

Meeting Summary: Committee Meeting #4

March 25, 2015; 7:00 – 10:00 pm

Wakefield High School

1. Opening Remarks and Meeting Overview

- Study Committee Chair John Milliken reviewed the [committee's charge](#) as it relates to the meeting's agenda and the overall schedule for committee meetings.
- The Chair announced a new [Facebook page](#) and [Twitter account](#) for County planning activities, including the Community Facilities Study.

2. Study Committee Discussion on Economic Challenges

- Members of the Economic Sustainability Subcommittee (Kate Roche, Moira Forbes, and Greg Greeley) reviewed three economic challenges that the subcommittee identified from the presentations and Resident Forum discussions from Meetings #1 and #2.
- Challenges to economic sustainability:
 - Maintaining the commercial tax base
 - Ease and attractiveness of doing business in Arlington County
 - Sustaining housing and affordability
- Study Committee discussion:
 - While committee members are generally aware of the challenges posed by commercial vacancies and competition from other jurisdictions, many County residents may not make the connection between the County's economic base and its quality of life.
 - The committee should be supporting economic development efforts, particularly marketing to attract and retain businesses.
 - Arlington Economic Development is making the case for an increased budget, which hasn't been necessary in the past because neighboring jurisdictions weren't as competitive. Economic development needs public support if the community thinks that it is valuable.
 - How do we make sure that the commercial space available in the County is adequate for the market? If the supply is not adequate, marketing will not help.
 - Future County budget discussion may be more difficult if commercial revenues do not pick up.
 - The County and APS need to be more efficient with their physical resources. They could be coordinating better with recreation facilities.
 - Where do the other corridors (Columbia Pike, Lee Highway) fit into the economic sustainability picture?
 - It is not clear what the County's overall vision is.
 - How does affordable housing link back to economic sustainability?
 - The trend in single family neighborhoods is replacing smaller, older homes and larger homes. This increases the tax base, but there is a

tension between increasing County revenues and maintaining affordability.

- The County needs a broad spectrum of economic activity for economic sustainability. It is not sustainable to import our workforce because people in lower paying jobs can't afford to live in Arlington.
 - Employers look at the available workforce when making decisions on where to locate.
- Resident Forum discussion:
 - Businesses are not well represented on the Study Committee.
 - Committee response: President and CEO of the Arlington Chamber of Commerce (Kate Roche) is a Study Committee Member. The Economic Sustainability Subcommittee received input from the Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) as it developed its list of challenges.
 - Does County have any control over residential tear downs?
 - Staff response: Unless the property is located in a historic district, the demolition and construction permitting processes are administrative. If the zoning and building code requirements are met, the County will approve the permits.
 - The County does control some of the dimensions and parameters of new construction (setbacks, height limits, etc.) through the Zoning Ordinance.
 - Affordability is more than housing. We need a transit system to move people around, especially to and from parts of the County without Metrorail.
 - School quality is important to economic sustainability.
 - The jobs created since the recession in the County have been lower paying than the jobs lost, but it is costing more to live here. This disparity will affect every policy in Arlington.
 - The biggest driver of energy consumption is determined by where a person lives. People need to be able to live near their jobs.
 - Neighborhoods are not economically integrated any more. The County needs housing for young people who are well educated but aren't millionaires.
 - The entire country is dealing with an economic slowdown. Arlington has a lot to offer that others do not: good transportation network, close to D.C., good schools. Our recent budgets have been difficult, but our revenues are still better than some neighboring jurisdictions.
 - How can the County help existing small businesses and those who want to develop small businesses? Can we create affordable business sites like we create affordable housing?
 - The County is not very good at communicating with citizens, especially with millennials.
 - What is the economic impact of single family homebuilding in the County?
 - What is the effect of land that has been planned for commercial uses being built as residential? Is there still demand for large office buildings?

3. County/APS Follow-Up on March 11 Demographics Presentations

- Lionel White, Director of Facilities Planning for APS, provided additional information ([slides 20 – 25](#)) to address the Study Committee’s questions from Meeting #3.
- Questions for Mr. White (*with responses when provided*):
 - Do you look at single family demolitions and rebuilds? *Development tracking data is provided by the County, and the student generation factors are applied for new housing. The projections methodology assumes that a new house will have the same student yield as the demolished house that it replaced.*
 - Are student generation numbers available for Committed Affordable Housing units? *County and APS staff are currently working through the existing data sources to provide this information.*
 - Are form-based code projects part of the pipeline data of approved development? *Only projects that have been approved either administratively or by the County Board are included in the pipeline development data.*
 - The perception in the community is that APS has been under-projecting enrollment. Do you plan for more students than the projections?
 - Can APS look at real estate sales data are part of its projections?
 - Was the 5.2% increase in students since last year consistent across all schools? *The percent increase differs by school and by grade level, but most schools saw an increase.*
- Elizabeth Hardy, Planner with the County Department of Community Planning, Housing and Development, also provided additional information ([slides 26 – 33](#)) to address the Study Committee’s questions from Meeting #3 and the Demographics Subcommittee meeting on March 23.
- Ms. Hardy also addressed a recent article in *Washingtonian* magazine that stated that Arlington would see a 14% decrease in population by the year 2040. This is inconsistent with the County’s forecasts, which anticipate an increase in population.
 - This article used forecasts from the Weldon Cooper Center (WCC), under a contract with the Virginia Employment Commission.
 - WCC and the County use different methodologies for their population forecasts. WCC applied the same forecasting methodology for all counties and cities in Virginia. This methodology is appropriate for some jurisdictions, but it does not take Arlington’s land use plans into account.
 - The WCC projections have a margin of error from 12% at the 10 year projection to 36% at the 30 year increment. As a comparison, during a 16 year period, 1994-2010, the County’s own forecasts for the year 2010 had a margin of error ranging from 1.8% to 4.6%.
- A [response matrix](#) including all questions and comments received on demographics, population and employment forecasting, and school projections was provided to the Committee.

4. Table Discussions with Resident Forum

- Study Committee Vice Chair Ginger Brown reviewed the questions for table discussions with the Resident Forum. These questions were developed by the Demographics Subcommittee.
- Table discussion questions:
 - Based on the demographic data that we have seen so far in the process, who are we as a County?

- How does the predicted change in demographics determine the needs of the different neighborhoods and Arlington as a whole?
- Who do we want to be as a County, and what steps or solutions should we take to get there?
- What constraints or barriers exist to taking those steps or solutions?
- The Demographics Subcommittee will review the [notes from each table discussion](#) as it develops a list of key challenges for discussion at a Study Committee meeting in May.

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.](#)