



March 29, 2016

The Honorable Emma Violand-Sanchez, Chair
The Arlington County School Board
1426 N. Quincy St.
Arlington, Virginia 22207

RE: Stratford School – Schematic Design

PFRC process has been productive

The Public Facilities Review Committee (PFRC) has held twelve meetings to consider Arlington Public Schools' (APS's) plan for an addition and renovation to Stratford School to change it back into a neighborhood middle school. Between April and October 2015, PFRC held seven meetings to review iterations of the concept design, resulting in a letter to you dated October 26, 2015.

From December 2015 through this month, PFRC held five additional meetings to review iterations of the schematic design, which you considered for information at your meeting of March 17 and will hear for action in the near future. PFRC may meet once more in mid-May to review any changes to the schematic plan, depending on when you schedule your hearing for action on it. Subsequently, PFRC will review the Use Permit that APS is required to submit to the County, and provide our input to APS staff and the School Board as well as ultimately to the Planning Commission and County Board.

As a reminder, the PFRC consists of representatives from County Commissions, as well as project specific representatives from other relevant County-wide advisory groups, as well as neighboring Civic Associations. A roster of PFRC membership for the Stratford project is attached. The PFRC's consideration is generally governed by the principles of civic design, as articulated by the County Board.

PFRC strongly supports the Stratford addition

Typically as part of a schematic design phase, the PFRC makes a recommendation based on the design of and impacts from a single preferred alternative. For Stratford, PFRC has not been able to fully analyze all impacts. This appears to be due to the School Board having advanced to schematic design with two alternatives – with a driveway connecting Vacation Lane and Old Dominion Drive, and without the driveway. This has reportedly limited the ability of APS to produce (and County staff to review) full and timely information about impacts related to traffic, trees, the Resource Protection Area, and the neighboring County park property.

In particular, County staff has not completed its review of the transportation impact analysis (TIA) developed by APS and published in mid-February, so PFRC does not have full information about traffic impacts. APS has not produced detailed information about tree impacts for the no-driveway alternative. Impacts on the Resource Protection Area (RPA) around Vacation Lane are not known, at least partly because of uncertainty

about the driveway. Direct impacts on County parkland are not known due to continuing uncertainty about an accessible route from Old Dominion Drive.

In the context of those limitations, PFRC was able to review and provide feedback on the schematic design. In general, the consensus view of the PFRC (without voting) is that the size, scale, and design of the addition are reasonable. It promises to add value without creating undue impacts to the County and its citizens. Its evolution since conceptual design has improved the project as a whole in important ways, and APS is to be commended for the process and resulting design of the addition.

PFRC strongly supports the no-driveway alternative

Across several meetings, PFRC reviewed the ongoing question of the need for and impacts of a potential driveway connecting Vacation Lane and Old Dominion Drive. As noted above, PFRC did not have full information about some impacts of the driveway, notably its direct impacts on trees along Old Dominion Drive, and direct and indirect impacts on the RPA. In addition, while PFRC did not have a full review of the TIA from County staff, at the transportation open-house and at PFRC meetings they reported that the information in the TIA does not demonstrate that a driveway is required, nor that it is likely to mitigate the vehicle-traffic concerns that have been the primary focus of the immediate neighbors. APS did report that significant site costs for emergency vehicle access have driven up the cost of the no-driveway option to nearly the same as the driveway option, though PFRC was not given sufficient information to judge whether the reported 90% reduction in cost difference since conceptual design was realistic.

It is also important to note that while some refer to the driveway as a road, it is most definitely *not* a road. A road or street is a public right-of-way providing access to public and private property. County policies support creating public rights-of-way through large blocks, for many well-established reasons. This proposal is for a driveway, providing privileged access only to a specific group of users traveling by a specific mode - private vehicle. APS reports that the driveway would also likely only be open during peak driving hours (dropoff and pickup), and cordoned off at other times, further demonstrating that any benefits would accrue only to parents choosing to drive children to this neighborhood middle school.

After discussion across several PFRC meetings, members present on March 16 voted as to whether or not to support the driveway or non-driveway alternatives. By a vote of 11-2, the PFRC supports the no-driveway alternative as advanced by the School Board as part of the conceptual design, and refined by APS during schematic design. Notably, the 11 members supporting the no-driveway alternative represent County commissions which participate in multiple PFRC reviews of school and non-school projects. The two members opposing the no-driveway alternative represent neighboring civic associations.

PFRC members in support of the no-driveway option noted that the driveway would decrease student safety due to a stream of vehicles through the site at busy dropoff and

pickup times, reduce open space available to students and other users, and contradict County and APS policies that support walking, biking, and other healthy transportation choices. The driveway option would likely draw more vehicle traffic to the site, decreasing health and safety and further burdening the surrounding street network.

PFRC received copies of letters to the School Board and County Board from several County commissions that have reviewed this project formally and informally, each of which also supports the no-driveway option. We hope that you will take into account that broad support for the no-driveway option as you finalize the conceptual design.

PFRC looks forward to continued collaboration

As the design moves forward, through the end of conceptual design and through the Use Permit phase, the PFRC recommends that APS and County staff continue to explore ways to limit the amount of driving, parking, and dropoff/pickup provided onsite, taking advantage of APS' TDM program as well on-street and remote/shared options for staff and for parents. This could reduce impacts to the RPA as well as providing additional space for outdoor activities by staff, students, and community users of school grounds and the adjacent park.

