

Ep.19 Career Center WG

FULL TRANSCRIPT (with timecode)

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M6: Good afternoon and welcome to Episode 19 of the what's up, APS? podcast. I'm your host Frank Bellavia and we're going to talk about the career center and how it fits in with the Arlington public schools long range plans and how it fits in with the Columbia Pike revitalization. And we'll do that right after this break. So.

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F5: I guess to everybody why I love my job. You love driving a bus. I really do. Well. I love riding your bus Mr. Dan. And. Also. The all buddy here Kravets is you.

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M9: Arlington public schools is looking for bus drivers if you're interested go to AP vitæ dodged us for more information. Arlington public schools one hire at a time.

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M2: Welcome back I'm your host Frank Bellavia. Today we're talking with Kathleen McSweeney of the career center working group and also John Snyder the Columbia Pike Revitalization Organization. About the career center and what it means the future plans of Arlington public schools in Arlington County. Thank you both for joining us on the podcast. KATHLEEN Well we start with you and tell us a little bit about the career center today. What's going on there what sort of programs are offered and and just how it fits in currently with eligible schools.

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F3: OK great. Thank you. And thank you for having us on the program. Well the Career Center site. It's a 12 acre site and it currently educates about fourteen hundred fifteen hundred students every day. And there are many buildings on the site as well educating students. We're where students are educated the crews that are building itself.

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F1: Hosts the career and technical education programs the students come from all the different high schools and they can take career and technical classes. Anything from Auto Body Electric.

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F3: Electricity or you know learning how to wire a house. Forensics forensic science. There's just huge cybersecurity.

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F1: I mean there are hundreds of offerings and there are about 900 Total students that come 300 that are on site at a time and they come kind of in daily shifts you'll see the buses pull up first thing in the morning and then they take students back to their high schools and they bring the next shift of students and it's a really great program and a really terrific way to for kids to get sort of hands on learning at the same time.

There are some students there as part of a full day program. There's the teen parenting program that was moved there a few years ago. Hills High Intensity learning for a second language students and academic Academy and all told that somewhere in the neighborhood of about 150 students at the career center they're there all day as well. And then there's also the Arlington tech program which is an exciting high school program that was started a couple of years ago I think they're in their second year now and they're about a hundred and fifty students there now and they have plans to grow to 600 by 2022. And ultimately their long term goal is to have 800 students in the Arlington test program and that's a program that's it's a project based learning program that all experiential and and it's a kind of new for Arlington. And so they've slowly been ramping it up. But I know I've seen some of the projects they've worked on and they're pretty exciting. Also in the career center building the Columbia Pike Library is located there and it has been for many years and that takes up approximately 20000 square feet and it's actually on the south Walter Reed drive side of that at that site. And then there were a couple of other buildings on the site Arlington Community High School which is in the former Fenwick building. And that has about 300 total students who come during different parts of the day. And they generally have no more than 200 on site at a time.

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F2: But these are students who for a variety of reasons are not in the neighborhood high schools. I think a lot of the times it's that students come maybe to this country sort of old as older students. Right. And they've sort of aged out of the regular high school experience and they come to two Arlington Community High School to finish their education. So it's oftentimes there and in fact a lot of the time they're over 18. But we allow students to go to about 22 to finish their high school diploma. And so those are those those students at the Orange Community High School. I would note that this Fenwick building is probably I'm counting I think it's at least a fourth place that Arlington QAD High School has actually been. And so they've been moved around a lot. And it was part of this process and part of this charge. We'd like to make sure that we get you know the plan for a permanent home for them as well. And then there's also a Patrick Henry elementary school and said that that school has just about 463 students but there are multiple relocatable on the site. So the total number of students is about 660 students and of course I think many people now at Patrick Henry Elementary the students who go there are slated to go to the fleet elementary school when it finishes it's being built right now next year Thomas Jefferson Middle School. And so when those students move to a fleet the Montessori program from from Drew is going to move in to Patrick Henry. And that's going to happen in the fall of 2019 when fleet is opened and there's a lot going on there.

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M2: A lot of kids a lot of students and a lot for your Agaric ungrouped to work through and figure out. John I want to talk to you real quick about Columbia Pike Revitalization Organization. Tell us about your group and what role you play in this.

