

ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY CONSERVATION COMMISSION
c/o Department of Environmental Services
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 705
Arlington, VA 22201

November 16, 2018

The Honorable Katie Cristol, Chair
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Blvd.
Arlington, VA 22201

Re: Reed School Project and Environmental Assessment

Dear Chair Cristol:

The Environment and Energy Conservation Commission (E2C2) provides these comments on the Environmental Assessment Checklist (EA) dated October 28, 2016 for the new elementary school to be constructed at the Reed School site on County owned property. Members of the Commission served on the Reed School Working Group and the Public Facilities Review Committee (PFRC) for the new elementary school, participated in the presentation on the EA provided by Arlington Public Schools (APS) staff on October 23, 2018, and reviewed the draft Use Permit and other materials made available to the Commission in February. Though it is impossible to construct an entirely new 750 student school facility with no environmental impact, the Commission commends APS and Arlington County staff for their focus on developing this project with the minimum impact to the environment and the County's limited natural resources.

Although we are generally pleased with and support the use permit application, we provide the following additional comments and recommendations.

Solar Power

The Commission supports the design of the new school building as a net zero energy facility. E2C2 encourages APS to implement solar into the project. We are encouraged by APS's pursuit of a third-party power purchase agreement (PPA) as an alternative to including solar panels in the capital project, but still strongly recommend the installation of solar panels on the roof as it is economical in the long run. The Commission encourages both the County and APS to pursue renewable energy where feasible, and to consider a complete life-cycle cost analysis (both capital and long-term operating cost savings), rather than only capital budget limits when considering the inclusion of solar power. In order to meet the County's relatively aggressive goals under its Community Energy Plan, every opportunity for renewable energy should be realized.

Stormwater Management

It is a rare project that can construct an entirely new facility and result in a net reduction of site imperviousness and improved stormwater quality. The current stormwater solution for this project proposes the use of runoff reducing (RR) Stormwater Best Management Practices (BMPs) such as

bioretention basins, urban bioretention, dry swales, and compost amended soils. E2C2 is encouraged by the significant amount of effort put towards continuing current stormwater management, containing new stormwater issues and planning for future stormwater.

Air Quality

Although a new elementary school means increased air emissions from buses and cars, E2C2 would encourage compliance with the current APS policy of increased or expanded walk zones to schools when redistricting neighborhoods to the new Reed school. The more families that can take advantage of alternative means of transportation such as walking and biking to school should be encouraged to do so.

Outside Lighting

The Commission supports and appreciates the use of energy efficient exterior lighting that reduces light spill and glare.

Zero Waste

We encourage APS to partner with the Solid Waste Bureau of Arlington County to integrate zero waste into the design and educational aspect of its schools. In preparation for two regional waste-to-energy facilities coming online in the next two years we encourage APS to contemplate food waste being sent there in order to achieve zero waste and improve sustainability. For example, Prince George's County has a food waste facility and is preparing its schools for food waste collection in order to achieve zero waste.

Residential Utility Tax

As previously noted, E2C2 remains concerned that the revenue stream continues to be diverted from the Residential Utility Tax (RUT) and has not been earmarked for energy-related environmental projects. This funding could be used to implement environmental and renewable aspects on this and future projects.

The Commission supports approval of the use permit and acceptance of the Environmental Assessment.

Sincerely,



Michael Mesmer, Chair
Environment and Energy Conservation Commission