

**Public Facilities Review Committee  
Abingdon Elementary School Expansion  
Meeting Summary  
Wednesday, November 19, 2014**

**Attendees**

<b><i>PFRC Members (√ = present):</i></b>	<b><i>Arlington Public Schools (APS):</i></b>
√ Stephen Sockwell, Chair	Scott Prisco, APS
√ Todd McCracken, Schools	Ajibola Robinson, APS
Jeff Certosimo, Housing Commission	Toole Design Group
√ Elizabeth Gearin, Parks & Rec. Commission	Hord Coplan Macht
Christopher Slatt, Transportation Commission	
Christopher Forinash, Planning Commission	
√ John Miller, At-Large	
√ Heather Obora, Schools	<b><i>County Staff:</i></b>
Karen Kumm, Planning Commission	Marco Rivero, DCPHD
√ Jason Widstrom, Fiscal Affairs Adv. Comm.	Arlova Vonhm, DCPHD
Terri Prell, At-Large	Dennis Sellin, DES
√ William Staderman, Disability Advisory Comm.	Bethany Heim, DPR
<b><i>Abingdon Project-Specific PFRC Members (√ = present):</i></b>	<b><i>Observers:</i></b>
√ Guy Land, Fairlington CA	Jim Hurysz, Resident
√ Kent Duffy, Fairlington CA	Steve Robinson, Resident
√ Bobby Crider, Courtbridge I	Bryan Unger, Resident
√ Joan Buhman, Courtbridge II	Lisa Lartius, Resident
Charles Matta, HALRB	Linda Solheim, Resident
√ Ed Hilz, Urban Forestry Commission	John Solheim, Resident
Patrick Kenney, E2C2	Aristotelis Chronis, Attorney
√ Christine Ng, E2C2	Linda Robinson, Resident
√ Kim Malinowski, Fairlington Villages	Dan Green, Resident
√ Terry Placek, Fairlington Villages	

**Introductions/PFRC Charge/Site Tour:**

PFRC Chair Steve Sockwell opened up the meeting by welcoming those present. Committee members and attendees introduced themselves and gave the name of the organization or committee they were representing. Chair Sockwell clarified that the discussion would be limited to committee members initially but let others in attendance know that there would be an open public comment period at the end of the meeting to speak and/or ask questions.

**APS Presentation:**

**Toole Design Group**

Toole Design Group consultants presented their multimodal transportation study. Their work consists of two phases. Phase 1 focuses on existing conditions, which is expected to be completed in December. Phase 2 will consist of future analysis of potential building scenarios and will take place from January - June 2015.

## HCM

Hord Coplan Macht (HCM) team members provided project updates, including an overview of the most recent BLPC meetings as well as the proposed meeting schedule over the next several months. HCM presented the final results of the archaeological study and community feedback, both positive and negative, from the four design concepts discussed at the last meeting. APS staff mentioned that they were pursuing the possibility of using the lot next to the tennis courts as a way to reduce the number of parking spaces provided onsite.

## APS

APS staff discussed recent meetings held with residents from the Courtbridge and Fairlington residential communities. Staff summarized their feedback on the design concepts as well, many of which were similar to those heard at BLPC and PFRC. Other concerns raised included how to manage construction and the lack of utilization and awareness of Ft. Reynolds Park as a public facility.

## **PFRC Questions/Concerns:**

### *Transit/Multimodal Study*

- School drop-offs are also occurring on 30<sup>th</sup> Road, which is not captured in the consultant's analysis. Similarly, please also consider delays on Woodrow Street.
  - Toole may go back and review staff surveys to determine what streets they are parking on.
- Does APS provide transit benefits or incentives to staff?
  - Yes, there is a pre-tax benefit although it is not promoted well among the school staff. Many people don't know about it.
- Have you performed origin studies for APS staff?
  - Not yet, we only have self-reported survey data and ZIP code data. We do know that APS teachers are more likely to live in Arlington than most other employees in Arlington. Also, there will be some staff turnover each year, so the data is going to be valid for only a short period of time.
- Did you perform speed and volume measurements?
  - Yes. The amount of delay in the vicinity of the school is minimal, under ten seconds. We did not note significant incidents of speeding. However, we noted that during the morning drop-off period, average speeds are at 26 mph, while the speed limit changes to 20 mph during school arrival and dismissal periods.
- Is it appropriate to conduct observations during the winter months, when more people are likely to drive?
  - We rely mainly on data taken during the fall but will come back to do at least one more set of observations. In addition, observations are done on inclement weather days to mimic behavior you might see in winter.
- Did you observe any poor behavior?
  - Very little. We observed a few rolling stops, but no really egregious driver behavior. A few minor issues were observed on S. 29<sup>th</sup> St. We did also observe some pedestrians crossing mid-block.