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M8: Work. Sure. Thanks for having me. The Columbia Pike Revitalization Organization or Cpro is our acronym. We're a public private partnership of the county of the residents and the businesses and landowners and. Property owners along the pike and we're dedicated to the economic revitalization of the Pike to have a strong set of businesses there to have a thriving community because so much of our the quality of life for any community is around our businesses. And so we've been in business as he broke for 32 years now and our role with the career center is that this is a new business essentially that's going to be opening and expanding right at the heart of the community. And if you think of it in terms of for

economic development like Nestle coming to Roslan this is a certainly a smaller business but it's a lot of economic activity a lot of customers for businesses coming to the center of the Pike and people will be drawn there from other parts of Arlington. And so we want to make sure that it's not just something that's good for schools but that is also good for the community.

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M1: There's a lot going on with different parts of Columbia Pike is there overall time frame for the revitalization of the entire area or is it segmented. And how does that work.

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M5: Well it's it's been something that for a long time there was really no revitalization. And then we've had a few new projects that have brought some new businesses and new residents into the pipe. And there's about four or five projects that are now under construction. A very large project that's under construction. Central Arlington at George Mason and the pike and some projects in the West End and a new affordable housing project that's mere Combee piking Gleib road Abha Arlington partnership for affordable housing is building across the street from another new project that replaced the Rosenthal car dealership. So what we're seeing is that some of these underutilized commercial spaces are becoming residential with mixed use commercial and the ground floor. So we're getting our new businesses. It took a very long time. We finally got our Starbucks years ago. And it's that kind of vital revitalization where there things that we could walk to from our from our neighborhoods riding our bikes instead of getting into a car and driving off to Bailey's Crossroads or somewhere else.

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F1: You may have just gotten Starbucks but you've always had a Rappahannock. So I would say that Columbia Pike has had a lot of wonderful sort of organic businesses a lot of them I think are our family and women owned up and down the pike. And so that really helps make the pike a very dynamic place. Wow.

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M5: And as we're looking at our businesses and how we can have the best strategy for attracting and keeping businesses the strongest ones are the ones that have been there forever that are really institutions. There's literally a line out the door from Bob ETUs people rave about the about. Tell us some of the other businesses that have been there as long as I can remember and it's been a while.

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F1: Great. And my family we always like take in movies that is in the draft house. But you know having said that I think it's really important to say that again this doesn't just grow up overnight or just happen. The Pike has really had many planning processes right. And John you've been involved in some of them I've been involved in some of them and said This is where Arlington does ancient plans for growth.

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M5: Yes. And one of the things that's been interesting about that we first had the form based code which was designed to spur development and make sure that when the development came it being a the citizens would want to see we Tourette's and literally drew what the buildings would be like. And then there was another component which was a housing study and another form based code that set up rules for redevelopment of housing areas so that we didn't displace residents. It was affordable housing. And so the the property owners can go bigger but only if they incorporate the basically the same number of

affordable units that were there before. So that's a different question. Very aggressive affordable housing program that's unique to the Pike and other cities are actually looking at it to replicate it. And so we're seeing that sort of movement where the career center comes in is this would be another public engagement. Most of the investment has been by private companies. They're building their building they're going to be making their money off of rent. This will be following onto the Arwed to build the center a very large public investment which is also nice because we literally get to draw what the building is going to look like just not just tell a developer what we'd like to see. But the developer is us.

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M1: When you look at the growing unity that we've we've all heard recently that there's change coming to the career center there's they're adding some new seats to get seven or eight hundred seats to the career center. Arlington tech is growing. What brought to the county and the school system together at this point. To look at this facility and join together Ted to redo it.

