group, provided details on the traffic and circulation impacts.

PFRC member asked how someone parked in the parking lot would safely travel to the entrance of the school and HCM responded there will be sufficient handicap parking spaces that will not be illegally occupied because there will also be short-term drop-off spaces provided. Additionally, there is consideration of connection traffic islands at the end of the parking lot and creating a walkway to the school.

PFRC members pointed out the Fairlington? Civic Association trees will need to be moved for the Lot Loop option, asked if the small trees along the walkway can be transplanted, and requested a tree inventory. The arborist acknowledged the Civic Association trees would need to be moved, and will provide the existing tree inventory. County staff added the small walkway trees could easily be transplanted.

PFRC members asked about the total percentage of green space lost and added there should be more effort to reduce pavement in the Lot Loop option. Questions related to Courtbridge specifically included the distance from Courtbridge to the new cutout, the current problem intersection and right-of-way with Courtbridge, and if the small green space on the northwest corner of the site will be used as a bioretention basin. HCM responded that the percentage of green space has not been calculated, the distance from the edge of building to the edge of curb is roughly 45 feet, and Alia Anderson responded that a proposed 30 foot adjustment of the intersection should help with the current right-of-way issues. Additionally, on the question of the bioretention basin, the stormwater plan for the site has not yet been developed. A more visible school will have an impact on the perception of the Courtbridge community and they are concerned the gym located in front will be a dominating element. There are additional construction concerns, especially regarding the marine clay soils and drainage. HCM agreed to provide a perspective of the gym option as viewed from Courtbridge to the next PFRC meeting and an update on the design team’s effort to investigate and address potential unsuitable soils.

A PFRC member pointed out that one advantage to the Field Loop is it can be used by kids during the school day and asked if the Lot Loop can be used similarly. HCM responded they will take it into consideration. Another PFRC member stated that schools should be used as community centers and the gym located in the front of the building would facilitate that use and provide a better civic presence.

The PFRC took a straw poll of the preferred circulation pattern. With the exception of one representative who stated that neither the Field nor Lot Loop option is preferred, the rest of the PFRC preferred the Lot Loop option.

Public Comment:

A Courtbridge II resident expressed concern about potential construction problems due to marine clay and the impact on the Courtbridge II community. They will need to pay for a study of their foundation to ensure there are no impacts. Additionally, the parking and driveway will be very close to their community, including the tall wall of the proposed gym option. Additional 8-10 foot trees are not a good compromise.

Another resident emphasized the continued need for and preservation of unstructured green space in the community. There is currently about 80,000 square feet of unstructured space that is widely used by the community and cannot be found anywhere else nearby.

Next Steps

Next PFRC Meeting: February 4, 7 p.m., Abingdon School

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 pm.