

20 October 2015

MEETING NOTES

RE: BUILDING LEVEL PLANNING COMMITTEE #12
STRATFORD MIDDLE SCHOOL
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA
31406600

Meeting Date & Time: 13 October, 7:00-9:00 PM
Location: H-B Woodlawn Library

Attendees:

BLPC

Graham McBride – Asst. Principal H-B
Karen Gerry – Principal, Stratford program (Not Present)
Renee Harber – Asst. Principal Swanson
Carol Burger – H-B Staff
Kathleen Meagher – Director, Secondary Education
Eve Reed – Cherrydale Representative
Ray Sendejas – Cherrydale Representative (Not Present)
Dot Green – Donaldson Run Representative
Susan Cunningham – Donaldson Run Representative – BLPC Chair (Not Present)
Anne Wilson – Donaldson Run Representative (in place of Susan)
Amanda Davis – Maywood Representative (Not Present)
David Barish – Waverly Hills Representative
Doug Taylor – Woodmont Civic Association – Acting Chair for this meeting
Caroline Holt – Lyon Village Representative (Not Present)
Deb Pearson – PTA Taylor
Jen Thompson – PTA Glebe
Rohini Chopra – PTA ASF
Whytni Kernodle – PTA Key (Not Present)
Joseph Delogu – PTA WMS (Not Present)
Michael Henry – PTA SMS
Laura Saul Edwards – PTA H-B Woodlawn
Jeff Turner – FAC Representative
Robert Dudka – HALRB Representative
Charles Craig – HALRB Representative (Not Present)
Rebecca Ballo – CPHD staff – Historic Preservation

APS Staff

John Chadwick – Assistant Superintendent
Scott Prisco – Director of Design and Construction
Ben Burgin – Asst. Director, Design and Construction
Bill Herring – Project Manager, Design & Construction (Project Point of Contact)

County Staff

Diane Probus - DPR
Jane Kim – DES
Michele Stahlhut - CPHD

Other Attendees

Richard Giza, neighbor
Stu Dziura, neighbor (PFRC)
Tegan Holtzman, neighbor
Candace Abbey, neighbor

Design Team

Dan Curry – Quinn Evans Architects
Atara Margolies – Quinn Evans Architects



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Lauren Delmare – Toole Design Group

This was the twelfth meeting of the Stratford Middle School Building Level Planning Committee (BLPC). The BLPC is appointed by the Arlington School Board to assist the Facilities and Operations staff and advise the School Board on each major capital / renewal project.

Discussion points are summarized below. This summary presents Quinn Evans Architects' understanding of discussions, decisions, and recommended actions. We request that all attendees review these Meeting Notes and notify APS with recommended revisions or questions.



1. INTRODUCTION

- a. Doug Taylor (acting chair) opens the meeting by asking if there is any public comment.

2. PROCESS AND SCHEDULE

- a. Dan Curry (QEA) presents the revised schedule. Stresses that the design team hopes the BLPC will make significant progress at this meeting so that QEA can develop the scheme further by 10/26 and present it to the School Board as an information item on 11/5.

3. RECENT MEETINGS

- a. Scott Prisco (APS) summarized the School Board Work Session from 10/6.
 - i. School Board seemed to favor pursuing the project to accommodate 1000 seats on this site by September 2019. Other “no addition” options were discussed.
 - ii. School Board wants the BLPC to choose the option that best meets all concerns to proceed; as much progress as the group can make tonight would be appreciated without feeling too pressured.
- b. John Chadwick (APS) added that the School Board will ask the BLPC to justify any costs above \$29.2 M, but that they are willing to listen.

4. PREVIOUS OPTIONS

- a. Dan Curry (QEA) reviewed the previous options (Terrace, Link, West and East) as last presented to the BLPC at the end of August. The charge to QEA was to return to the group with all 4 schemes adjusted to meet the budget.

