

PUBLIC FACILITIES REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING

DATE: January 15, 2013
TIME: 7:00 p.m. Meeting
PLACE: Ashlawn Elementary School Library
5950 8th Rd N.

STAFF COORDINATOR: Freida Wray, 703-228-3541

Site Location:
Ashlawn Elementary School
5950 8th Road North
(RPC# 12-041-033)

Information:

Applicant:
John Chadwick
Arlington Public Schools
2770 S. Taylor Street
Arlington, Virginia 22206

Architect:
Doug Gehley
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Staff Members:

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Dennis Sellin	DES – Planning	703.228.4805	dsellin@arlingtonva.us

SUMMARY: Arlington Public Schools (APS) is proceeding through the Building Level Planning Committee (BLPC) and the Public Facilities Review Committee (PFRC) processes for the renovation and addition on the Ashlawn Elementary School campus. The concept design for the proposed school addition and circulation pattern endorsing the North Manchester Street entry option was approved by the Arlington County School Board on December 20, 2012. The schematic design stage has begun, which will concentrate on further development and details of the school’s building program, layout, and design. Further discussion of traffic circulation (vehicular and pedestrian) as it relates to the North Manchester Street entry will be explored.

BACKGROUND: The 2013-22 Capital Improvements Program (CIP) was approved by the County Board in July, 2012. One of the projects listed within this plan included a renovation and addition to Ashlawn Elementary School for an additional +225 students currently located on relocatable structures on-site (approximately 700 students total). The addition would be approximately 27,000 square feet.

At a joint work session with the School Board held on July 24, 2012, the County Board endorsed a planning process for the Ashlawn project that incorporates the APS process (BLPC) and the County’s process for public facilities (PFRC), and requires them to work in tandem in designing the schools. The process would include three (3) phases: a conceptual phase, a schematic phase, and a final phase during which use permits for the projects would be requested and reviewed by the County Board. A follow-up, joint work session with the School Board was held on October 25, 2012 discussing the various conceptual design options and circulation patterns. Both the County Board and School Board determined that more work needs to be done to further refine the conceptual design and circulation options, which is what APS and County staff are currently

addressing. At the PFRC's November 27, 2012 meeting, the PFRC decided on moving forward with further developing and assessing the North Manchester Street circulation option. County Staff is currently analyzing Toole Design Group's traffic report and devising comments and recommendations based on these findings. The Arlington County School Board endorsed the concept design for Ashlawn at their December 20, 2012 meeting. It is anticipated that the use permit for the renovation and addition at Ashlawn Elementary School would be submitted in February, 2013 and acted upon by the County Board in May, 2013.

The BLPC consists of schools staff, teachers, parents and PTA members, representation from community groups, and County staff. APS has chosen SHW Group, a firm with eight (8) offices nationally, two (2) in Virginia specializing in school design, to design the renovation and addition for Ashlawn and run the BLPC process. Toole Design Group, an engineering firm locally based in Silver Spring, Maryland, has been chosen to analyze infrastructure, traffic, circulation, and parking patterns for the site. Within the month of September 2012, various transportation surveys and other preliminary analysis have been performed on the site with the preliminary results presented to the PFRC at their October 17, 2012 meeting. A more detailed report has been posted for review and a presentation of that report's recommendations was given to the PFRC at their November 27, 2012 meeting.

The PFRC is a subcommittee of the Planning Commission and consists of representatives of several commissions and the schools, as well as at-large members. It also includes project-specific members representing the Boulevard Manor, Dominion Hills, and Bluemont Civic Associations.

