



ARLINGTON COUNTY URBAN FORESTRY COMMISSION



2700 South Taylor Street
Arlington, VA 22206

November 1, 2015

The Honorable Mary Hynes, Chair
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

Subject: Stratford School Addition

Dear Chair Hynes:

The Urban Forestry Commission received a presentation at our October 23, 2015, meeting by Arlington Public Schools (APS) on the proposed addition at Stratford School. While we note that the proposed location of the addition will be on park property, placing it on the existing parking lot minimizes tree loss.

However, we object to both of the roads proposed for the site, referred to as the "high road" and the "low road." While the high-road option does less damage to existing tree canopy, both alternatives would result in significant tree loss and increase the cost of the project, and neither road is necessary. The "turnaround" option that utilizes an existing parking lot would adequately serve the school's needs.

APS confirmed during Public Facilities Review Committee meetings that fire and safety concerns can be addressed without the addition of a new road, and transportation staff also have indicated that their studies show that a road is not needed. Further, given that the current school on this site draws students from across the county with numerous buses, the new school will draw more students who walk to school. The focus should be on pedestrian safety, rather than building a new road through the middle of the site.

The low road has been rejected by the PFRC. Given the amount of land that the high road would consume, the steep slope of 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 playing field would need to be shifted to the east into a now heavily vegetated area, construction of the high road would result in significant tree loss. This would make it extremely difficult for APS to comply with the County's tree replacement requirements on the remaining property. We note in particular that the extensive fill needed for the road would damage or kill trees far from the road's proposed path by covering much of their root systems.

We recommend eliminating the proposed 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.

We appreciate having this opportunity to share our views with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jean F. Amel". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a thin horizontal line.

Dean Amel, Chair
Urban Forestry Commission

Cc: Arlington School Board