- Since you said that 91% of teachers and staff drive alone to the school, what is the mix of incentives that would get more of them to switch modes?
  - We believe that this school would be a good candidate for more carpooling.
  - While the existing bus stop is not far (on 31<sup>st</sup> street), we would have to look at the route it serves.
- For the second phase of the analysis, which scenarios are you going to study?
  - This hasn't been determined yet, they are all still very conceptual at this point.
- Does the mode share analysis take into consideration the potential future boundary changes for the school?
  - Yes.

### *Parking & Circulation*

- Fairlington Village maintenance vehicles are taking up parking spaces on 29<sup>th</sup> Street, which impacts the availability of on-street parking.
  - That may be true, but there is always going to be some condition that renders one or a few on-street parking spaces unavailable, which is why we consider on-street parking to be “full” when 80% of spaces are occupied.
- Did staff express concerns regarding parking?
  - Yes, staff did complain about both the number and size of the existing parking spaces.
- Consider “going up” for parking instead of spreading it out over the site. You might also consider putting a building over part of the parking lot to limit additional impervious surface area.
  - We have 85-90 staff and teachers now, and that number will grow with the expansion. We hope to obtain permission for a reduction in the amount of required parking on site.
- Concern expressed about the appearance of an above ground garage as well as the potential for crime and lighting required.
- Can you consider tandem parking as a possible solution?
  - We will look at it.
- Looks like there is a trade-off between green space and parking, as evidenced by the 2- and 3-story designs. Concern about converting the sidewalk space (at the 30<sup>th</sup> St. S. “paper street”) into vehicular access.
  - We are building for the long-term future of this school and must keep that in mind. We also are looking to provide a safer environment for all those who come to the school, and that means separating, to the extent possible, the various modes of travel.
- Is the paved areas that borders residential uses to the south side an option for a bus drop-off loop?
  - It's too narrow for vehicular travel or for a fire emergency lane.
- What is driving the desire for secondary access?

- This is mainly needed for emergency access and to help resolve the bottleneck created at 29<sup>th</sup> Street and Abingdon Road by having a single point of entry.
- From a pure transportation safety standpoint, secondary access is not essential. But it is good for safety, as well as for the school's future needs.
- Residents want to protect the existing fields and are concerned about the visual impact of a taller and more massive school addition. We are willing to accept the trade-off of having teachers and staff parking on local streets if it allows the soccer field to be preserved.
- How would you change access to Courtbridge under these options?
  - Courtbridge residents would always maintain access but the cul-de-sac would be removed.

### *Design Concepts*

- Is APS looking at a green space that the community can use?
  - Yes, Parks staff is part of the discussion
- Is artificial turf being considered for the playing field?
  - No, the plan is to refurbish it with natural grass. County Parks/Recreation staff present confirmed that we have no plans to install turf in this location.
- Are current play areas in the back preserved in all four options?
  - No, they are not preserved in option B and might be impacted in option A.
- Can you put the expansion on the Trades Center side of the school?
  - We have setback requirements along this property line (50'), per the Zoning Code. Staff will determine what the process would be for getting relief from this requirement but an appearance before the Board of Zoning Appeals is likely necessary.
- Please research the restrictions that might exist in the area owned by Dominion Power near 31<sup>st</sup> Street.
  - We will find out by the next meeting
- Neighbors are concerned about drainage as this is already an issue in the community.
  - There are much more stringent regulations now for the Chesapeake Bay watershed protection area, and we must now contain all of our storm water on our own site.
- Concern that if the field is absorbed into the play area for the school, it will be fenced and less accessible to the neighborhood.
- Have you performed soils tests to ensure that you can go as high as three stories?
  - Not yet.
- At BLPC, most of the building block studies ended up with 2-story buildings.
  - The team will still explore 2-story and 3-story options.

### **Public Comment:**

- Geology maps obtained from the County indicate the location of clay soils in this area, which are problematic. APS will have to test.

- The neighborhood has a laissez faire attitude toward teachers' use of on-street parking. There appears to be a fair amount available on nearby streets (29<sup>th</sup>). There is no reason to take away from actual activity area on site to add parking.
- Consider reconfiguring the existing parking lot by removing islands for better utilization and to save mature trees.
- Are there plans to add lighting to the soccer field?
  - No, this is just a practice field and the County has no plans to change this.
  - Staff will provide additional information on how it is currently used at the next meeting.
- Green space in front of Courtbridge is highly valued and contains wildlife.
- Many negative comments made at community meetings were culled down in the presentation.
- PFRC is a good, open process. Hopefully, the committee members are able to read all the data that was presented.
- Lots of good ideas on parking, including the possibility of tandem parking.
- Casual open space is very important and it is used by the neighbors
- About 40% of the parents have the ability to walk to school (w/in a ½ mile radius). What about redistricting to increase that amount?
  - The consultants have factored the school boundary into their analysis.

### **Next Steps**

The next PFRC meeting will include a presentation of more refined design concepts from HCM and responses to questions raised in this meeting. Toole Design Group would not present here again until January.

The current meeting schedule for the remainder of the year is as follows:

- December 2, 2014 – BLPC
- December 16, 2014 – BLPC
- **December 17, 2014 – PFRC**

The meeting adjourned at 9:30pm.