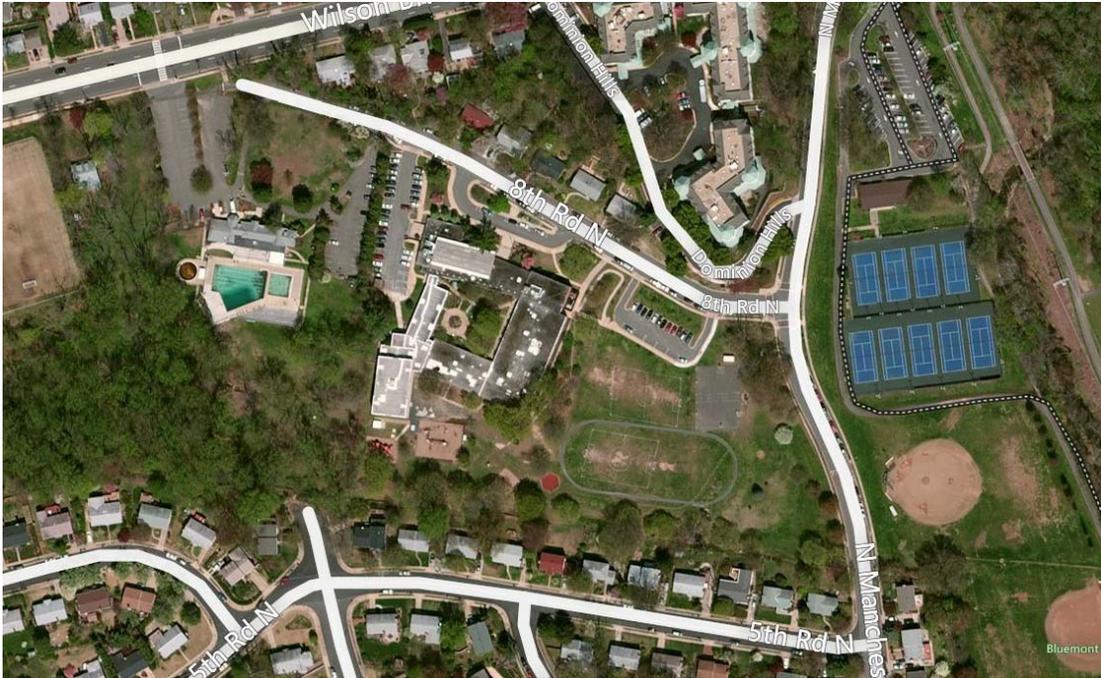
The following provides additional information about the site and surroundings:

Site: The site is bound on the north by 8th Road North and Wilson Boulevard, south by 5th Road North, east by North Manchester Street and Bluemont Park, and west by the Dominion Hills Pool and Powhatan Springs Park.

Zoning: The site is zoned "S-3A" Special Districts. Schools are a permitted use by provision of a use permit subject to ACZO Section 36.

Land Use: The site is identified on the General Land Use Plan (GLUP) as "Public"

Neighborhood: The site is located within the Boulevard Manor Civic Association and is adjacent to the Dominion Hills and Bluemont Civic Associations. Representatives from the aforementioned civic associations are involved in the BLPC and PFRC processes.



DISCUSSION: The BLPC has held nine (9) meetings as of the date of this report, with the most recent occurring on December 11, 2012. The next scheduled BLPC meeting will be held on January 10, 2013. To date there have been four (4) meetings of the PFRC, which were held on July 25, 2012, September 26, 2012, October 17, 2012, and November 27, 2012. Several issues were identified, including further analysis regarding traffic, circulation, and parking (including potential vehicular and/or pedestrian connection options for the intersection of 8th Road North and Wilson Boulevard), visual impacts from the proposed new facilities, provision of adequate open space and recreation facilities, and creation of potential community facilities at the school campus. A summary of the meetings are located on the PFRC website. The *Principles of Civic Design in Arlington* provides the PFRC discussion points and guidelines on building siting, form, and design.

Building Massing – Concept Design:



The above concepts (presented to the Arlington County School Board at their December 20, 2012 meeting) shows in greater detail how a stepped back building mass can provide continuity with the existing school building and expanded uses such as a covered play area for children, a waiting area during inclement weather days for parent pick-up of children, greater pedestrian connectivity throughout the addition and entire school campus, and opportunities for innovative façade design and building treatment. These concepts will be further refined for the upcoming BLPC and PFRC meetings during the schematic design phase.

Transportation and Circulation: At the November 27, 2012 meeting, the PFRC (as well as the BLPC earlier) endorsed the North Manchester Street entry option, which will be the basis for improved and expanded circulation to and from the school. Staff has identified a number of goals with respect to circulation and transportation that should be discussed during the public process for incorporation into the building and site design:

- Emphasis on multi-modal transportation opportunities
- Incorporate building access and circulation into building siting
- Minimize parking/drop-off adjacent to street and sidewalk areas
- Coordinate opening/closing times to manage traffic
- Examine existing/proposed transportation impacts to surrounding communities and incorporate into design
- Implement County standard for sidewalks, streetscapes, and driveways

The following site circulation options identify opportunities and potential limitations and incorporate ways in which 8th Road North and Wilson Boulevard may be connected.

North Manchester Street Entry Option:



Opportunities and Limitations – North Manchester Street Option:

Opportunities:

- Pedestrian circulation expanded throughout the site.
- Parking and vehicle circulation is expanded to the North Manchester Street side for parent pick-up/drop-off activity.
- Maintains existing bus loop in place with potential expansion.
- New pedestrian connection on 8th Road North and Wilson Boulevard.
- Raised pedestrian crosswalk on North Manchester Street may be implemented as a traffic calming measure.

