

Meeting Summary: Committee Meeting #5
April 8, 2015; 7:00 – 10:00 pm
Wakefield High School

1. Opening Remarks and Meeting Overview

- Study Committee Chair John Milliken reviewed meeting agenda and the overall schedule for committee meetings.
- The Chair also announced that public open houses for the Community Facilities Study will be held on June 2 and July 16 (tentative date).
- The Study Committee chair recognized School Board members Barbara Kanninen, James Lander, and Nancy Van Doren, County Board member John Vihstadt, and State Senator Barbara Favola.

2. Validating the Forecast Methodologies

- The Chair introduced Bob Scardamalia of RLS Demographics and Richard Grip of Statistical Forecasting, who have partnered to provide consulting services to Arlington County and Arlington Public Schools in support of the Community Facilities Study.
- The scope of the consultants' work is to review and evaluate the methodologies used by the County to forecast population, housing units, households and employment and used by APS to project student enrollment.
- Mr. Scardamalia and Mr. Grip presented their [review of the County's forecasting methodology and APS's projection methodology](#).
- Key takeaways from the presentation:
 - The County and APS forecast and projection methodologies are valid and appropriate for Arlington County, and the two different datasets and methodologies are necessary to meet different purposes.
 - Steps could be taken to improve the accuracy and transparency of the County and APS methodologies.
 - Near term recommendations include developing annual reports and improving the web site (APS) and comprehensively documenting the forecast methodology (County).
 - The County and APS could refine school enrollment projections by collecting and analyzing housing data such as unit type, number of bedrooms, and length of homeownership.
 - Monitoring emerging trends in multi-family housing will be important to project potential changes in student generation rates.
 - Supplementing the County's forecasts with a cohort-component and demographic analysis could help predict future births and students by focusing on the County's population of women of child-bearing age and fertility rates.
- Questions from the Study Committee (with responses when provided):
 - Can APS provide its historical accuracy for projections greater than one year?
 - How should the school projections account for populations like military families that are unique to Arlington? *The grade progression ratio method that APS uses for projections*

should account for in and out migration, including special populations like military families.

- How do we know if past trends will be predictive or if the recent past (i.e. the recession) was an anomaly? *A one time event like a natural disaster can be problematic when using the grade progression ratio method to project student enrollment. However, the review of APS's projections did not reveal any extremes that would suggest that recent years would not be predictive of the future.*
 - Longer term projections and forecasts will depend on the assumptions in the methodology about the migration patterns of millennials or seniors.
 - What do other school districts do to project births to kindergarten students? *Arlington's birth to kindergarten rates are pretty stable compared to other districts. Recent kindergarten class projections have been accurate because of this stability and the quality of the data used.*
 - Should we be considering phone surveys to improve student projections? *In the consultants' experience phone surveys are not worth the time or money to perform because they only provide a snapshot in time and could be outdated very quickly.*
 - Are there any good studies on what millennials will do in the future? Will they stay in Arlington? *There is a lot of anecdotal data on millennials in the media. By monitoring the Census Bureau's Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) data, you can drill down further on migration in and out of Arlington for different age groups. Millennials have been acting differently than past generations. They are living in urban cores, rooming with friends to afford housing and delaying marriage and births.*
 - School enrollment last peaked in the 1960s, and we are now seeing turnover of the single family housing stock from families that bought their houses in the 1950s and 1960s. Will there be a similar change in student yields from multi-family housing? *PUMS data can be used to analyze different characteristics of different housing types, but there may be limitations due sample size and sampling error.*
 - Did you find any discrepancies between the County and APS numbers? *There shouldn't be any discrepancy between the two datasets because the County and APS are forecasting different things. Where there is overlap in the datasets, the agencies are using the same data, and there is a level of coordination between them.*
- Questions from the Resident Forum (with responses when provided):
 - The County is forecasting tens of thousands of new housing units, most of which will be multi-family. The current data suggests that multi-family housing is not generating many students, however a single development produced a significant portion of the new students last year. *Accuracy on student generation from new development can be improved by breaking housing units down further by the number of bedrooms per unit. However, that data can be hard to get. Forecasting student generation is very complex, and is not as straight forward as simply looking at a single building or development.*
 - The consultants looked at the methodologies but not the actual projections. Why isn't the execution of the methodology being reviewed?
 - When projecting student enrollment we should be looking at employment trends, the age at which owners sell houses, the average age and family size of home buyers, and areas where the cost of housing is rising faster than incomes. We need to be predicting when houses will turn over and looking at whether we are attractive to all families having children, not just millennials.

