



Arlington County, Virginia
Joint Facilities Advisory Commission



Ginger Briggs Brown, Chair
Gregory Greeley, Vice Chair

June 27, 2018

Honorable Katie Cristol
Chair, Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 300
Arlington, Virginia 22201

Honorable Barbara Kanninen
Chair, Arlington School Board
2110 Washington Boulevard
Arlington, Virginia 22204

Dear Chairs Cristol and Kanninen,

As directed in our charge, the Joint Facilities Advisory Commission (JFAC) respectfully submits its recommendations to the County Board and School Board on their respective FY 2019 – 2028 Capital Improvement Plans (CIPs). Since JFAC's establishment in November 2016, this is our first opportunity to review the proposed CIPs. We created a CIP Subcommittee to help facilitate our review and received presentations from APS and County staff at our April and May 2018 meetings. We intend to further refine a methodology for jointly reviewing the CIPs in advance of the FY 2021 CIP cycle. Today, we offer more general comments on the CIPs with the theme of "catching up and looking forward."

County Manager's Proposed FY 2019 – 2028 CIP

There is consensus among the members of JFAC to support the major themes of the County Manager's proposed CIP that:

- **Maintains a "state of good repair".**
Maintenance is often politically the easiest thing to cut, but deferring maintenance and back of the house needs does have consequences. JFAC members noted examples of these consequences. The deterioration of the salt storage facility on 26th Street North, which could hinder an effective response to snow events over the coming years. Another example is the need to maintain ART buses to provide consistent, reliable service for transit riders. Major disruptions, like the recent experience of delayed and canceled trips, should not be occurring. We also note that the good repair concept should include maintenance of our parks and public spaces.

When considering maintenance, we encourage both Boards to apply a systems approach and use root cause analysis to support planning and implementation. For example, it would be straightforward enough to continue to plan for and prioritize repairs and repaving as needed, responding to deterioration at particular sites. Introducing root cause analysis would lead to questions about why and how pavement deteriorates, and systems thinking would consider additional factors aimed at preventing or slowing deterioration. This could include creative partnerships with public utilities and consideration of pavement surface alternatives that would have lower lifetime total costs of ownership.

- **Funds Metro as a priority.**
Just as our County facilities need to maintain a state of good repair, we support the proposed increase in capital funding to support maintenance of the regional Metro transit system. We note

that the increased funding for Metro requires the delay of other facilities and projects, including a number of transportation projects and the relocation of the Public Safety Communications and Emergency Management operational space. We hope that in the next CIP cycle these projects will not continue to be cut – this would be detrimental to the sustainability and future of Arlington.

- **Keeps up with the needs of APS over time.**

County demographic forecasts indicate that we should be prepared for an increasing student population through 2035. Our community may continue to be challenged to create seats for more and more students over the next two decades.

APS Adopted FY 2019 – 2028 CIP

The School Board recently adopted the APS CIP on June 21. We offer the following observations for consideration as school facilities planning and implementation efforts continue:

- **Monitor seat capacity in 2026 and beyond.**

The School Board's adopted CIP provides substantial funding for the known, near-term needs at the high school and elementary school levels. However, there is the potential for large seat deficits at the elementary and middle school levels in 2026 and beyond.

- **Outline a clear decision process for the Career Center site.**

Last fall, JFAC worked with the Advisory Council on School Facilities and Capital Programs (FAC) to create the first draft scope of a Phased Development Facility Plan for the Career Center site. Given our prior involvement, we look forward to the recommendations that come from the conclusion of the Career Center Working Group (CCWG). Before APS moves forward with these recommendations, JFAC recommends that it be directed to work with the CCWG Chair to develop a transitional process or processes to facilitate the JFAC mission, resolve any of outstanding issues, and/or consider future phases in the FY 2021 APS and County CIPs. This transitional process should:

- Be clear about what decision(s) are needed, who will make the decision(s), and when;
- Describe the role(s) of the working group, JFAC, or other commission(s) or committee(s); and
- Give specific information about what community input is sought; identify guiding principles in making the decision; prioritize the proposed uses or needs; and analyze what could fit, what should fit, location, cost and timeline/schedule.

Looking Forward

While there is general support for the priorities of the County and APS CIPs, we offer some observations and recommendations looking towards the next CIP cycle(s) and a long range facilities plan that looks beyond the ten year CIP horizon. These include:

- **Consider equity carefully.**

The current CIP cycle is not one that introduces new major initiatives, which should allow us time for necessary conversations and careful preparation for future CIP cycles. During JFAC's roundtables and public comment periods, we have heard repeated concerns and opinions about

the equitable distribution of resources. We recommend that the County Board and School Board direct staff (and JFAC) to:

- Seek community input and review input received during the County Board-sponsored Big Idea Roundtables;
 - Develop guiding principles for considering equity (whether geographic, economic, demographic) as a factor in decisions on public facilities; and
 - Establish or re-establish standards for County and APS facilities.
- **Think outside the box.**
Given the budgetary constraints and the state of the CIP, greater consideration in a long range facilities plan should be given to shared cost opportunities to enable higher return on capital including, but not limited to:
 - Public-private partnerships;
 - Rental opportunities in lieu of immediate capital construction;
 - Co-location opportunities;
 - Greater intensity of use; and
 - Sponsorship opportunities.
 - **Make the most of the facilities we have.**
We must be efficient in our use of funds and ensure that existing facilities are used to the fullest extent possible. Particularly as we as a community look for more seats for our students, efficient school facility usage and effective joint usage of facilities should be the first strategies considered.
 - **Build our facilities faster and more efficiently.**
An important goal is to assure that any decision process uses community, staff, and expert time and public dollars efficiently and assures that the time for project planning and implementation is controlled and monitored. The County and APS should study the resources that have been deployed for prior facility projects and seek opportunities for improvement.

We look forward to engaging with the County and School Boards, staff, and the broader Arlington community in the coming months and years as we continue to fulfill our mission to provide guidance for future CIPs and longer term facilities planning efforts.

Sincerely,

Ginger Briggs Brown,
Chair, Joint Facilities Advisory Commission

Gregory Greeley
Vice Chair, Joint Facilities Advisory Commission