Limitations:

- Will reduce existing open space areas and trees on the eastern portion of the site (for expanded on-site parking).
- Separation of parking throughout the site and increases impermeable surface for vehicular use.
- Potential for more traffic on North Manchester Street and land disturbance is greater for creating new parking area on that side of the site.
- May present grading issues when leveling the site for new parking lot and parent pick-up/drop-off lanes.
- After hours community use and parking are facilitated on 8th Road North and North Manchester Street, but this may create greater usage of North Manchester Street after hours (possible concern of neighborhoods south of the school).
- Does not provide clear opportunities for expanded open space or landscaping on the site.
- Few, clear pedestrian connections to nearby parks are shown (mainly to Bluemont Park).

Since the Previous PFRC Meeting (November 27, 2012):

Toole Design Group identified basic recommendations for infrastructure improvements and operational adjustments to site circulation. They include the following:

- Support parking restrictions on 8th Road North during arrival and dismissal.
- Implement raised crosswalk and crossing guard(s) at 8th Street North and North Manchester Street.
- Enhance drop-off and pick-up procedure to provide a more efficient and productive unloading and loading process.
- Increase pedestrian safety measures at driveways.
- Improve connectivity/key access routes from Wilson Boulevard, North Manchester Street, and North Montague Street.
- Routine maintenance of sidewalks at/near the site, possible widening of those sidewalks, and relocation/repositioning of road signage on the site.

Wilson Boulevard Specific

- Improve key pedestrian and bicycle corridors on and near Wilson Boulevard, North Manchester Street, and Bluemont Park.
- Construct a sidewalk/pedestrian connection on 8th Road North between the upper parking lot and the end of the stairs leading to Wilson Boulevard. Improve/reconstruct stairs at 8th Road North and Wilson Boulevard.
- Construct an accessible pedestrian pathway between Wilson Boulevard and 8th Road North.
- Improve Wilson Boulevard crossing (including but not limited to repositioning the crosswalk, add a curb extension, and relocating the existing electrical box).

North Manchester Street Specific

- Widen sidewalk on 8th Road North east of the proposed bus loop entryway.
- Install a raised crosswalk at 8th Road North/North Manchester Street intersection, supplemented by a crossing guard during the morning and afternoon arrival/dismissal times.
- Construct a paved pathway between the southeast corner of the school property and school entrances.

North Montague Street Specific

- Create a paved pathway, rehabilitate/reconstruct existing stairs, and add a ramp to the entryway from the street to the school.
- Improve pedestrian infrastructure at the intersection of 5th Road North and North Manchester Street (including but not limited to curb extensions, raised crosswalks, crossing guard/parent volunteer at the intersection, etc).

Bluemont Park Specific

- Connect North Manchester Street/8th Road North to the Four Mile Run Trail with a stair/ramp and improve pedestrian connections between the WO&D trail, 8th Road North, 7th Street North, and 5th Street North.

Many of the aforementioned improvements are highlighted in greater detail within Toole Design Group's Ashlawn School Transportation Plan. This plan is being reviewed by the Department of Environmental Services (DES) transportation and engineering staff, and follow-up questions and comments are pending. DES is also analyzing these proposed measures/improvements and prioritizing their viability and implementation. However, specific improvements and measures will be discussed at length during the schematic design and development processes. There is also on-going staff discussion regarding the improvement alternatives to the area of 8th Road North and Wilson Boulevard.

Parking: The Zoning Ordinance Section 33 requires specific parking ratios for elementary schools based on student design capacity and square footage of facilities contained therein

(There is also a Zoning Ordinance requirement addressing facilities parking based on fixed seating for potential public facilities. As any new school would be subject to the use permit process, such standards cannot be modified by the County Board and would be required to be met on site. The County Manager directed staff to review standards with respect to County policy and recommend amendments as warranted. Staff reviewed demand for parking and practices in nationwide jurisdictions.

Staff is recommending that standards for schools be updated to reflect demand for the primary usage of the sites. Staff is also recommending that flexibility for the County Board to modify standards be incorporated for elementary and middle schools and aquatics facilities. For example, through the use permit process, staff would be allowed to analyze the proposed parking based on Transportation Demand Management (TDM) measures, off-site parking alternatives, area circulation/parking studies, etc. to determine what the optimal requirement would be for the specific project. A request to advertise proposed changes to the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance is scheduled for the January 16, 2013 and January 26, 2013 Planning Commission and County Board meetings, respectively. Final action by the Planning Commission and County Board will be in February 2013.