

December 13, 2014

The Honorable Jay Fiset
Chairman
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

Subject: Western Rosslyn Area Planning Study Working Group Charge

Dear Chairman Fiset:

As members of the Western Rosslyn Area Planning Study (WRAPS) Working Group, leaders of the neighboring Civic Associations and interested observers of the ongoing planning process, we respectfully request that the County Board consider revising the WRAPS Working Group charge.

There are three main areas of consideration: (1) the historic Wilson School building; (2) the provision of a 1,300 seat secondary school at the Wilson site; and (3) the limit of 60,000 square feet of open space that is currently included in the charge.

We encourage the Board to revise the charge to allow for more robust discussion of historic preservation and include provisions for integrating the historic Wilson School's architectural elements into future building design. The original school was a striking architectural achievement; one that deserves to be part of the design of the future school building. The current WRAPS charge includes historic preservation only as an afterthought, rather than recognizing its tremendous value in inspiring a sense of place and history in our neighborhood. The Arlington Public Schools WRAPS working group representatives, along with initial building renderings presented at the December 8, 2014, WRAPS meeting, have made clear that historic preservation will be trivially honored, at best, under the current WRAPS charge. Please revise the charge to include that architectural elements of the historic Wilson School be incorporated in the future school building design.

With the School Board's November 18, 2014, decision to relocate the H-B Woodlawn program to the Wilson School site, the charge should be revised to reflect this new policy position. Limiting school construction on the site to the 900 seats necessary to accommodate H-B is essential to the success of the plan. By leaving the charge open ended, you create continued uncertainty within both the H-B community and with the nearby Rosslyn neighborhoods. The charge should be revised to limit the seats onsite to 900. Ensuring a more appropriately scaled school building will facilitate our community's many other goals for the study area, including preserving vital open space.

With regard to the open space limit of 60,000 square feet, attendees at the November 8, 2014, community workshop made clear that this limit is grossly insufficient to meet the open space needs of the community. We reiterate the view expressed in Jennifer Zeien's June 24, 2014 letter to Richard Tucker that the county board reconsider its May 13, 2014

change to the WRAPS charge to lessen the open space parameters from at least 60,000 square feet to up to 60,000 square feet, inclusive of indoor space provided by the new school.

According to the Department of Parks and Recreation WRAPS presentation on October 9, 2014, and the 2005 Open Spaces Master Plan, the Rosslyn area is a key area for *increasing* open space and making better use of existing park sites, yet under the current WRAPS charge, the provision and/or accessibility of open space for our community could actually decrease. Rosslyn's growing population, including many families, need the amenities, including the tot lot, basketball court, soccer field and passive recreation space, that currently occupy the Wilson School site and Rosslyn Highlands Park. These combined open spaces represent a vital community gathering spot for Rosslyn. Increasing and improving the open space in the WRAPS study area should be made a top priority in the WRAPS charge, and a limit on open space square footage should be eliminated.

In order to maximize open space, bonding for the fire station would reduce density pressure on the site while facilitating many of the other guiding principles identified by the WRAPS working group. At the WRAPS meeting on Monday, December 8, 2014, APAH and Penzance each presented several options for building siting and design. These presentations were informed by discussions with Arlington County Department of Community Planning, Housing and Development and Fire Department staff, and illuminated the extreme challenges to siting and financing the firestation. We encourage the County Board to include Fire Station 10 in the FY 2016 Capital Improvement Plan. If the WRAPS study area property owners were discharged of the obligation to fund and construct the firestation, community benefits from these projects could then solely be used for traditional recipients of community benefits: open space and affordable housing. This is a vital step that would impart confidence by our community that the WRAPS process can result in preserving and enhancing the open space that is desperately needed in our neighborhood.

We appreciate having this opportunity to share our views with you. We would be happy to discuss further with you in person.

Sincerely,

Katie Elmore
First Vice-President, NRCA

Stan Karson
President, RAFOM

CC: Members, Arlington County Board
Barbara Donnellan, Arlington County Manager
Jane Rudolph, Director, Department of Parks and Recreation

ATTACHED: June 24, 2014 Letter from Jennifer Zeien to Richard Tucker Re: Western Rosslyn Area Planning Study