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F4: So the county and schools have been I think hearing from the community for several years that they needed to really plan together instead of planning separately they together and I think they realized as they move forward the project that it really behooves them to plan together and to share it to share and to pool some of their resources as well. And so you know kind of started several years ago or a few years ago with the community facility study that kind of looked globally and of course the county board and the school board seated the people to that group and then what grew out of that was the joint facility Advisory Committee which is what we refer to as the JACPAC and J fack also looks at long range planning of public spaces you know public facilities across the across all of Arlington. And so this I see this is sort of following you know on to that to that trend for the county and schools to actually plan this together this spot. And you know it's very clear in our charge we not only are looking at the Columbia at the career center site we're actually looking at the block between Ninth Street South Ninth Street and Columbia Pike to see if there are some opportunities to be had are to be realized on that block as well. And again this is sort of you know take taking from the best sort of planning experiences that we've had along the pike to try to plan this this area. It has been referred to as the crown jewel of Mayger that it will be you know where we're done and I think that will be true. And it's also I would say the career center with all of the really special programs that they've had and they've run for years. They sort of have been a hidden jewel. I think of apx a lot of you know a lot of students you know do take classes there. But yes certainly not the majority of students in Arlington. You know as as the profile of graduate you know has dictated some changes in the way students receive their high school education. I think that's going to change in school more like the career center model and not really like our traditional high schools. So this is an opportunity to not only help transform that piece of the pike but also to. To. Really move our educational system forward and to you know look look into the future in terms of how students are educated.

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M2: And you just touched on what the working group is charged to do. Who's part of this work.

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F3: We have many and I'm going to cheat here and look at my list but we have many people who are seeing this is kind of a big Working Group. We have 32 people seated on this group and we have people from the advisory council on instruction of Michael Shea who supports them and or who represents them. We have somebody on the facility Advisory Committee for apx. We have a teacher from Orange County High School. We have somebody from the Montessori Action Committee or Arlington tech parents

Budget Advisory. We have a career center advisory group and we have some students as well. We have a student from the program at the career center. We have somebody from the Student Advisory Board and we have a Wakefield student as well then we have some people from area neighborhoods. We have Arlington Heights and Penrose and Douglas Park and our Hova heights represented. We have a couple of large members and we also have some some interesting other people who lent an interesting perspective because we have the Black Heritage Museum a branch in Virginia that actually just opened. A little gallery space on Columbia Pike. We have of course people representing Betty Segal representing the fort based code Advisory Group. We have John represented a sea pro. And then we have some county commissions. We have represented from the Planning Commission the E2 Sea to the environment and an energy conservation commission the joint facility Advisory Committee or Jay fact Parks and Rec the pikes President group. I mentioned the planning commission the public facilities review committee transportation commission and I would also mention that we have somebody representing the Ethiopian Community Development Council because they actually own some of the property is between night Street and Columbia Pike and it made sense to have them at the table.

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M1: That is a pretty large group and it seems you've got somebody from every part of not only as a career center but Arlington public schools in Arlington County and the community involved in that.

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F4: Right. It really is a wide wide group a group with different areas of expertise which is really helpful. I really would be remiss if I don't mention the people who are actually staffing our committee because they're doing a terrific job. We have Michael De Palma and Dr. Sarah Johnson from apx and Dr. Sarah Johnson is really I think kind of the person who kind of rankles everybody together. And and then we also have Matt MacIsaac who is a planner with Arlington County and they've they've been a great team to work.

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M1: What's the timeline for the working group and what can people expect to come out of the working group.

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F1: You know that's a great question. So we're halfway through our charge now or at least our work. And we've been doing a lot of information gathering so that everybody kind of has a common view of what a common understanding of what happens the career center who is being educated and also plans in the county. You know what. What is the Columbia Pike plan. What does the zoning for and as 3A which is what this is zoned. Pursell. What are the things we need to think about in terms of transportation. So we have received all of these presentations so that we all have a common understanding and then we just had a work session actually with the county board of the school boards to tell them you know these are the things we're thinking about. Does this sound right to you. These assumptions we're making we got some feedback from them and then now we're kind of moving in who are wrapping up our our principles for how the site should develop. And talking about phasing because one of the things is you know again I mentioned it's a 12 acre parcel. It's a good size but when you're talking about bringing potentially a lot of other high school students to the to the parcel then or to the career center. You really need to think about how that is going to play out mean more fields you need more green space. You know what does that look like. And then the church just sort of allow us you know beyond the 2022 period. This is really a long range plan. We should be looking far into the future for what we ultimately want to see happen on the

site. And so we're going to look at facing and to look pretty far out. You know one of the things we heard I think we've we've all sort of heard it this year but we really heard it from both the school board and the county board at the work session was things are pretty tight financially.

