

6 August 2015

**MEETING NOTES**

**RE: BUILDING LEVEL PLANNING COMMITTEE #9**  
**STRATFORD MIDDLE SCHOOL**  
**ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA**  
**31406600**



2121 WARD PLACE, NW, 4TH FLOOR  
WASHINGTON, DC 20037  
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**Meeting Date & Time:** 3 August, 7:00-9:00 PM  
**Location:** H-B Woodlawn Library

**Attendees:**

**BLPC**

Graham McBride – Asst. Principal H-B (Not Present)  
Karen Gerry – Principal, Stratford program (Not Present)  
Renee Harber – Asst. Principal Swanson (Not Present)  
Carol Burger – H-B Staff  
Kathleen Meagher – Director, Secondary Education  
Eve Reed – Cherrydale Representative (Not Present)  
Ray Sendejas – Cherrydale Representative  
Dot Green – Donaldson Run Representative  
Susan Cunningham – Donaldson Run Representative – BLPC Chair  
Amanda Davis – Maywood Representative (Not Present)  
David Barish – Waverly Hills Representative (Not Present)  
Doug Taylor – Woodmont Civic Association  
Caroline Holt – Lyon Village Representative  
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 (Not Present)  
Jeff Turner – FAC Representative  
Robert Dudka – HALRB Representative (Not Present)  
Charles Craig – HALRB Representative  
Rebecca Ballo – CPHD staff – Historic Preservation

**APS Staff**

John Chadwick – Assistant Superintendent, Facilities and Operations  
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**

John Wingrad, neighbor  
Richard Giza, neighbor  
Betty Dziura, neighbor  
Vicki Mendelowitz, neighbor

**Design Team**

Carl Elefante – Quinn Evans Architects  
Dan Curry – Quinn Evans Architects  
Julia Siple – Quinn Evans Architects

WASHINGTON, DC  
ANN ARBOR, MI  
DETROIT, MI  
MADISON, WI

[WWW.QUINNEVANS.COM](http://WWW.QUINNEVANS.COM)

Atara Margolies – Quinn Evans Architects

Lauren Delmare – Toole Design Group

This was the ninth 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. Scott Prisco (APS) thanked everyone for coming and stated that the goal for this meeting is to make some decisions. Noted that with many competing stakeholder interests “everyone is going to be a little bit unhappy.”
- b. There is an upcoming work session with the School Board on August 11; public is invited to attend.
- c. Susan Cunningham (BLPC chair) said that the BLPC needs to give APS a sense of where they are headed for the upcoming work session with the School Board.
- d. Scott Prisco asked for any opening public comments; none were made.

#### 2. SCHEDULE AND RECENT MEETINGS

- a. Carl Elefante (QEA) reviewed the current schedule including key upcoming dates:
  - i. August 11 School Board work session
  - ii. Stratford Local Historic Designation as information item to School Board at August 13<sup>th</sup> meeting.
  - iii. August 31 BLPC
- b. Carl Elefante reviewed the recent workshop with the HALRB on July 15 and the PFRC meeting on July 16.

#### 3. REVIEW OF PREVIOUS SCHEMES

- a. Atara Margolies (QEA) reviews pros and cons of previous schemes, by site scheme and by building scheme.
  - i. Site Options:
    1. C2 – Vacation Lane to Old Dominion with exit and right-in entry access from Old Dominion
    2. C3 – Vacation Lane to Old Dominion with exit-only access from Old Dominion
    3. G2 – Full access from Old Dominion (no connection to Vacation Lane)
    4. A1 – Vacation Lane Enhanced Access (no connection to Old Dominion). A1 is still on the table at the request of Arlington County DES so an option is preserved which does not require VDOT approval.
  - ii. Building Options
    1. Link
    2. Terrace
    3. Hill

#### 4. OUTSTANDING STAKEHOLDER CONCERNS

- a. Atara Margolies (QEA) reviewed several outstanding stakeholder concerns:
  - i. Vacation Lane Improvements: The design team is continuing to develop these but as they will be implemented regardless of which option is chosen, it is not being presented at this meeting as a driving



