

ARLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Item C-1-d

Work Session on the Arlington Facilities and Student Accommodation Plan
September 24, 2019

The Arlington School Board convened on Tuesday, September 24, 2019, at 7:01 PM at 2110 Washington Blvd., Arlington, Virginia.

Present were:

Tannia Talento, Chair
Monique O’Grady, Vice Chair
Reid Goldstein, Member
Barbara Kanninen, Member
Nancy Van Doren, Member
Melanie Elliott, Clerk

Also present were:

Cintia Johnson, Interim Superintendent
John Chadwick, Assistant Superintendent, Facilities and Operations
Leslie Peterson, Assistant Superintendent, Finance and Management
Lisa Stengle, Executive Director, Planning and Evaluation
Wendy Pilch, Director, Early Childhood and Elementary Education
Robert Ruiz, Principal Planner
Elizabeth Hardy, Arlington County Department of Community Planning, Housing and Development

Ms. Talento called the meeting to order, welcomed attendees, and reviewed the meeting agenda.

Overview

Ms. Stengle provided an overview of the components of the Arlington Facilities and Student Accommodation Plan (AFSAP). She confirmed that it provides information on projections and capacity, and she noted the AFSAP and all supporting documents are available on the website.

Priorities for the FY 2021-30 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)

Ms. Stengle presented priorities for the FY 2021-30 CIP, sharing highlights of capacity plans in the current CIP as well as projected enrollment growth. At the high school level, she reviewed planned capacity additions and shared projections that inform the upcoming CIP. At the middle school level, she described issues with current boundaries and how option school enrollment has impacted the schools. She confirmed boundaries will be adjusted by 2022-23 to address the imbalance. She also identified elementary capacity challenges to be addressed, acknowledging that projections for elementary enrollment in the out-years is the most unpredictable. She also presented a map of projected seats needed by corridor. Additional components of the CIP, such as field and parking needs and minor construction/major maintenance projects, were also reviewed.

Factors Contributing to Enrollment Growth

Mr. Ruiz described factors that contribute to enrollment growth. He reviewed projections for kindergarten students that are based on actual births and forecasted births, as well as reflecting new housing unit forecasts. He also reviewed assumptions that inform these projections.

Projections and Enrollment in 2019

- Collaboration between APS and Arlington County Government (ACG)

Ms. Hardy outlined collaboration between APS and the County to develop and share projections and forecasts. She confirmed that recommendations from the 2017 Community Facilities Study have enhanced collaboration. She then described County data sources shared with APS, including the master housing unit database, the housing unit forecast, and actual and projected births. Mr. Ruiz then explained how the new County projected birth data have improved APS projections.

- PreK Enrollment

Ms. Pilch described APS pre-kindergarten (pre-K) programs and how student enrollment is managed for each program. She also reviewed the 2019 pre-K application process, enrollment procedures, and barriers that affect enrollment. She then highlighted plans to better manage the pre-K lottery and enrollment in the coming year.

The PreK-12 Instructional Program Pathways as a Planning Tool

Ms. Stengle explained the PreK-12 Instructional Program Pathways (IPP) and how it will be used to help manage enrollment and balance capacity. She confirmed it is a planning tool that brings teaching and learning to the forefront of all capacity planning processes.

Recommendations for FY 2021-30 CIP

Ms. Stengle then reviewed recommendations for the upcoming CIP. Projections indicate no additional seats needed at high school; 500 seats needed for middle school students; and an additional 700+ seats needed at the elementary level. She then shared an initial list of sites where elementary capacity might be added.

FY 2021-30 CIP Process

Ms. Peterson described financial projections that will inform the 2021-30 CIP and explained limitations to the information that is available at the early stages of CIP development. Ms. Stengle then reviewed next steps in the CIP development process.

Discussion and Questions

Ms. Johnson thanked staff and the County for their work and cooperation on this process. Board members appreciated the information presented as well as staff collaboration, and the group also acknowledged the value of the Community Facilities Study to furthering this work. Dr. Kanninen commented on the need to keep a focus on long-term growth, and suggested planning for even more added capacity than projections indicate is needed. She asked for recommendations from the Department of Teaching and Learning (DTL) on ideal school sizes. Staff agreed that would be

useful but also recognized many factors need to be considered, including finances, instruction, and facility needs.

Staff responded to questions about expanding pre-K capacity, and Ms. Pilch spoke to challenges in balancing pre-K enrollment throughout the county, recognizing that it can be difficult to meet specific requirements for some of the programs. The group discussed how to incorporate the concept of public benefit in planning for capacity needs and encouraging support for school projects. Also discussed were discrepancies between projections and actual enrollment numbers, and staff commented on efforts to improve and refine projections.

The group discussed how demographics can be factored into capacity planning and the planning process. There was interest in looking at how demographics can be considered in terms of instruction, and challenges to managing diversity throughout the schools. Also discussed was what balancing enrollment across schools means, and whether there is an ideal school size. Staff shared some feedback from elementary administrators on managing high enrollment. Alternative tools for managing capacity were also discussed, such as transfers, maximizing space, renovating facilities, and improving transportation through alternatives such as public transit.

Ms. Peterson reviewed how the County has managed debt capacity over the last several years, and confirmed that some years APS has been allowed some flexibility with debt capacity. Also discussed were possible changes in county revenues, construction costs, and other factors that affect projects and funding. Staff provided background information about Career Center capacity and staffing calculations, and confirmed plans to add permanent seats at the site.

Board members shared requests for additional information to help inform the CIP development. The Board reiterated support for ensuring there is a focus on public benefit as part of planning, and recognized the need to continue to plan for long-term growth, consider bigger schools or a variety of programs, and look at ways to expand or improve current facilities. Again, there was the recognition that the work should be guided by instruction. In closing, Ms. Johnson and Ms. Talento reviewed areas identified for focus going forward. The Board appreciated staff and the community for their efforts and support of the schools, and for the work that had already been accomplished.

The meeting adjourned at 9:08 PM.

ATTEST:

Melanie Elliott, Clerk
Arlington School Board

Tannia Talento, Chair
Arlington School Board