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F4: So we might need to think about you know how we work with future see IPs you know beyond the 10 year stripey that we're currently working with. So beyond that to figure out how how we face this so that we can get all the wonderful things we really want on the site but they'll come over time it won't all happen at once and because there are so many things on there you can't really build anything.

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M1: You've got that elementary school there you get the library and then here a library one. People want the library to remain in that area. So there's a lot to consider. There's also been talked to about this being the fourth comprehensive high school that people want knowledge Chinese that's something that you guys are looking at as well.

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F1: So in the charge itself it uses the words for high school. We stayed away I guess people stayed away from the word comprehensive because nobody can really define what it means. And when we asked actually we asked to define what it means and some people said well it means a war zone and people said well it means it has certain things but. I'm not sure that ABS actually agrees what that means. So we're using the term for high school and one of the things that wasn't is it decided for the site was you know when these 800 students come these additional 800 students can. What what will be the program you know Will. Will it be just a regular high school curriculum. Will it be some sort of choice school and will they be neighborhood seats or you know choice. So that has yet to be determined today that that's been a I'll be honest that's been a little bit of a point of contention on the work group. You know a lot of people would like to know what did apx mean when they when they you know moved the students.

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M2: Is that something that the committee is charged with doing to is looking at the instructional focus of this of what the problem was we are just what to do with the area.

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F1: Yes so we're not actually charged for the instruction focus. There's a sentence in our charge that says you know that will be determined you know after we finish our work.

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F4: OK. But it's hard not to try to figure out because it does help inform the conversation. You know if these are neighborhood seats then you know and there's a war zone and you're zoned to go to that school. Well then you know let's talk about the amenities. We know after school sports is very important after school activities are very important to students. So how are we going to have these students you know have opportunities have the same sports opportunities that other students have. It's choice school. It's actually a kind of a different conversation. Not that they don't need sports and not that they don't need after school activities but there's a choice you're making to go there. And so you kind of know what the limitations are if you want to play football. You know you're going to need to go back to your home school right. You know transportation is definitely a factor that helps you consider that.

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M5: But there is something to all of these different things that must go on a relatively small side is that some things that had been aspirational before are now mandatory. Like build up not out we don't have we don't have the room to have a sprawling campus. Right. So it's going to be a taller building probably than people are used to seeing there. But one of the principles of design that we have on the pipe form based code is what the density the taller parts of the buildings closer to the main road. Put it right on the bike and then when you move back a block to where there's a single family homes you're not moving overtop although that's what we're looking at those sorts of physical constraints. And there's also some opportunities like right now the career center has a green. Well this building will have a roof. Yes.

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F1: Right. Right. We've been you know it's funny because I think we're putting everything on the roof right. But the greenhouse in there it makes a lot of sense. And you're so right John Tomate out of the community facility said one of the things that you know was there one of the core principles was build up not out. And you know clearly this has to be true across all of Arlington not just the career center site which of course is constrained and of course we want to put some fields on it and add green space but that's that should be true of everything we do. Arlington moving forward with the you know a developer building the county building you know apx building. We actually absolutely with the number of people we have here should be maximizing our green space. It just makes sense.

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M1: How excited are the businesses especially in that area of Columbia Pike that the county and schools are looking at this desert area.

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M5: People are very excited about it. You have to think of some of the businesses lost dog. When you have 2000 high school students and the building they're going to sell some IITA. So are those kinds of opportunities. There are a lot of things that can be done together in that you're going to have well presumably this building will have a theater. And there are also theatre groups in the county that want to use public facilities and such. So we can really maximize the use of these things that draws people to the area and they started to look at Columbia Pike props they don't live in this part of the county and they start to look at the Pike and start to understand what the opportunities are. So the businesses are excited about that. And to a large degree the residents are excited about that for the same reasons because the school can bring a lot of amenities to the site that aren't there. Now a lot of people are very interested in there being a swimming pool like at the other high schools that there is a gymnasium that there are things as simple as meeting rooms that you can reserve the way you can at the other schools. But it's in a central location it's right on the main street of Arlington County. At least that's the way that Pike residents see it. One of our fire lines and see approach is that the pike is Arlington's oldest and newest Main Street its newest and that we're going through revitalization it's oldest and that the work started on it during the Madison administration. So we're looking at this as an opportunity to be a central focal point for the community there is some excitement around it.

