



ARLINGTON COUNTY URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION

2700 South Taylor Street
Arlington, VA 22206



April 8, 2016

The Honorable Libby Garvey, Chair
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

Subject: Stafford School Addition

Dear Chair Garvey

The Urban Forestry Commission has just received updated information from the Arlington Public Schools (APS) regarding the Stratford school expansion and we are notifying the County Board of these changes. The Commission originally received a presentation at our October 23, 2015, meeting by APS and our letter to the Board was based on that information. At that time, APS anticipated a removal of 20-30 trees for the road option from the school to Old Dominion Drive, however, a just completed tree census by APS consultants shows an increase to 52 removed trees. Species affected are Red oaks, White oaks, Slippery elm, and Swamp Chestnut oaks of enough significant size so that 85 replacement trees will be required. For the entire project, it is now estimated that 166 trees will be removed and that 211 replacements will be required. The loss of environmental benefits when replacing the existing larger trees with newly planted replacements is significant, as the photos provided at the March 16 budget session showed.

UFC understands there needs to be an increase of Seats for Students, and is appreciative of APS locating the Stratford addition on a current parking lot which reduces tree loss. However, we do not see any benefit for Arlington students, nor the general public, from creating an entrance onto Old Dominion Drive. APS confirmed during the PFRC meetings that fire and safety concerns can be addressed without a high road that extends to Old Dominion Drive. Also, given that the current school on this site draws students from across the county with numerous buses and that the new school will be drawing more students walking to school, the focus should be on pedestrian safety, rather than building a new road through the middle of the site.

Given the amount of land that the road would consume, the steep slope at the location where the proposed road would approach Old Dominion Drive, the large amount of excavation that would be required to build the road, and the fact that the field would need to be shifted to the east into a now heavily vegetated area, it would be extremely difficult for APS to comply with the County's tree replacement requirements of 211 trees on the remaining property. We note in particular that the extensive fill needed for the road



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would damage or kill trees far from the road's proposed path by covering much of their root systems.

We recommend eliminating the proposed high road construction and maintaining maximum tree canopy on the site. We also note that PFRC members raised concerns about the construction of the high road and that the membership was divided in its support of the road. As a consequence, we urge you to support the "turnaround" option for parking and student drop-off.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nora E. Palmatier".

Nora Palmatier, Chair
Urban Forestry Commission