



**Arlington County, Virginia  
Joint Facilities Advisory Commission**



*Gregory Greeley, Chair  
Kathleen McSweeney, Vice Chair*

**Recommendations for the  
Arlington Public Schools'  
Arlington Facilities and Student Accommodation Plan**

November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019

**Recommendation Summary**

The Commission recommends that APS and the County address the school seat funding gap, and that APS continue to look for policy, program, boundary, and creative options to identify opportunities to add seats.

The Commission recommends that APS review the long term growth of the middle school student population. The long term middle school facility needs may ultimately be better addressed by an additional middle school facility instead of the middle school addition that was included in the previous CIP.

If the long term middle seat needs require an additional middle school facility, the Commission recommends that the Boards task JFAC to establish a committee with a broad set of stakeholders to start the siting process, as outlined in the Community Facilities Study, for a new middle school or joint facility that includes middle school seats.

The Commission recommends that the Boards task JFAC to establish a committee with a broad set of stakeholders to start the siting process, as outlined in the Community Facilities Study, for siting options that can address the anticipated seat deficits. These options can include new elementary facilities, new joint facilities that include elementary school seats, or swing space to allow for elementary school expansion.

The Commission recommends that APS create projections for future school bus and white fleet parking needs, review these projections against facilities available for parking, and include this information in future AFSAP documents.

**Background**

The Joint Facilities Advisory Commission (JFAC) was created as an advisory body jointly appointed by the Arlington County Board and the Arlington County School Board, based on a recommendation from the 2015 Community Facilities Study. The Commission has been charged with reviewing and making recommendations on the Arlington Facilities and Student Accommodation Plan (AFSAP) that is produced by Arlington Public Schools (APS) one year in advance of the adoption of the APS Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)

The Commission held three public meetings, on July 24<sup>th</sup>, September 25<sup>th</sup> and October 23<sup>rd</sup> (in conjunction with the FAC), to review the key information to be included in the AFSAP being drafted by APS staff. The discussions centered around reviews of projected student enrollment growth, planned

school facility construction and the geographical distribution of anticipated student seat needs through 2029. A common refrain from members was the need to balance school seat needs with other County needs, while understanding that every year added to construction represents an escalation of already high school costs. The priorities in school seats and programs need to be driven by instruction. And, APS should exhaust all potential policy, program, boundary and creative options in the quest for additional seats.

This letter summarizes the Commission's recommendations to the School Board and the County Board and is intended to provide input to the Boards on the development of the CIP for APS.

### Capital Improvement Plan Funding

The new APS AFSAP highlights the un-met school seat needs in the current CIP. This gap between the anticipated school seat needs and the new school seats funded in the previous Capital Improvement Plan needs to be addressed.

Creative techniques that the Commission discussed for meeting these needs include:

- Assessing whether Pre-K in ground floor retail (currently widely used by private preschool providers) could be used to free up elementary seats and make Pre-K more walkable in neighborhoods.
- Exploring partnerships with churches and commercial preschool providers to offer pre-school seats for students.
- Exploring opportunities to use leased space or commercial office buildings for schools or classrooms.
- Assessing where existing public facilities could be expanded and become joint facilities that include school classrooms.
- Reviewing school boundary policies used in other jurisdictions that should better balance student crowding in neighboring schools.
- Exploring scenarios where swing space could allow APS to complete reconstruction and expansion of existing schools more quickly and efficiently.
- Exploring scenarios where the newly-available sites on Quincy Street and Carlin Springs Road could be used to reduce school crowding or facilitate school expansion.

The Commission recommends that APS and the County address the school seat funding gap, and that APS continue to look for policy, program, boundary, and creative options to identify opportunities to add seats.

### High School Seats

The AFSAP projections indicate that planned high school expansions to create additional seats at the Ed Center and at the Career Center substantially address the projected growth in Arlington's high school student population through 2028. The Commission has assumed that these planned expansions will continue and therefore has no additional recommendations for high school facilities.

### Middle School Seats

The AFSAP projections indicate that Arlington's new and expanded middle school facilities address much, but not all, of the projected growth in Arlington's middle school population. The projected seat deficit of 770 middle school seats by 2028 represents 10.8% of projected middle school enrollment in

2028 and is the equivalent of three-fourths of a middle school. APS noted that the current CIP has funding allocated to add 300 new middle school seats by 2030.

The Commission recommends that APS review the long term growth of the middle school student population. The long term middle school facility needs may ultimately be better addressed by an additional middle school facility instead of the middle school addition that was included in the previous CIP.

If the long term middle seat needs require an additional middle school facility, the Commission recommends that the Boards task JFAC to establish a committee with a broad set of stakeholders to start the siting process, as outlined in the Community Facilities Study, for a new middle school or joint facility that includes middle school seats.

### Elementary School Seats

The AFSAP projections indicate that there would be a deficit of 2,472 elementary school seats by 2028 even taking into consideration school construction plans that will add elementary school seats at the new Fleet and Reed Elementary Schools. This deficit is substantial. It is 14.3% of the projected elementary school enrollment in 2028, and it is the equivalent of 3 elementary schools.

The AFSAP data also highlighted that the elementary student growth is anticipated to be greatest at the western end of Columbia Pike, the Ballston-Rosslyn corridor and in the neighborhoods east of Interstate 395 in the Route 1 corridor.

The Commission recommends that the Boards task JFAC to establish a committee with a broad set of stakeholders to start the siting process, as outlined in the Community Facilities Study, for siting options that can address the anticipated seat deficits. These options can include new elementary facilities, new joint facilities that include elementary school seats, or swing space to allow for elementary school expansion.

### Other School Facilities

#### APS Vehicle Parking

In addition to school seat needs, APS also has needs for parking vehicles that support school operations. The most notable of these needs is school bus parking, but the parking needs also include utility vehicles (also known as the “white fleet”). The Commission has studied the challenges facing Arlington with operating both ART bus and school bus services. Most notable is the difficulty in finding land that can be used to park buses in Arlington.

The Commission recommends that APS create projections for future school bus and white fleet parking needs, review these projections against facilities available for parking, and include this information in future AFSAP documents.

#### School Parking and Transportation Options

The Commission has not spent substantial time reviewing school parking and transportation options. However, this topic came up during our AFSAP review, and would benefit from further study.

Concerns and ideas related to this topic include:

- The costs for underground parking are substantial
- Open space and park space are precious resources and our community has said repeatedly they should be preserved – not used for parking
- Schools need to have enough parking, and we should not use constrained CIP funding to build more parking than needed
- APS should consider the effectiveness of Transportation Demand Management policies in reducing parking needs.
- The County and APS should consider non-traditional options such as funding underground parking (perhaps using bonus density) in nearby commercial developments if it is more cost-effective.