- factor. Scott Prisco noted that Toole will be completing additional observations once school starts again as they continue to develop their recommendations for Vacation Lane.
- ii. The extent of Old Dominion access is also a major concern. Different site options show different levels of access. Local agencies (VDOT and DES) have indicated that they would not support full access (left-in and right-in access from Old Dominion to the site).
  - iii. Phase 2 Program
  - iv. Difference in historic preservation approach from HALRB which resulted in a new West Option that will be presented later on.
  - v. Cost – preliminary comparative costs will be presented later tonight.
- b. Phase 2 Program
- i. Julia Siple (QEA) presented program data for Phase 1 vs Phase 2 and reviewed VA and APS standards used to generate the data. She also presented a program comparison with other Arlington Middle Schools.
  - ii. Julia reviewed the program elements that will be expanded in Phase 2 vs Phase 1 and when those thresholds for program expansion are triggered.
  - iii. Dot Green asked about elements where the existing school supports more than the required program – would this cut into the proposed program? Scott Prisco (APS) replied that no; in that case.
  - iv. Susan Cunningham asked if there is an addition to the cafeteria in Phase 1. Julia clarified that there is no addition to the cafeteria but reallocation of space from the current teacher lunch area. The teacher lunch area will be relocated. Phase 2 will include cafeteria expansion.
  - v. Carol Burger asked if the auditorium stage is sufficient for 1300 students (QEA – yes) and how the teacher’s lounge would be relocated if it becomes part of cafeteria in Phase 2 (QEA – will be worked out; more flexibility with where that space can go with new approach to Middle School).
- c. New West Option
- i. Dan Curry (QEA) presented the newly developed “West” option which is paired with Site Option A2 (no Old Dominion access).
  - ii. All building program is located completely on the west end of the site, adjacent to the existing building. The team was asked to study this option by HALRB at the last work session on 7/15. HALRB does not support any of the current options.
  - iii. Massing is taller (5 floors) with multilevel parking garage underneath the building. Added height would require a variance during the use permit application process. Variances are quite typical.
  - iv. Heart of school is shifted west.
  - v. The arts and music program - in the 2005 addition - is now quite far from the rest of the program.
  - vi. The footprint is less constrained at the west end so there is more flexibility for programming.
  - vii. Charles Craig asked why no program under courtyard. QEA answered that the goal was to leave all area south of the building as untouched as possible. Charles also inquired as to how the building could be lowered.
  - viii. John Chadwick asked about phasing. QEA answered that phasing is quite difficult with this scheme, but perhaps that it could be phased by building either the north half or the south half first. There would be a cost associated with tearing down an exterior wall for Phase 2 but there are ways to design that wall to make it as cost effective as possible.
  - ix. Carl noted that to bring the building down there could be program under the courtyard that connects across to the basement, in addition to moving the parking to under the playing field.
- d. Costs
- i. Atara Margolies (QEA) presents costs as base option (C2/C3) plus additional cost to achieve other options.
  - ii. There is a cost savings to building one 5 story building (west option) at one time rather than two 3 story buildings several years apart.

- iii. Susan C. asks if APS is concerned about being over the baseline. Scott answers yes, there are many factors they didn't anticipate during the CIP process (increased escalation, for example).

**5. A/E TEAM RECOMMENDED OPTION**

- a. Carl Elefante presents the design team's recommended option of C3 site and revised Link building.
- b. The scheme is recommended because:
  - i. Core classrooms are proximate to each other and the scheme retains the organizational flow of the existing school
  - ii. Atrium places the heart of school within the historic school precinct
  - iii. Parking garage costs are deferred until Phase 2
  - iv. Phase 2 program contains mostly "specials;" core classrooms are built in Phase 1.
- c. This scheme has adverse impacts relative to historic preservation issues which will be addressed with mitigation. Mitigating actions are common and achievable for preservation projects.
- d. QEA presents several ideas about how the historic event of integration can be memorialized on this site through interpretive opportunities.
- e. Precedents are presented for atrium expansions to existing and historic buildings.
- f. Carl Elefante mentions some of QEA's relevant experience; QEA has successfully added on to many historic buildings and highlights the historic features through the architecture and interpretation.
- g. Scott Prisco (APS) raised the question that has been circulated around that there is a fear that the existing building could be delisted from the National Historic Register with this addition.
  - i. Carl Elefante (QEA) responded that in all options the historic building is being retained. Therefore, it is highly unlikely the viewshed impact alone would compromise the historic designation.
  - ii. Rebeccah Ballo (County Preservation) responded that Virginia Department of Historic Resources already submitted a letter that it was concerned about impact to a listed property.
- h. Scott Prisco responded that APS has already communicated with the state and will continue to work with them once a concept design has been chosen.

**6. BLPC DISCUSSION**

- a. Jeff Turner – how can we justify the cost of \$5 M for an atrium? Shouldn't that money go towards new seats? Carl described how "capping" a courtyard is a relatively standard historic preservation approach toward preserving existing facades.
- b. Michael Henry stated that he prefers Terrace building option (C2) as it still seems to him to be the best compromise option. It meets the program and addresses HALRB concerns. He understands the team's perspective but he cannot agree with the recommendation as presented.
- c. Dot Green stated that educationally, the Link (C3) makes the most sense because it provides an atrium at the heart of the school (she feels the Yorktown atrium is very successful) , it is the best option for school design, and it has optimal fire department access. Indicated that we should not be bending over backwards for the interests of people driving by and viewing the building from the road. The interpretive experience could be really positive in the Link (C3).
- d. Caroline Holt stated that with the Link (C3), it is an addition on the back of the building. The historic front of the building is being left untouched. Building an addition on the back, appropriately, is how one adds to a historic structure. Indicated we should be embracing the history and honoring the history but not at the expense of the best school environment for our kids
- e. Carol Burger– if the courtyard is left untouched, there will just be trailers there continuously. The flow of is better consolidated in the Link (C3).
- f. Charles Craig stated that not one member of the HALRB supports the Link (C3). HALRB would like the opportunity to review the new West scheme. Does not want a road by the building.