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M1: There are some challenges and some concerns that the people that you represent have about this redevelopment.

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M5: There are concerns of residents are concerned by the idea that well with this calm a lot of cars and buses. And how do we make this of this work. So we don't have a big traffic jam every morning and every afternoon and the group has been looking at things like using Main Street which is now under utilized as potentially that would be the places where buses will be coming up maximize the use of transit of the Pike is the busiest transit corridor in the Commonwealth and that is an advantage for students for staff for everyone to be getting to to the site. Those are some of the worries about it when you have fields. People will say well that doesn't mean we have like some some time to pick these things into consideration and that is on one of the perennial issues also is I think parking.

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F4: Neighborhoods are always very concerned when you're bringing a lot of new uses to a site that parking is going to be a problem is going to be spill over into the neighborhood. People better start blocking driveways and that sort of thing. And so one I think one of the recommendations from this group and I think it's one week we are a lot of people have some consensus around is creating some underground parking somewhere on the sites that we can put in a green space on top. We've done it in some other places here in Arlington. Certainly you're doing it now and fleet right Elementary. And so that is something we're going to probably be recommending.

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M1: You mentioned the career center is known as the jewel of the pike. Given its location staked out what are some of the ideas that are being discussed in your group for its future.

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F4: So we're going to talk about both the Career Center site and also the South Block because there there are some things we can achieve if if there's some acquisition or leasing or something of some of the property by itself.

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M2: BLOCK You mean the space behind between Columbia Pike is backslider.

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F4: OK. Exactly. And so. Well one of the things we must do under the charge is figure out how those 800 students are going to go there and receive a quality education. And so you know figuring out the best place to to put them as part of our charge and then looking kind of beyond the question about the Columbia Pike library now is that really the best location for a library. The career center has some challenges because they don't actually have space for library right now and it would be nice to get some greater visibility to the Columbia Pike library which is beloved by people in the neighborhood. And so moving that to the Pike would be you know long term would I think be something we're very interested in. We have a library subcommittee was actually mandated and are charged. We have a terrific group of people on that who have said Look we absolutely need to right to put the Columbia library on Columbia Pike and with that we need to maybe create some performance space maybe create some cultural space as well maybe somewhere friend the Black Heritage Museum just have a gallery and maybe Arlington Community High School could also be situated there in the long term. And there are so many terrific. There are terrific skills that the students at the career center are actually developing. There's a cosmetology program. The question was raised well you know I'm on Columbia Pike. We like to have first floor businesses couldn't we create a business where the cosmetology students could go and actually do hair and offer that is a service to the community. There also is a terrific chef or you know culinary arts

program at the career center and couldn't there be some sort of pop up restaurant that is part of the first floor amenity. That again is on Columbia Pike. They do a lot of auto care in autobody repair at the career center. The students. Couldn't that be a service that's also present. That also provided to the community. So they actually have you know actual shops that they can work in. And so that I thought was really creative and interesting idea where kids again are getting that actual. Real life experience that they can marry their actual school work and education that goes along with the career center has been for a number of years completely and it completely is consistent with the profile the new profile of a graduate here in Virginia you know the governor signed a law that basically said we're going to have these elements and high school education really needs to be more focused and on actual experience experiential learning project based learning. And you have actually kind of a capstone project to the end is something you actually work on right. Sort of like they use the Wakefield senior project as the as part of model for that. And so all our schools all our schools and all our students will be doing that and I think the challenge for a yes is going to be not only you know how do we how do we take the best of what's at the career center in kind of expand it for everybody who's going to be there. But also how do you make sure that all of our students at the other high schools can take advantage of that and have that kind of education.

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M5: It really is something that if you go through a lot of cities on the main street that's where the public library is. And so it makes all the sense in the world that the Columbia Pike library be right on the side where people get off the bus walk to it that that's the public facing part of the public face and the same with the community theater the fact that that theater space is also being used by the school is an opportunity and inefficiency and the ideas that Kathleen just talked about with bringing the career center talent right up to the front so that people can engage with that. It enhances the program and it's also very smart design because it saves space. Instead of using space until those are the sorts of things that we're looking at to do that that means that we somehow bet that South Block is not presently owned by the county or the schools and so we need to work out some kind of an arrangement for that. But it really opens up a lot of exciting opportunities to not just be a pilot but to be on the site.