5. COST

- a. Atara Margolies (QEA) reviewed the basic strategies employed by the design team to bring the costs of each scheme down:
 - i. Reviewed renovation assumptions; current renovation costs represent only what is needed to meet the program and make the scheme work.
 - ii. Reduced new addition to 35,000 gsf from 45,000 gsf; program reduction will be explained in next section of the presentation.
 - iii. Provided minimum site requirements for parent drop-off and exit-only access to Old Dominion Drive.
- b. Atara reviewed the cost summary of all 4 schemes. Link and West are closest to meeting the budget at \$31.3 M, while East and Terrace have characteristics that drive those project costs higher.
- c. \$4.22 M in “other” costs is a constant throughout – represents Vacation Lane improvements, a portion of the cost of the road connecting to Old Dominion Drive, and this will be funded through a joint fun for community improvements.



- d. Costs for each scheme were presented, with the factors highlighted that cause East and Terrace to be more expensive and Link and West to come closer to meeting the budget goal.
 - i. Terrace – large footprint, largely underground, intensive green roof
 - ii. East – expensive connection to existing building to achieve pedestrian connection at all 4 levels.
 - iii. Link – compact efficient footprint; even with multiple connections to existing building
 - iv. West – compact efficient footprint; straightforward connection to existing building (not at historic façade); some grading/sitework as located on existing sloped parking lot site.
- e. Laura Saul Edwards asked how is the BLPC going to justify the addition \$2 M? Need to understand the ramifications of reducing the program, or reducing the site costs.

6. PROGRAM

- a. Dan Curry presented the Ed Spec and program assumptions the team has been working with in reducing the proposed program of the addition from 45k gsf to 35k gsf.
- b. Dan explained the differences in sf/student from the 2004 Ed Spec for 850 students to the draft sf/student of the current 2015 Ed Spec for 1000 students that QEA and APS are working on. Efficiencies can be found by serving more students with the large common spaces by scheduling them for more periods.
- c. Dan reviewed the comparison of the Ed Spec sf/student to the average sf/student across all APS Middle Schools as they are currently being used.
- d. Review of program elements removed from the 45k gsf program to meet the current goal.
- e. Laura asked if improving utilization could result in recapturing some program. Scott Prisco responded that the APS team model works best with a 5/7 utilization model, but that APS is trying to find ways to get slightly better utilization to take advantage of all spaces for as many periods as possible.
- f. Dan stressed that this is not a final list; it will be refined and revisited and hopefully some program areas will be recaptured, or adjusted. The media center would be highest priority in terms of recapturing.

7. REVISED OPTIONS

- a. Before presentation of Options, Doug requested that everyone hold their comments and questions until the large group discussion/
- b. Dan Curry presented the revised options: Terrace, Link, East and West.
- c. West Option was presented as the option with the greatest momentum.
- d. Dan reviewed how the West site was always considered a viable site for an addition, but it was not initially pursued because there was a mandate not to build on DPR land in Phase 1, and because we were planning for 2 phases ultimately, building on the existing parking required an expensive garage in Phase 1. Now that those constraints have been removed, the West option for a site for 1000 students is a strong option.
- e. One remaining con of the West option is that the arts and music program remains quite far away at the opposite end of the building without a full circulation link.
- f. Previous “cons” (parking garage, impact to DPR fields) have been removed.
- g. Design team strongly recommends the West Option as the one that meets the most community goals and nearly meets the CIP approved budget. In Schematic Design the team will continue to work on massing, program, sensitivity to historic significance, sustainable strategies, landscape design.