PFRC looks forward to participating in the continued refinement of the design including parking, street improvements, stormwater management, tree protection, RPA, open space, and other outstanding issues regarding site design and off-site impacts. We value the collaborative process with APS and County staff, and appreciate the ongoing opportunity to share our views with the School Board.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christopher Forinash". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "C" and a long, sweeping tail.

Christopher Forinash, Chair (Stratford)
Public Facilities Review Committee

Cc: Mark Schwartz, County Manager
Gabriela Acurio, Deputy County Manager
Bob Duffy, Planning Director, CPHD
Arlington County Board Members
Arlington County School Board Members
Dr. Pat Murphy, Superintendent, APS
John Chadwick, APS

Ben Burgin, APS
Bill Herring, APS
Christopher Forinash, Chair, PFRC Stratford
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Stratford Public Facilities Review Committee –

(Last Update March 2016)

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Guiding Principles for Stratford School

Adopted 6/16/15

The following includes Guiding Principles for the Stratford School Public Facilities Review Committee (PFRC) review process prepared by County staff. These principles address site specific considerations for the subject site. In addition, these principles include specific guidance for the County staff to work closely in coordination with Arlington Public Schools (APS) to develop a joint use agreement for the use of Parks and APS facilities. Lastly, the full text of the PFRC Principles of Civic Design are provided on the last page for reference.

PRINCIPLES OF CIVIC DESIGN

1. Incorporate the principles described in the Public Facilities Review Committee's (PFRC) *Principles of Civic Design in Arlington*. Implement the principles that are most sensitive to the building, site area, and circulation constraints of the Stratford School property as they relate to: (1) civic values, (2) siting and orientation, (3) building form, and (4) building details and materials.

Historic and Cultural Resources

1. Propose sensitively designed additions and renovations to the Stratford School property that are consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Renovation and Rehabilitation and that are respectful of the front and rear elevations, are sensitive to the historically and culturally significant viewsheds associated with the site and that balance the community needs of the site.

Parks and Open Space

1. Identify the current school and community programming for the APS and DPR outdoor and indoor facilities in order to preserve and enhance these programmed spaces as both building and recreational facilities are renovated/expanded.
2. Staff shall not be constrained by the existing property lines in considering the most efficient use of existing public land in accomplishing all project goals. The design and construction planning for reconstruction of the recreational facilities within Stratford Park by the County shall be fully coordinated with APS plans to ensure the park improvements and the school expansion design are cohesive.
3. There should be no net loss of land committed to active recreation or sports programming, and no reduction in school and community sports programming.
4. An opportunity for broader community input on sports and recreational facility locations – within the already established Stratford PFRC timeline – shall be provided.

Transportation

1. Improve pedestrian accessibility and circulation to and throughout the school site especially along Lorcom Lane, 23rd Street N, Vacation Lane, Military Rd, 22nd Street N., and Old Dominion.

2. Explore and implement design solutions that provide safe, functional, neighborhood sensitive and cost effective access and circulation to the school site via all modes of transportation.

Arlington Public School and Department of Parks and Recreation Joint Use Agreement

1. Prepare a timeline that coincides with APS' use permit application for the creation of a DPR/APS Memorandum of Understanding that identifies joint use facilities agreement on hours of use, defines maintenance responsibilities, schedule coordination and all other issues which should be addressed as part of the agreement.

PFRC Principles of Civic Design

These principles are intended to inform the design of civic facilities in Arlington, including buildings and other projects, to ensure they meet community goals for attractiveness, durability, and functionality. The principles reinforce and supplement existing County planning documents and policies, and are meant to promote compliance with certain basic principles, but not to inhibit creative design. Each project will need to be reviewed individually, and for each project, certain principles may be stressed over others.

Civic Values

1. Respect neighborhood context and important historic structures.
2. Take advantage of prominent sites and major civic programs to create bold architecture.
3. Emphasize leadership in energy conservation and environmental sustainability through architectural design, materials, and construction methods.
4. Utilize universal design to ensure open and welcoming accessibility for all citizens.
5. Explore adaptive reuse of significant existing structures and building elements and consider possible future reuse of new buildings.
6. Optimize open space for public relaxation and recreation, and minimize building footprint and areas used for parking, on-site roads, and service drives.
7. Support joint development and use of school and county facilities when in the best interest of both entities.

Siting and Orientation

8. Orient the primary building entrance to the appropriate adjacent street or public space so movement and entrance to buildings are natural and intuitive.
9. Emphasize pedestrians, bicycles, and mass transit over automobiles in building placement, entry, and architecture.
10. Ensure building and site are functionally and spatially coherent, facilitating the flow of people to, from, and within the site.
11. Create “positive” outdoor spaces with a pedestrian emphasis.

Building Form

12. Develop massing strategies appropriately scaled to the site and neighborhood.
13. Use massing to emphasize a pedestrian, human scale to the building, breaking into smaller sub-parts that respond to site and program.
14. Develop a sense of hierarchy in the massing, emphasizing and leading to the important functions and spaces in the building, including the entrance.

Building Details and Materials

15. Use design details related to pedestrian scale and provide interest, discovery, and character.
16. Celebrate the civic nature of the project with public art and iconic architectural elements.
17. Use durable and permanent materials to assure longevity of, and civic pride in, the project.
18. Appropriately plan budgets to reduce negative design impact of value engineering.
19. Explore consistent design elements with other successful Arlington civic projects.
20. Design building lobbies to create a sense of place and importance.