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M1: So you were just a little bit on the timeline. What are the next steps. Is a recommendation coming soon from the working group. Were you looking at a time timeframe for that.

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F1: So we'll have our phasing conversations and going to firm up our ideas throughout May and June and the work of the group really needs to be wrapped up by mid August because following this are the building level planning groups committee and the public facilities review committee that will convene to plan for the 800 seats at the career center. So we don't we are not actually doing the design you know we're not saying oh this is going to go here and this cafeteria is going to look like this. We're actually talking about the long term vision for it for this area. And we're talking about where the density where the massing you know should go on the site and you know what we'd like to see in the future.

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F4: And then the next level the B P C and N P F R C processes that are planning for those 800 seats that will actually design what that looks like using our principles using the principles we come up with and pass on.

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M1: If people want to provide any feedback or they have any ideas or they want to just get more information how can they do that.

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F1: We have a website on apx actually on the ABS website. If you go to engage with us there is a career center website link and we have several pages. We have the career center list of people who are attending in the charge. I think that it's with 32 people a lot of people might know people in this group so they can probably feed on to them. There's also a link online where you can actually submit comments and then there's a list of all of our meetings all of our meetings are of course public and they're publicly no guest and we welcome anybody at the meetings.

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F4: We do have public comment the meetings we usually saved for me and that people can have a listen to the conversation up to that point and provide their feedback. And certainly you know you can you contact me directly if you have an idea or you'd like to see us talk about something.

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M5: And there are kopecks you mentioned there are constituent groups there are civic associations. You did talk to your civic association through Seagrove. One of the groups that's represented is the pike president which is meeting of all the 10 civic associations along the pike who are in contact all the time so that there are a lot of ways to contact the civic associations and so the word gets gets through to them. We've been in almost constant conversation in our own organizations about what's happening and that's also part of the way of coming through. It seems sort of intimidating to be contacting the school or the county a lot of this is just talking to your neighbors.

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F4: Yes. Thanks very much for mentioning that because I'm very appreciative when I say the Penrose civic association president comes back to the group and says you know we discuss this at our last civic association meeting and we decided yeah we really agree with X or we'd like you know this kind of nuance on why that that really helps the conversation and that's quite frankly why they're seated there. They're supposed to be representing a group of people.

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M1: One last question I want to put to you John. Do you think that having this site redeveloped will bring in additional businesses and more opportunities on the pike.

00:35:47;14 - 00:36:42;09

M5: I do think that it will strengthen and bring in the businesses because one of the things that we have been lacking on the pike is a big daytime business presence. We don't have a lot of office buildings. We have a couple of relatively small ones and 50 years ago we had a lot more business from people in the Pentagon. That has tailed off. And so having a daytime crowd helps restaurants a great deal other sorts of service businesses and it will draw those in and will help them a great deal. When you think about the number of students and teachers and parents who will be sort of in the circuit of their you know before dinner or dinner before a day some kind of an event at the school or picking people up and stopping by. It's a great opportunity for the businesses and will really strengthen them.

00:36:42;16 - 00:37:04;03

M1: Do anything you wanted to add before we wrap up. Well I would just encourage people to go to the Web site read the charges see see the presentations that we've already gone through had to definitely engage with us because this is it's a terrific opportunity to plan a large space that's going to have wonderful.

00:37:04;22 - 00:37:52;10

M6: Ramifications you know into the future for both our students and for people who live and work on the grant and that website for our listeners to go to is après via US slashing gauge and you can find all of our engagement opportunities there. I want to thank you both for joining us today on the on the podcast. And thank you for your work on behalf of the county and the students and in making this the new crown jewel of Columbia Pike and so much for other episodes of our podcast you can visit us at apsva.us/podcast. Check us out on iTunes and Google Play and if you have any questions e-mail us at apsnews@apsva.us us or send us a tweet @apsVirginia. Thanks a lot.