8. GROUP DISCUSSION



- a. Carol Burger states that the West Option does not provide an easy accessible route from the basement to the 3rd floor – as it uses the existing elevator. She prefers the Link scheme.
- b. Rohini Chopra asked if Phase 2 would be possible with the West Option. John Chadwick responds that it is unlikely that Phase 2 would ever be pursued on this site, and that the School Board instructed the group to consider Phase 1 only.
- c. John then asked Rebeccah Ballo what happens to the historic district designation if the building is largely located on DPR land and not APS? Rebeccah responds that the County has already talked to DPR and the district would be expanded to include the new addition and a reasonable buffer. Any future additions, even on park property, would follow this same rule of expansion of the district.
- d. Doug asked about the School Board member(s) who did discuss the “no addition” option of only seating 850 students on this site – John C responded that APS has the impression the School Board is NOT leaning in that direction and that they would like to meet the original seat goal, as then it will just leave them with more seats to find elsewhere.
- e. Dot Green suggested voting so that the design team can move ahead and make the West concept the best it can be in time for the School Board presentation. She also feels the Link is better, but realizes that politically it is untenable so the West is the way to go.
- f. Rohini stated that it is the BLPC mandate to pick the best scheme; feels they have been unfairly pushed into accepting the West scheme.
- g. Michael Henry said that the BLPC is making its own decision based on all factors, including cost. He thinks the reduced Link scheme is not as strong at the original Link scheme [many members nodded at this comment].
- h. Doug asked what is the BLPC being asked to recommend.
- i. John C responded that they are being asked to identify which site scheme is preferred, and which massing scheme is preferred. John then asked the BLPC to also recommend the historic interpretative component of the plan as an add-on as it is not yet included in the budget but it is something that APS feels is quite important, and certainly justifiable.
- j. Laura added that she loved the previous Link scheme, but without the atrium, and with the extended connections to the building from the smaller massing, she does not like it as much. She now feels the West is stronger. She supports the high road and would support costing an interpretative package of ideas to present to the School Board as an add-on item. She stated that the BLPC could mobilize to identify sources for additional funding for that if needed.
- k. Doug stated that if the BLPC recommends to move forward with the addition they may also recommend that Phase 2 CANNOT be accommodated on this site in the future.
- l. Eve Reed stated that BLPC should also add that no relocatables could be located in the courtyard in the future. John C responded that while that is a great idea and of course APS would love the courtyard to be empty, they are a public school entity and they have to provide seats for all Arlington County Middle Schoolers even if it means trailers. Their hands are tied. Several members added that if the interpretative exhibit was in the courtyard that may be a deterrent to trailers.
- m. Renee commented on the program reduction – teachers and students are resilient and can handle whatever is given to them. She agreed that Special Ed Resource Rooms aren't used as much – teachers meet students in the classroom rather than pull them out. She would like to see gym storage not cut as significantly, but feels that the auditorium could be scheduled for drama so the drama classroom is not needed.
- n. Carol Burger disagreed and felt that the drama classroom was a key program component.
- o. Graham McBride echoed Renee and said that it is important to keep as much instructional space as feasible.
- p. Ann Wilson asked if parking provided with West Option is the same; QEA responded that it meets Phase 1 TDM requirement which is fewer spaces than are on site today.
- q. Graham and Carol discussed accessible route again at the request of Doug.
- r. QEA agreed to look at the elevator issue and return to BLPC with concept and cost estimate.



- s. QEA was also asked to look at travel distance to Arts/Music compared with max travel distances at other Middle Schools.
- t. Straw poll was taken:
 - i. Terrace and East Options both off the table
 - ii. West vs Link:
 - 1. West – 13 votes
 - 2. Link – 3 votes
 - iii. High Road vs Low Road?
 - 1. High Road (Option C3) – 13 votes
 - 2. Low Road (Option C2) – 0 votes
- u. Official vote to be conducted electronically this week.
- v. Graham asked about parking for current students and staff during construction. John C noted that APS is always committed to finding temporary parking during construction. QEA noted that with the West Option the lower lot could be expanded at the start to provide that replacement parking upfront.
- w. Doug reminded the group that per Susan's earlier email, it is being investigated as to whether or not the BLPC is considered an advisory group under FOIA (Freedom of Information Act); so for now everyone should conduct themselves accordingly and refrain from discussing the project with more than 2 members of the BLPC outside of an official meeting.

9. PUBLIC COMMENT

- a. Question about how we are meeting the Ed Spec, and why would we build an addition that barely meets the Ed Spec; wouldn't we be better served by building a school that could handle the students over 1000 that will certainly be on this site within a few years? Dan from QEA answers that with an existing building there are always more challenges than when building a completely new facility.
- b. Question from Richard Giza: Happy to see that the low road is not likely to move forward. However, high road is inconsistent with Arlington's stated "car-free diet." If you make drop-off easy, more parents will do it. He also stated he was skeptical about the likelihood of the drive remaining closed – taxpayers will want it open all the time.

10. NEXT STEPS

- a. BLPC to conduct online vote for final recommendation.
- b. QEA to develop chosen scheme (likely West) for next meeting in preparation for presentation to School Board on 11/5.
- c. BLPC thanked Scott P for his hard work and wished him well in his next endeavor.

END OF MEETING NOTES