- If you use fertility rates to predict future births, will the fertility rates account for different demographics? *Yes, there is good data on birth rates by age of the mother. There is data on variations in birth rates by race, but the quality of the data is questionable. National trends may not be applicable to Arlington.*

3. County's Plan – A Comprehensive Vision

- The Chair introduced Bob Brosnan, Assistant County Manager, to present on the County's vision for the future as articulated by the Comprehensive Plan and other planning policies.
- Mr. Brosnan preceded his presentation with a brief response to the consultants' presentation.
 - The presentation confirmed that the methodologies used by the County and APS are appropriate for Arlington County and provided some recommendations on potential process improvements.
 - The presentation also confirmed that the County and APS have different methodologies to forecast and project different outputs (housing, population, and employment for the County and students for APS).
 - County and APS staff are taking those recommendations into consideration, including the resources needed to implement them.
 - Some of the recommendations could be considered in depth by the consultants in a second phase of their work.
- Key takeaways from the [presentation](#):
 - Beginning with the plans for Metrorail in the 1970s, the County consciously decided to use transit and well-planned growth to revitalize the community.
 - Core elements of this vision are to encourage growth generally to within 1/4 mile of each station and to preserve the rest of the community – especially the single family neighborhoods.
 - This vision is articulated through the County's plans, including the Comprehensive Plan (and its elements such as the General Land Use Plan and the Public Space Master Plan), and sector and small area plans that provide more detailed guidance for future development at the neighborhood level.
 - The General Land Use Plan (GLUP) and its supporting sector and area plans provide guidance for the County Board's decisions on rezonings and site plans.
 - The GLUP has allowed the County to manage and control growth to be primarily within the Metro corridors, which account for 11% of the County's area.
 - The County's vision from the 1970s has been very successful at guiding development in the Metro corridors. The result is a good mix of commercial and residential development, which helps to balance the transportation network (particularly for transit) and diversifies the County's tax base.
- Questions from the Study Committee:
 - If a site plan project does not conform to the GLUP, the County will sometimes amend the GLUP. Who make the decision to revise the GLUP? *Proposed changes to the GLUP go through a planning process with community and commission input to evaluate the proposed land use designation with the County's plans and policies before staff will evaluate a site plan application. The Planning Commission must hold a public hearing and make a recommendation to the County Board on the appropriateness of the proposed change to the land use designation. The County Board will also hold a public hearing and will make the final decision of whether to amend the GLUP.*

- What is the process for updating sector plans? *State code requires the County to review its Comprehensive Plan ever five years. In Arlington we review the plans on an ongoing basis and perform a comprehensive review every five years. Sector Plans, supporting documents to the Comprehensive Plan that describe more specific policies and guidance in a smaller geography, are not updated on a regular schedule. The first sector plans in the R-B Corridor were adopted in the 1980s. Some of the sectors were amended within 20-, 15-, and 20 years.*
- Some do not agree that all the changes over the last 40 years has been positive; the successes have been uneven across different parts of the County. Can the community engage in a process to reconsider the vision? *The County hasn't comprehensively revisited its vision since the Arlington Futures Study in 1986 which, during that process, the vision was reaffirmed. If this group chose, one of the Study Committee's recommendations could be for the County Board to reconsider or refine the County's vision.*
- The GLUP is based on a planning effort from the 1970s that has not been modified much. Minorities may not have been well represented in that planning process.

4. Facility Siting and Review Processes

- Susan Bell, Project Consultant for the Community Facilities Study, delivered a [presentation](#) on Arlington County's past public facility siting and review processes. Part of the County Board's charge to the Study Committee is to propose criteria and a process for siting new County or APS facilities or adding new uses to existing facilities.
- The planning process for public facilities has three major steps.
 - **Needs assessment** for facilities will be discussed at the April 22 Study Committee Meeting.
 - Past County processes and criteria for **site selection** are discussed in this presentation. Case studies for recent siting efforts in Arlington will be presented at the May 13 Study Committee meeting.
 - The **development review process** for facilities is also covered in this presentation.
- Key takeaways from the presentation:
 - A citizen working group developed siting principles and a procedures for County facilities that were adopted by the County Board in 1993.
 - The process developed in 1993 was very methodical and linear but did not anticipate every situation.
 - The emphasis on transparency and openness in the 1993 process created issues when the County was dealing with confidential information, and the process was not workable for situation when the County was leasing private space.
 - Another citizen working group reviewed the 1993 siting process in 1999. This group presented a number of recommendations for revising the process, but these recommendations were not adopted by the County Board.
 - In 2011, the County and APS signed a Memorandum of Understanding regarding the use of County land to meet APS's school capacity needs.
 - The School Board appoints a Building Level Planning Committee to give stakeholders an opportunity to advise the Board on major school construction projects.
 - The County Board appoints the Public Facilities Review Committee to advise the Board on both APS and County facility projects.

Web:

bit.ly/ACGFacStudy



Together, Arlington County and Arlington Public Schools have launched a broad-based planning effort that will build a consensus framework for assessing the community's future funding, resource and facility needs. [Learn more about the Arlington Community Facilities Study.](http://bit.ly/ACGFacStudy)