Public Facilities Review Committee
Stratford School Expansion
Meeting Summary
Thursday, May 14, 2015

Attendees

PFRC Members (√ = present):	***Arlington Public Schools (APS):***
√ Stephen Sockwell, Chair	Ben Burgin, APS
√ Todd McCracken, Schools	Bill Herring, APS
Jeff Certosimo, Housing Commission	Dan Curry, Quinn Evans
√ Elizabeth Gearin, Parks & Rec. Commission	Atara Margolies , Quinn Evans
Michael Perkins, Transportation Commission	Jeremy Chrzan, Toole Design
√ Nancy Iacomini, Planning Commission	James Elliott, Toole Design
John Miller, At-Large	
√ Chris Forinash, Planning Commission	
Heather Obora, Schools	
Jason Widstrom, Fiscal Affairs Adv. Comm.	
√ Terri Prell, At-Large	
William Staderman, Disability Advisory Comm.	***County Staff:***
√ Christine Ng, E2C2	
Stratford Project-Specific PFRC Members (√ = present):	Michelle Stahlhut, DCPHD
√ Mark Bildner, Cherrydale	Jane S. Kim, DES
Carole Russo, Cherrydale (Alternate)	Meliha Aljabar, DPR
√ Anne Wilson, Donaldson Run	Rebeccah Ballo, DCPHD
√ Stuart Dziura, Donaldson Run (Alternate)	
√ David Barish, Waverly Hills	
√ Paul Holland, Waverly Hills (Alternate)	
√ Ed Hilz, Urban Forestry	
√ Robert Dudka, HALRB	
Charlie Craig, HALRB (Alternate)	

Introductions and Announcements
PFRC Acting Chair Nancy Iacomini opened the meeting by welcoming those present. Committee members and attendees introduced themselves and gave the name of the organization or committee they were representing.

APS Presentation:
Ben Burgin, APS staff, gave a brief overview of the project schedule.

Transportation
Jeremy Chrzan gave a presentation on current arrival and dismissal conditions at the Stratford School site. Bus drivers currently struggle with the loop and just park in the drive. Students walk on northern side of vacation lane or by the bus loop. Parents pull over and pick up students in the no standing zone and prevents passing because of existing size of streets. During early dismissal there is a queue from start of bus loop back to 23rd street with some blocking of traffic. Current field work is mostly completed and they will present full existing conditions, survey results, LOS data for middle schools in the County and for HB and Stratford. They will not have the traffic analysis completed and they are still assigning trips to the network in Arlington. They need the number of concepts reduced before beginning that process.

PFRC Questions and Comments

- What is the size of the school?
    - APS: the goal is 1,000 seat middle school. APS is asking their team to evaluate 1,300 as projection trends head toward maximum capacity.

- Why isn't APS planning for the maximum capacity now?
    - APS: There are opportunities to enhance the site for 1,300 but APS cannot build infrastructure for 1,300 right now. We don't want to make decisions to preclude that in the future; we would go through this process again in the future if it expands. APS doesn't want to make decisions to preclude future expansion. The PFRC/use permit process would happen again for future expansion. There are some things that can be done to facilitate expansion like different switchgears or mechanical systems that won't impact the cost of things right now but could impact construction in the future; we don't want to design something that will cost us more in the future

- PFRC has advocated for preparing for future expansions in the past but APS has resisted it. Is this a new APS policy? Decisions are being made on the entry to the site based on a population that is going to change. The orientation and access are going to be different and there are going to be tradeoffs. Cars are going to be a tough thing to fix. Is there data on how Swanson and Williamsburg operate?
    - APS wants to prepare for a known expansion at this site that is not in the current budget.
    - Toole Design: They are going to look at Williamsburg again because they heard there are issues there; there's an element of the cars analysis that we won't be able to work on yet

- All the options have the parent drop-off in the same location and it is difficult to see how to move forward or make decisions without information about where cars are going to go.
    - Toole: parking; current staff drive rate – parking could be reduced somewhat over zoning by 20-30 spaces

- Have you looked at available street parking spaces?
    - Toole: there is no available street parking abutting the site, although there is available parking elsewhere, but not directly adjacent. They are still working on trip generation data, although in the afternoon there are fewer parent drivers. Toole is not as concerned about dismissal but they are going to look at Williamsburg to compare.

- Access and traffic is probably the top challenge at this site and we need to dig into the data.
    - QEA: If you have nine opportunities there needs to be nine studies. There needs to be some narrowing down

- How were the tallies done?
    - QEA: in-class surveys and electronic parent survey

- How much variation is there from school to school of vehicle traffic? School starts so early that it is dark in the morning so parents drop-off, but students walk home. It varies seasonally.

