



April 21, 2015

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The Honorable Mary Hynes, Chair
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The Public Facilities Review Committee (PFRC) met on April 15, 2015, to discuss the final schematic design as related to the upcoming use permit application for Abingdon Elementary School. The use permit is expected to come forward to the County Board in September 2015. The PFRC met six (6) prior times in 2014 and 2015 to discuss the evolving design for the addition/renovation of Abingdon.

Arlington Public Schools (APS) design team, represented by its architect Hord Coplan Macht (HCM), presented the schematic details for the project. The main points of discussion are detailed below:

Geotechnical

Some PFRC members, particularly adjacent landowners, have been concerned about the impact of construction due to soil that includes marine clay found in coastal Virginia. Based on boring information from an APS consultant, the excavation for the school will not impact marine clay strata which are located at levels below the excavations. According to APS, there will be drilling, but no pile driving for foundation work. APS will also extend study of impact zones for construction beyond the usual 1:1 standard of excavation feet to impact zone feet. APS will also provide a photo documentation survey done before and after construction. If needed, there will be a plan for correction of any impacts. The PFRC raised no significant concerns after APS made these statements.

Sustainability

APS had previously targeted LEED Gold certification. However, a geothermal cooling system at this site was part of the plan; the cost of the system is currently beyond the budget. APS said it will meet LEED Silver standards, keeping GOLD as a target. Replacing the roof is the biggest energy saving feature of the new design, and it will pursue the most efficient HVAC system possible. The cost of solar panels may also be beyond the current budget. Solar panels may be added later or power obtained through a power purchase agreement.

Parking

The number of on-site parking spaces (83) has not changed since the PFRC's review of the concept design. PFRC members asked about the status of the plan to use 15 parking spaces adjacent to the school site located at the Fairlington Villages Community Center lot. According to APS and a member from Fairlington Villages, there is no final

agreement for the use of the 15 spaces. However, an agreement is near completion that will allow the use of 83 parking spaces on-site.

Transportation

APS's consultant, Toole Design Group, confirmed that a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) incentive will be offered at Abingdon School, with the goal of a 10% reduction in the number of staff driving alone to school. Toole discussed the transportation priorities for the site which include (but are not limited to): moving the entrance to the school, additional pedestrian protections such as bump outs, raised crosswalks and enhanced sidewalks at key intersections and midblock areas, improved traffic/pedestrian signage, as well as Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant curb ramps at adjacent streets. Off-site improvements will start after the schematic process is completed.

Toole noted that the planned bicycle parking at Abingdon exceeded parking plans at most Arlington schools. Members were particularly impressed with the plan to locate bicycle racks for teachers and staff in interior space, providing security. Members were generally surprised to learn that Arlington has no standards for bicycle parking at schools.

PFRC members expressed some concern regarding on-street bike lanes, particularly on 30th Street South, for staff and parents are not a priority in planning. There was also concern about insufficient lighting in adjacent Fort Reynolds Park and the adjoining pathway to the school, which are the primary access points to the school used by walking students. An additional comment was that there is no speed reduction sign on 30th Street South.

Trees

PFRC members generally expressed support for the adequacy of the tree removal and replacement plan, but noted that issues related to tree removal are now unresolved. One issue is that APS may displace some of the seven (7) commemorative trees that have been planted by the community (the exact number of trees is still under discussion). In previous discussions, these trees had been designated for transplanting. However, APS's arborist hired as a consultant, determined that the trees are unlikely to survive a transplant due to their large size and poor health. Several PFRC members commented that further discussions are needed between the community, APS, and the County Arborist on how to move forward with appropriate treatment of these specific trees.

A second issue is that there is not room for all of the required replacement trees on the APS site. This planning is also the subject of ongoing discussions. The Urban Forestry Commission representative (Ed Hilz) asked for additional information on this topic specifically.

Also worth noting is that APS has agreed to provide a double row of trees in the small open space directly adjacent to the Courtbridge II development.

Stormwater Management

HCM provided basic information on using different forms of bio-retention to treat and manage stormwater on-site. The bulk of the planned improvements will be at the rear of the school and would not impact or reduce open space.

Architecture

PFRC members raised no objections to the design of the exterior of the building. In general, members supported the placement of the gymnasium at the front of the site and were supportive of plans to design a more visible entrance.

Other

APS agreed to return to PFRC for review of site specific conditions related to the upcoming use permit. Also, APS will return for review of any substantial changes needed on-site due to further refinement of stormwater management, tree management, or other issues.

In a straw vote, PFRC members voted unanimously to support the proposed schematic design of the project. In general, the PFRC was satisfied with APS's plans and its responsiveness to community concern with the caveat that there needs to be continuing consultation with the community about unresolved issues related to tree removal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen Sockwell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'S'.

Stephen Sockwell, Chairman
Public Facilities Review Committee

Cc: Barbara Donnellan, County Manager
Gabriela Acurio, Assistant County Manager
Arlington County Board Members
Arlington County School Board Members
Dr. Pat Murphy, Superintendent, APS
John Chadwick, APS
Ajibola Robinson, APS
Marco Rivero, PD, CPHD