

## **Stratford School (6:30-8pm)**

### Presentations and Commentary

The meeting was called to order at 6:30pm. Mr. Forinash, the PFRC Chair for the Stratford School item began the meeting with updates since the last PFRC. He reminded the group that in January 2016, two meetings ago, they tried a combined BLPC/PFRC meeting. The snowstorm that night affected attendance so it was not exactly as planned. There has been only 1 PFRC meeting since that time. At the last meeting in February, the TIA was being released next day. There has been time to review, but not complete review since then. No further announcements beyond April meeting. Information item on schematic design to School Board tomorrow (Thursday). There is no plan to go back to the School Board for action within the next 2-4 weeks.

Mr. Ben Burgin from Arlington Public Schools (APS) brings us up to speed. He introduced Mr. Bill Herring (APS), Mr. Carl Elefante (Quinn Evans Architects), Ms. Atara Margulies (Quinn Evans Architects), and Ms. Lauren Brandeis (Oculus). Mr. Burgin discussed the project schedule through the spring. There is a very tentative April 7th School Board meeting for Action Item. APS is still showing 2 site plan options, one with driveway connection and one with alternative road option. After schematic design action APS will get use permit together and submit only one option of the use permit. This explains gap between the School Board meetings. It is in order to allow time for the School Board and County Board to provide direction to APS staff on which road option will move forward. Mr. Burgin gave updates on other public meetings that have occurred since the last PFRC meeting. APS has had meetings with DPR to discuss an agreeable delineation between the properties. They have been working to detach the two construction projects and have been largely successful. He also gave an update on the Safe Routes to Stratford Open House, a County event run jointly with APS. The information focused on safe routes; 4 stations were set up for people to comment. Mr. Burgin also discussed recent meetings with Historic Preservation staff (HPP) on the Historic District designation and Design Guidelines. Ms. Rebecca Ballo with the HPP gave a brief update on the historic preservation zoning ordinance amendments related to APS properties that passed unanimously at the March 15<sup>th</sup> recessed County Board hearing. Mr. Elefante and Ms. Ballo gave an update on the February meeting with HALRB on the schematic design. The design was well received. The HALRB Chair sent the School Board a letter supporting the schematic design and will speak to that on Thursday.

Ms. Margulies presented site updates and updates on cost estimates. She introduced the landscape program which has not been altered much since last iteration. She also showed the bike network illustration for how they meet the County's 1/10 ratio discussed strategies about how to keep it from conflicting with pedestrian zones. The southeast entrance is crucial to making the site accessible as it is pretty much the only entrance at the same elevation as a nearby parking area. Ms. Christine Ng asked if the bike racks are covered. Ms. Margulies replied affirmatively that some bike racks are covered by overhangs at entrances. These will fit as many as don't block the egress doors at these locations. Mr. Mark Bildner asked if the entrance at the parking lot will be solely for people with disabilities or if there will be additional entrances for them. Ms. Margulies replied that this will be up to school and how it functions. There will be an accessible entrance there, but whether it is main entrance or restricted will have to do with school operations and security. Mr. Forinash asked if there is data on bike rates to school. Is the ratio 1/10 students currently? What are the rates at other schools? What data do you have? Mr. Burgin stated APS did not have that information and Mr. Forinash replied it would be very useful to

review before final design. Ms. Ng asked if there any planned improvements within the .5-1 mile area to the bike infrastructure. Ms. Jane Kim with Arlington County DES replied that the only capital projects are the 5 Points and Old Dominion sidewalk project. She added that 5 Points will include bike lane stripping, and the next time Lorcom Lane or Military Road gets striped the County will look at striping on the uphill. There was further discussion of coordination between bike lanes and ADA access and other areas nearby where new stripping may be appropriate.

Ms. Margulies presented further information regarding ADA access. She presented an existing analysis of the site and then the future analysis with the new addition. The slides showed the existing slopes with existing paths on the site. She explained that when there is a sidewalk existing prior to 2012, the way to make it compliant is to remove obstructions and to make a clear path. Even if the path is above the preferred slope, they would be considered compliant. New paths with less than a 5% slope do not require handrails and landings. New paths between 5-8.3% require handrails and landings. She showed the existing slopes on the site plan, and pointed out that the historic path (path integrating students traversed from Old Dominion to the rear of the school) varies in slope and is steeper than 8%. It is not considered accessible today. Ms. Margulies then presented a graphic of the pedestrian network with green arrows showing slopes less than 5% and red showing where networks are not ADA accessible. Some new pedestrian paths will involve park property outside immediate boundaries of this project, but are worth pursuing for overall site access and improvement. Ms. Kim added that staff met with CAO today and if there was no change to existing pedestrian path from Old Dominion to the school, it would be compliant. When you introduce a new path, then it has to be ADA compliant or there must be a reasonable alternate path. She stated that two paths showed to the BLPC (not shown here) were fine with CAO for compliance. For references, staff has dealt with this issue on site plan projects, and standards are different here because this is a public use facility. Ms. Kim added that you can't just "try" to meet standards, you have to meet the standards.

