

Meeting Summary

June 15, 2016; 7:00 – 10:00 pm

Navy League, 2300 Wilson Blvd.

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## 1. Opening Remarks

- Study Committee Chair John Milliken announced that Study Committee member Tannia Talento is running for School Board and is unopposed for the open seat.
- The Chair also announced that the Virginia Chapter of the American Planning Association has selected the Community Facilities Study to receive its 2016 Public Outreach and Engagement Award.

## 2. Discussion of the Strategic Priorities for Arlington: Blue Ribbon Panel Charge

- The County Board has requested feedback on this [charge](#) from the public and specifically from Community Facility Study (CFS) participants.
- The chair opened up the meeting to general comments to Study Committee and Resident Forum members:
- Comments of the makeup of the proposed Blue Ribbon Panel
  - The small group of six or seven individuals proposed is a major change in course from the CFS model which was much more inclusive.
  - It is not clear how the panel members will be chosen and what expertise they will have.
  - Even with 23 members, the CFS Committee was not completely representative of the community. Six or seven people would be even less representative. There are likely not seven people in the entire county who have broad knowledge of all the elements of the Comprehensive Plan.
  - Committee members are not sure that such a small group can effectively reconcile many competing interests.
  - The CFS process deliberately brought County and School interests together, but this process seems to exclude the School system.
  - CFS Committee members were approved by all ten members of the County and School Boards. This charge gives each County Board member one representative, which seems like a step backward.
  - It is not clear why the County Manager should appoint a citizen to the panel. It might make more sense if the County Manager were to appoint a senior staff member to the panel as an active participant, rather than as support staff.
- Comments on the timeline for the Blue Ribbon Panel
  - The aggressive timeline, as opposed to some processes that take years to complete, has advantages. However, this is too much work to be accomplished in six or eight months.
  - This effort was not included in the Planning Division's work plan, which informs the County's annual budget, presented to the Planning Commission earlier this year. Committee members are worried that this effort could postpone other projects in the Division's work plan.

- Comments on the purpose of the Blue Ribbon Panel
  - The charge is not clear what the purpose of this process is and what the panel's deliverable is.
  - The charge seems unfocused. It includes the County's vision statement, Comprehensive Plan elements, operating budgets and capital improvement plans, communications, community outreach, and priority setting.
  - It seems that this is a process to define a process. Many of the recommendations in the CFS report could be used to address the questions raised in the charge rather than having a new group start over at square one.
  - The charge seems like it is ignoring the recommendations in the CFS report, which address priority setting, taking a fresh look at the County's long term vision, and how to improve communications and civic engagement.
  - Committee members need to better understand the purpose of the panel before making recommendations on the composition of the panel.
- Comments on the specific elements of the charge
  - The portion of the charge that directs the panel to "consider policy areas that should be revisited" is a red flag. Committee members are concerned that this is an opportunity for a small group to recommend a reversal of longstanding County policies, specifically the County's commitment to smart growth.
  - The Planning Commission has a statutory obligation to develop and review the Comprehensive Plan. This element of the charge should be led by the Planning Commission. The Long Range Planning Committee is already preparing for the five year review of the Comprehensive Plan, to be completed this year.
  - There is a lot of confusion about what the County's vision is. There is a vision statement, which was developed separately from the Comprehensive Plan. The eleven Comprehensive Plan elements also comprise the vision, but each element was developed separately by different departments and advisory groups.
  - There should be a Schools element to the Comprehensive Plan because schools are so important to the future of Arlington and because schools are directly competing with other County functions for resources. APS already has data and policies in place (e.g., number of seats needed, student-teacher ratios) that could be assembled in a single document. This element could also include transportation planning for schools.
  - The County does need a visioning process, but it needs to be broad-based and include the advisory commissions. Page 110 of the CFS report recommends a periodic examination of the County's overall vision.
  - Before the County embarks on a strategic planning effort, citizens need to better understand the vision and how the Comprehensive Plan elements are aligned with the vision.
  - The panel should help citizens understand the County's priorities and how decisions are made
  - The CFS spent a lot of time discussing communications and community engagement, and the County should act on those recommendations rather than asking another group to come up with new ideas.
  - The staff work proposed in the charge is useful, and the County Board and the community would benefit from an integrated review of County policy goals and objectives.
  - The County and APS already express their priorities on a regular basis through their budget and CIP processes, although this could be done more systematically.

### 3. Recommendations for Revising the Blue Ribbon Panel Charge

- The County Board should be clear and deliberate about the problem it wants the panel to solve. Pages 90 and 110 of the CFS report articulate this problem, as the Study Committee understands it.
- The charge should reflect the amount of work that a seven member group can accomplish in six months.
- The purpose of the Blue Ribbon Panel should be to scope a process for (1) articulating a vision for the County's future and (2) developing a strategic plan to achieve that vision. This scope should include how the public will be able to participate.
- This effort can be completed in the currently envisioned timeline (by December 2016).
- The vision for Arlington includes the Comprehensive Plan but is broader.
- The Planning Commission, rather than the Blue Ribbon Panel, should conduct the review of the Comprehensive Plan (#1 in the charge). This work can inform the visioning effort.
- If the County Board wishes to look more closely at the connections between the vision and operating budget decisions, the Fiscal Affairs Advisory Commission should be tasked with that effort.
- The Blue Ribbon Panel should, at a minimum, consult with relevant advisory commissions.
- If the charge to the Blue Ribbon Panel is modified to be a scoping study, the panel should, at a minimum, consult with relevant advisory commissions. The actual visioning and strategic planning effort should be a fully collaborative and open process.
- Page 99 of the CFS report lays out recommendations for communications and community engagement.
- APS should be included as an equal partner in this effort, and the composition of the panel should reflect that.
- These recommendations are based on the understanding that the Boards will implement Recommendation #17 from the CFS report, to create a formal needs assessment and priority-setting process for public facilities. At a recent joint work session between the two Boards, it was agreed to create a committee consisting of two County Board and two School Board members, as recommended in the report.
- The Study Committee Chair and Vice Chair will draft a letter to the County Board and circulate it to the Study Committee for comment.

Web:

[bit.ly/ACGFacStudy](http://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.](#)