- Toole: It varies seasonally. Schools did the surveys at different times; the parent survey asked how does your child usually travel to and from school. Current arrival traffic is spread out over time.

Historic Preservation
QEA gave an overview of the historic design process, the designation process that is underway, and the timeline.

Site Planning
QEA reviewed the interactive process at BLPC that led to several of the concepts that will be reviewed.

- Are we reviewing Phase 1 or Phase 2? Are they the same size?
  - QEA: They want to look for where those opportunities might be for Phase 2 in the future. They are trying to update specs for how to get to 1,000 and then to 1,300.

- For 1,000, it is mostly classroom space for 1000, but for 1,300, more support space is needed.

Option A
Not enough space for a line of buses; No change to park or parking; Plenty of room on the field; 140 parking spaces; Low cost option; Parent and bus drop-off could be flipped; BLPC voted to keep this option because it is a low cost option;

Option B
First of three options with a road along site; Buses enter from Vacation Lane; Long and straight is suited for buses; Provides a great opportunity for entry to the building; voted out because the BLCP didn't want more traffic on 23rd Street;

Option C
Vacation Lane to Old Dominion; bus drop off on right hand side; engages Old Dominion but doesn't touch parks; the field shifts slightly; right turn only onto Old Dominion; APS control of the lane is important; BLPC preferred this one, generally.

Option D
Direction is opposite of C; Right in, drop off on wrong side; both C and D requires APS lane control; BLPC kept this one pending more analysis and VDOT input.

Option E
Right in and right out from Old Dominion; Can we get bus drop off, parking, etc. to share field space with Parks; expensive option; building entry is on the end of the building; entering at level which is level two; loading and cafeteria are not going to move; BLPC discarded due to high cost and loss of parking and constrained drop off.

Option F
Coming from 23rd Street; Access issues but no park impact; could be two parent drop off loops on Vacation Lane; $$; BLPC did not prefer because of the 23rd Street connection.

Option G
Old Dominion loop scheme; the field gets reconfigured but still fits; Parent drop off is on Vacation Lane; Some parking is lost; expensive option that involves re-grading and retaining walls; Buses are kept entirely separate from the site and neighborhood; VDOT is more concerned about queuing of cars on Old Dominion which would require a longer deceleration lane. A road just for buses is limited amount of queuing time. This option kept on table by BLPC.

Option H
Paper street option. BLPC thought it was a non-starter.

Option I
Another version of A, taking what is on the site and improving it and making it wider to combine with A – low cost

- What makes up the difference between $ or $$ or $$$ - none of the schemes are over a million dollars.
    - QEA: Option G is most expensive. We came away with what we thought was the best going forward; conceptual phase costs are hard to zone in.

<u>Building Siting</u>
The courtyard location is an easier connection to circulation;
Flat against west end makes connecting to the existing building circulation a challenge;
Entering from west end pushes entry next to loading.
Turning at right angle – locates program far from rest of school; building is in the hill; leaves a lot of flexibility for future phase of the building;

- Can phase I and phase II be stacked?
    - QEA: Factors to consider are the zoning code height limit and cost of building for 2nd story. Initially we think of 2-3 stories, so stacking would mean 6 stories next to historic building and in that neighborhood;

- When looking at 1,300 seats are you looking at the support space
    - QEA: yes we are looking ahead to understand what would be needed;

- The 3rd option has a hill and a 6 story addition there might be acceptable as there is not a lot of housing there and there are high-rises across the street;

- With the 1st option is there an opportunity to connect with a physical walkway?

    - QEA: Possibly but we are too early in the process. It is proximate enough that connecting is possible. 1st option makes most sense for expansion

- It would help if you did slides on a spreadsheet basis in order to compare; so much info in a jumbled option;

- The courtyard is the least desirable because it puts the addition on the last remaining spot. Realistically you're not going to make a loop and ask people to go around and there will be a covered walkway between them. The entire back of the building is gone and least desirable for historic preservation. 2/3 of the variations have building on the south. Much of what makes this special is the massing and it is hard to tell what will mass properly.

Was it studied to do an addition on the north? North and south would leave middle open in original state. Putting that road behind the building constrains the additions against the building; opposed to that road more than anything

  - QEA: The addition doesn't need to be that close the building if no road; maybe we have more room to step the building down;

- It would be helpful to have an inventory from DPR about the use of parks at this site; can they be used in the same way and by the same people;
- It is difficult to react to any of these options without knowing how the transportation is going to work;

SITE OPTIONS

- Concerned about how much these options hinge on Old Dominion access;
  - QEA: APS has met with VDOT previously but the County has not; going forward, we will work together; at County, we will work with whatever comes out of this process, but without transportation information, we can't make any recommendations.