- g. Jeff Turner then asked if there is the opportunity to build both phases simultaneously. John Chadwick (APS) responded that the BLPC could bring that question to the school board. This issue will be discussed at the 8/11 work session with the School Board.
- h. Susan C. stated that she feels both the Link and Terrace options can make a school. From Vacation Lane the Link scheme presents as “thick,” perhaps stepping the mass down could help with that. She is concerned that if the Link (C3) is chosen, this will delay the process because HALRB is opposed and the school may then not open on schedule. Terrace (C2) is a compromise scheme and perhaps it could be combined with the West scheme for an even better solution.
- i. Rohini Chopra – The atrium presents an opportunity to honor the historic significance and an opportunity to raise awareness about the history. Given the site challenges and stakeholder conflicts she thinks we can find a compromise with the Link (C3) option.
- j. Doug Taylor stated that the circulation loops created by the Link and the Terrace building schemes are superior to the internal circulation shown in the Hill and the West building schemes. He understands the value of the Link atrium space but he is not as clear about the rooftop spaces in the Terrace scheme or the courtyard in that scheme.
- k. Jen commented that she does not see value to the West option; it is just like A3 reversed.
- l. John Chadwick added that he would ensure that the atrium in the Link scheme was built as a community amenity that would be open to the public.
- m. Deb expressed interest in leaving the Link (C3) on the table in addition to a revised Terrace (C2) scheme. She stated that she is torn between honoring the historic concerns but wanting the educational benefits of the Link scheme. Raised concern that if the Link scheme is chosen there may be a schedule delay.
- n. Doug T. asked for someone to explain the HALRB position again. Susan C. summarized the HALRB perspective and that group’s focus on an outside visitor approaching the site and being able to “read” the historic event and retrace those steps. Rebecca Ballo responded that is much like at a historic battleground site (Gettysburg) or at the west wall of the Pentagon where certain views/materials are left untouched so the historic experienced can be relived. Rebecca explained that the view from Old Dominion is the most significant view of the school because a photographer captured the historic moment from that angle.
- o. Michael H. expressed the Link scheme as a change to the skyline of the existing building.
- p. Kathleen Meagher stated that the atrium provides more flexible program space than a similar outdoor space. An interior atrium would provide the opportunity to highlight the existing building and historic significance for the students and community.
- q. Carl Elefante from QEA explained that one can see the historic door that the students entered east of the gym in the Link scheme, and that the central door on the main classroom façade would be visible through the glass atrium wall.
- r. John Chadwick and Scott Prisco (APS) both stressed that it was not just that particular day that was significant but the history leading up to that day, and that came after that day. The atrium in the Link scheme will have the power to celebrate the integration of APS schools overall.
- s. Dan Curry (QEA) reminded the BLPC that these are still just concepts and that the design team is looking for guidance on preferred direction; everything will continue to progress.

## 7. PUBLIC COMMENTS

- a. Susan C opened the floor for public comment.



- b. John Wingrad (neighbor from 22<sup>nd</sup> St) stated that he (and the neighbors on his street he represents) oppose the C2 site scheme due to excessive loss of trees. He refers to the stated urban forestry goals of the County to increase the tree canopy. Also expressed concern over spending money on making it easier for parents to drive their kids to school.
- c. Fran Abby (neighbor on 23<sup>rd</sup> St) stated that she is very concerned with site access. She quoted from other APS project reports how keeping traffic out of the neighborhood is a high priority and urged the BLPC to retain options with Old Dominion access on the table. Agreed that site option G2 does not really work and option C2 or C3 would be good for the community.
- d. Richard Giza (neighbor on 22<sup>nd</sup> st) stated that he is in agreement with John Wingrad. He also alluded to the County's plan at Five Points. While he agrees with all of the pedestrian and bike improvements there, he did not see anything to help Arlington with its goal of a "car free diet."
- e. Caroline Renault (neighbor on 23<sup>rd</sup> St) stated that her foremost concern is the students in the school and their safety so she is in favor of the option that the fire department prefers (site option C3).

#### 8. STRAW POLLS/MOTIONS

- a. Motion to remove site option G2 and the Hill building. Passed.
- b. Straw poll on building options to remain on the table:
  - i. Link option – 11 in favor of keeping it in
  - ii. Terrace option – 10 in favor of keeping it in
  - iii. West option – 1 in favor of keeping it in
- c. Straw poll on Old Dominion access
  - i. 12 in favor of Old Dominion access (unanimous)
  - ii. 0 in favor of Vacation Lane only access
- d. Discussion about how if both Link and Terrace buildings are still in play, then both C3 and C2 site options must remain in play as Terrace building does not work with C3 site option.
- e. Straw poll on whether to raise the question of doing both phases at once to the School Board:
  - i. 9 in favor of raising the question
  - ii. 3 did not oppose, but felt it was not relevant

#### 9. NEXT STEPS

- a. QEA to further develop C2 so it is at the level of C3.
- b. APS stressed that at the August 31 BLPC there *must* be a preferred option in advance of going to the School Board on September 10.
- c. The next BLPC meeting is Monday, August 31, 7pm-9pm, in the H-B Woodlawn Library.
- d. Upcoming work session with the School Board is August 11.

END OF MEETING NOTES