There were further questions regarding the pathway and ADA compliance. Ms. Kim explained that so long as one path is compliant, both paths are not required to be. This would mean that the historic path could remain uncompliant so long as there is an ADA compliant route within reasonably near proximity. There were also a number of questions from PFRC members regarding materials for the paths, including concrete, handrails, or other elements that might be visually obtrusive. Mr. Elefante stated that they were working on the issue and would not have a material palette or well developed designs for the path at the schematic level.

Ms. Margulies then presented information on the tree survey and tree impacts of the driveway option. There will be 166 trees removed based on the limits of disturbance (LOD) for schematic design. 241 trees would remain. APS is required to replace 211 trees according to the Zoning calculations. The plans are showing about 90 new full size trees. Tree replacement is not a 1:1 replacement, County has a tree replacement formula. If there is no driveway, APS had not engineered that option so they do not know tree impact from that proposal. Arborist estimates about 30 trees may get to stay with the no driveway option. Mr. Ed Hilz asked if the figures were based on the high road out to Old Dominion, and Ms. Margulies replied affirmatively. Mr. Steve Sockwell recalled a slide at joint session showing a 20 tree impact from no driveway option, and asked if this was indeed the case. Ms. Margulies replied that number that was from a range and is not exact. Mr. Sockwell asked if there is a qualitative estimate of loss of shade from removing a mature tree canopy. Ms. Margulies stated that has not been studied, and Mr. Sockwell encouraged them to look at it.

Ms. Margulies then presented the open space analysis. The open space calculations take into account the APS and DPR properties as a whole. The numbers presented are for the driveway and no driveway schemes. Ms. Kim pointed out “grass-pave” areas will be treated the same as grass in pervious calculations.

Ms. Margulies presented fire access next. In the first scenario with the road, she pointed out a grass paved area to the north of original building that will address fire access for the main building so they do not have to go into the courtyard. It has been determined that they do not have to extend truck access to the farthest corner of the new addition. The ladder can reach so it is feasible, and Fire has agreed to grant relief for last 50’ of building. The access area will be a mix of concrete, asphalt, and grasscrete as feasible. For the no driveway option, the fire access will need to be in the courtyard. They will be backing up into courtyard anyway to turn the truck around (as the road will not connect) and so should just provide full fire access for the building in this area. Mr. Bildner asked how much fire access would impact the use of the courtyard. Ms. Margulies stated that they would still be able to program the courtyard, but it would impact gardens, trees, and other programming.

Ms. Wilson asked for a more exact description of the proposed pavers, which Ms. Margulies provided. Ms. Kim stated DES prefers grass-pave to grasscrete. Ms. Ng asked if this is labeled open space in the table. Ms. Margulies stated that they counted most of the driveway as walkway, but hope to put more of it in open space if it has grass pavers.

Ms. Margulies discussed changes to the building. The Channel Glass is way out of budget and they have cut the cost in half by going to a glass curtain wall with frit treatment. This will still achieve design goals at half the cost. All other building options are the same.

Mr. Perkins asked if the PFRC is voting today on the road option. Mr. Forinash replied yes. Mr. Perkins asked for cost updates. Mr. Burgin stated APS does not have cost information to present in slides, but does have the information. APS did price estimates for both road options. In schematic, they showed a delta of \$2,000,000. Updated information shows a difference of only \$250,000 between the options. They had not completely done cost estimates for the fire access and this has proved to be very expensive. The additional grass pavers they are providing as part of the fire access and other site work costs that will be necessary have significantly closed the gap between the two options. The driveway for fire access increased to \$1.77 million. The road option remains the same at approximately \$2 million. Ms. Kim stated that the materials could theoretically all be changed to asphalt, thereby lowering the cost of the fire access road significantly; it would also be easier to maintain than grass-pave. Ms. Margulies added there are not significant differences in the cost for ADA access related to either road option. Ms. Gearin asked for clarification as to whether or not this a real road, or just a driveway. Mr. Forinash replied that it is not a road (Ms. Kim concurred), but a driveway that will only be operable a few hours a day.