- Do the busses just queue up?
  - QEA: We have to allow stacking; drop off is not a queue;

- Is there sufficient emergency access?
  - QEA: The road in back provides access; without road, you can have a fire access spot without a whole road;

- The Abingdon project is using a paved area that is not for vehicle access;
  Will we need to pave more area?
  - APS: Bill – Wakefield a sidewalk specially designed for fire vehicles

- Did BLPC embrace a common principle or was it for different reasons?

  - QEA: separation of modes and getting busses off of neighborhood streets. challenges related access from Old Dominion – how do you control parents versus busses; we can easily control traffic coming from vacation lane;

- Reorganizing the site property, the need to accommodate parent and community traffic to support rec uses on the site, how can that be managed?

    - QEA: BLPC – none of the transportation was available, fewer for study, largely based on the dollar signs and the drawings;

- Has BLPC discussed guiding principles?
  - QEA: Pedestrian safety was first, cost was 2nd; premise has been don't touch the park; from the building level, it was a mandate to come in under budget.

- Has any scheme nixed because of cost alone; From professional standpoint, the options are limited in scope based on cost; there was no other option presented by BLPC; not having another option for parent drop-off is a problem

    - QEA: In early conversations with BLPC, some of the groups expressed that parents want to drop off at front door no matter. If we can improve parent drop off in any way, we will.

- Having the busses going in and off Old Dominion is fine coming from the south, but from other way is difficult. Vacation Lane could make a lot of sense
    - QEA: from the APS perspective, they can control busses; controlling of the parents is difficult.

- The Five Points intersection is a huge concern for the community; creating a situation in which traffic is forced
    - QEA: Still need to discuss with VDOT, looks like it might be headed for right in and right out;

- Plan option A – orange and purple arrows coming from Vacation Lane; can that be a one-way street? It makes sense to make it one-way.

Public Comment

Resident who lives just north of 22nd on east side was concerned about the paper street option. Any left turn at Five Points is the problem. The worst is coming down the hill and turning left onto Military. There is no lane to make a left turn. Its bad circulation; In terms of trees: On 23rd street by Lorcom Lane there are 2 oak trees and 23rd is very steep and much more difficult to deal with and min 23rd street; some of the options push field into tree barriers on the east.

Resident/BLPC member: It's difficult to see this is an island surrounded by neighborhood streets that are small. The traffic is similar to Williamsburg and it's hard to see how that translates to fitting in the neighborhood; truly thinking that through needs to be one of the first exercises to guide the design; adding on state involvement; Lee Highway, this is incredibly important parcel and this decision could constrain future opportunities for good civic space.

PFRC Summary Comments

- Of the 4 options, Option I is least favorite because of constraints on busses, and it's the wrong end of the building; C/D is the best but make busses turn right;

- Would like to see an option with a parent entrance from Old Dominion (maybe Option G); Williamsburg traffic as comparable, morning backup of 5-10 min of 2/10 of a mile – trouble imagining entrances handling the Williamsburg volume

- 1) When will the tree inventory be available? 2) Its not possible to choose without more comparison data 3)29 million seems foolish to build something that has these features if it's going to come out more than 29 million. It should be reverse engineered.

- Take a closer look at pedestrian access and how to make sure there are no conflicts;

- Roads sometimes change in the middle; you could stop at that driveway and it could be a one way up to a point and then it becomes 2 way; no more printed tree inventory.

- More context is needed including pictures of buildings across the street; There are problems with 3 point turns; Perhaps there should be loading lanes on Military or Lorcom; middle schoolers don't want people to see them get dropped off;

- Five Points is a big community issue for Cherrydale. Busses are the easy part; we need to see the peak number of cars per minute. It's a lot of cars to move through a street. Design something to work with behavior of parents; it would be helpful to identify all potential sources of funding outside of APS for traffic;

County: There is a CIP project in design phase at 5 points;

- I fear the school will do everything they can to get seats in place and neighborhood issues will be secondary. This is a tight traffic situation

  Terri – VDOT

- Prefer to see this in larger context and pull out the camera to bigger picture, especially in terms of traffic data; this is a very unique site in that it feeds off of tiny roads but there are larger roads with traffic right around it; APS is the applicant, BLPC is about the program but PFRC wants the bigger picture.

- PFRC doesn't generally get involved in cost. We assume school budget is in place and we indicate our preferences but it's more about what we'd like to see in neighborhood context; at Abingdon school, Toole was helpful in analyzing traffic patterns and in pinpointing problems off-site which helps to think about how to get the funding, which doesn't necessarily have to be part of this project.

Next Steps

The next PFRC meeting will include a presentation of baseline transportation data from Toole Design Group, more ideas from QEA, and responses to questions raised in this meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 10:00pm.