Ms. Kim gave a brief summary of the Open House, including what materials were presented. She stated it had a good and energetic turnout with a number of School Board and County Board members attending.

Ms. Wilson asked if it was premature to take a vote without a completed staff report on the TIA. Mr. Forinash replied that it was, but that a vote was necessary regardless, given that the School Board is meeting on Thursday for a vote on the schematic design. There will be another PFRC meeting before the School Board will take final action.

Mr. Hilz asked if it is still the DES position that no the driveway option would not have an impact on traffic flow. Ms. Kim replied that is not the staff's position, but based on review of the TIA so far, the existing road network with improvements will be able to adequately and safely handle the traffic.

Mr. Elefante gave a very quick reiteration of what is being presented to School Board Thursday. They are recommending a 40,000 square foot addition and the driveway.

#### Public Comment

Mr. Forinash opened the floor up to public comment.

Mr. John Leonard, a neighbor of the project spoke in opposition to the driveway option. He is disappointed that there isn't more info about the no driveway option and no firm numbers on impact of trees with no driveway option from APS. He believes the estimate of 30 trees to be removed is low, and that it would be more like 50-75 trees.

Ms. Susan Cunningham recapped the BLPC recommendation: 40,000 square foot to prioritize ADA and community use. The BLPC remains concerned about the lack of scenarios being run in the TIA for traffic. APS is not going to run different scenarios, but the BLPC feels uncomfortable that the TIA isn't coming to correct conclusions. The BLPC is also concerned DES saying student bikers should use sidewalks, they are concerned about pedestrian safety at 5 Points and Military Road, and un-signalized left turns. The BLPC also prioritized sustainable features outside the building; while inside the building they prioritized LED lighting over other features. The BLPC took a vote 11-1 for the west addition, and a 9-0-3 vote for the road option.

#### Discussion:

Ms. Wilson stated that she emailed the group a video from earlier this week showing traffic back up at the Stratford. She does not feel reassured that the County is offering anything to address this and believes traffic will be more of a problem once the addition is built. She stated that the first PFRC principle is respect for neighborhood context; she thinks that the road helps respect context of this neighborhood that is not urban and is very residential. She does not understand why you would want to promote traffic in the neighborhood when you could link it to the arterial. The driveway would give more flexibility for the future of the site.

Ms. Ng expresses opposition to the driveway. She is concerned about it being next to the field and the school and children being exposed to vehicle exhaust doing sports.

Mr. Hilz cannot reconcile what the neighborhood says and what DES says. DES doesn't have much credibility in the neighborhood and there seems to be a real disconnect.

Ms. Gearin asked for clarification from staff, that since this isn't a choice school, there would be fewer kids being driven? Mr. Forinash replied that assumption is built into the TIA.

Mr. Bildner stated that the Transportation Committee letter addresses whether the road is a negative in promoting pedestrian and alternate modes over cars. He wondered if the Committee thought about how the road could make the solution more convenient. Could the absence of a road create real congestion that would force more people to walk? If so, this is a valid concern for the neighbors. If more cars come because they can cut to Old Dominion, then there may be no net deduction since those people may be driving to work anyway. He understands the goal, but is not sure if taking away the road gets there in a way he is comfortable with.

Mr. Perkins continues to oppose the road. He stated it is clearly not necessary for transportation needs. It also does not conform to principles of civic design given in the PFRC charge. It gives large site area and resources to promoting one mode to the detriment of the other modes, namely pedestrian and mass transit. The cost aspect does not seem to be an issue since both costs are about the same. The high road also requires a very steep grade that complicates the design of pedestrian path and could present a safety hazard.

Mr. Schroll associated himself with Mr. Perkin's comments. When going through TIA, he does not see that the road makes a demonstrative difference as there is still a high LOS across the board in both scenarios. He stated that it is not county policy to have LOS A or B everywhere. There is also certainly a higher tree impact with the road option, even though exact number is unknown.

Mr. Forinash stated he is unable to support the driveway option. He stated it is important to recognize this is NOT a road; it is a driveway operating for an hour or two a day. He can recognize when a number is being driven to a conclusion and to have a 90% difference in cost between the two is implausible. He associates himself with Mr. Perkins and Mr. Schroll in terms of the county policy issues.

Mr. Perkins added that he cannot think of another school property that would have a road such as this; it would be precedent setting.

Mr. Forinash called for a vote and called the roll. The final vote was 11 – 2 against the driveway option.

Mr. Forinash thanked everyone for the good discussion and adjourned the meeting at 8:35pm.