

Memorandum

To: Arlington School Board
From: Cynthia Hilton, Acting Chair SY 2023-2024, Advisory Council on School Facilities and Capital Programs (FAC)
Date: 13 JUN 2024
Re: FAC Annual Report for SY 2023-24

Purpose

The purpose of the FAC is to assist the School Board in the continuous, systematic review of school facilities and the capital improvement program by: making recommendations on the biennial school facilities and student accommodation plan (Pre-CIP) which informs the ten-year capital improvement plan and recommendations for funding thereon; providing, upon request, recommendations to the School Board on specific issues; providing advice on areas identified by the Council regarding the capital program; assisting the School Board in providing the community with information concerning school facilities and the capital improvement program; receiving and integrating input from the community concerning school facilities and the capital improvement program; and receiving and integrating input from the Building Level Planning Committees.¹

Annual Report Directive

The FAC shall provide the School Board with a summary of its activities and recommendations each school year. Additionally, the FAC, through the staff liaison, shall provide the School Board with its planned activities for the upcoming year annually. The following is the FAC Annual Report for school year (SY) 2023-24.

Membership

The FAC charter provides that the Committee have “no less than 9 and no more than 15 members.”² The Committee commenced the year with a 15-member complement. Regrettably, over the year, the FAC lost members and valuable input. See the following roster of the original FAC membership plus resignations/terminations during SY 2023-24:

Member Count	Name	Resignations/Terminations
1	Bauman, Hans	
2	Cheney, Rosa	
3	Chiappetta, Tina vice Walker, Mathew (original)	Emailed resignation for SY23-24 (2/20/2024) Emailed resignation for SY23-24 (10/16/2023)
4	Garcia, Kateri	
5	Goodman, David	
6	Hilton, Cynthia	
7	Hoekstra, Sally	
8	Hublely, Jessica	
9	Jones, Kelly	Emailed resignation for SY23-24 (01/25/2024)

¹ Purpose is defined in Policy Implementation Procedure B-3.6.30 PIP-3 Facilities Advisory Committee.

² Due to term limits or other reasons, only eight of our current 11-member compliment plan to return for SY 24-25, less than the minimum number to do business.

10	Larnard, Zachary	
11	Leutner, Steven	
12	Litzner, Kelley	Resigned from FAC at the 2/12/24 meeting
13	Rasmussen, Adam	
14	Thoman, Matthew	
15	Volchansky, Nadia	Terminated 3+ absences, motion made during 02/12/24 meeting.

At the same time, the process of accepting applications for membership on APS advisory committees halts mid-SY. An example of a consequence of this practice is that for half of the year the FAC did not have a voting member representing the ADA community. Another drawback from reduced membership is a smaller pool of volunteers to serve as liaisons or otherwise take on work. We know the Board values citizen advice and wants input from a range of perspectives. We ask that the Board consider keeping the advisory committee application process open throughout the SY. Recruiting and maintaining membership supports and enables committees to be relevant and responsive to assigned work.

Leadership

This year saw the resignations of the FAC chair, Kelley Litzner, and secretary, Kelly Jones. Vice chair, Cynthia Hilton, assumed the position of acting chair, in March, following Litzner's resignation. In May, Zach Larnard was selected to replace Hilton as acting vice chair. No member has stepped up to assume the position of secretary. Secretarial functions are assigned to various member volunteers at each meeting.

Meetings

During the SY, the FAC planned to meet monthly. Our designated meeting time is the second Monday of the month. Meetings are only possible through the commitment of assigned APS staff, with notable reference to Michael DePalma, who enrich our discussions with timely and relevant information and logistics. We are also grateful to our Board liaison, Mary Kadera, for her many contributions and guidance. Her attendance speaks volumes to the value of FAC deliberations and work.

The FAC follows a staff protocol that we meet only if a quorum is achieved. We support this protocol. Committee business cannot be conducted without a quorum, and it is not fair to our Board liaison or staff to prepare for and attend such meetings. The value of our advisory role is diminished when the perspective of any one member is absent.

With this background, two meetings were cancelled – January and April – due to lack of a quorum. The expected presence of a quorum is determined by staff from member responses following the distribution of an emailed calendar invitation with meeting information. Regrettably, it was discovered, after the cancellation of April's meeting, that the direction in the invitation prompting members to indicate if they will be attending was flawed. It had never been explained to members that using an option to RSVP via a reply to the invitation was inadequate because APS software did not record external RSVP responses. Following this realization, FAC asked staff to amend the RSVP direction as follows:

“APS is asking all School Board Advisory Committees to please reply (RSVP) to meeting invites for School Year 2023-24. Council members need to ~~reply to this meeting invitation~~ or send a separate email with confirmation of attendance. Accepting the calendar invitation is not sufficient. All RSVPs need to be submitted no later than noon of the scheduled meeting. The meeting will be cancelled or rescheduled if the quorum has not been met.”

Other recommendations to staff to ensure member attendance and meet quorum obligations included setting a deadline at least a week in advance of the meeting to let staff know if they are attending and providing that list to members so that they can see if they are properly recorded. If a member has three unexcused absences in a row, the member should be contacted to determine if they want to remain on the committee.

Another precedent followed by the FAC in furthering our responsibility to systematically and continuously review the condition of school facilities is to hold our meetings at and tour APS facilities. This SY we met at:

- MPSA (SEPT)
- Nottingham (OCT)
- Jefferson (NOV)
- Trades Center (DEC)
- *Cancelled (JAN)*
- Taylor (FEB)
- Yorktown (MAR)
- *Cancelled (APR)*
- Barcroft (MAY)
- Virtual (JUN)

Chair’s Initiatives

In order to improve transparency of and accountability for FAC activities and to improve onboarding of new members, several initiatives have been instituted including: (in no order of importance)

- Staff have been asked to provide hard copies of relevant documents to members who request them and to have at least one copy of all documents to be presented at meetings available for the public should any attend.
- Staff have been asked to post all FAC comments to the FAC website. Comments are now available under the “resources” tab on the FAC webpage.³
- A log has been instituted to track all recommendations FAC has made and their status.
- A portion of every meeting is dedicated to documenting takeaways from the meeting’s facility tour. The exercise is meant to improve the relevance of the tours to Committee business by capturing and formally documenting the Committee’s observations of the facility during the tour.
- A table of acronyms has been created.
- Members are provided a “Primer” on FAC and its work.
- A table of major reports produced by Facilities & Operations (F&O) is available to members and the public to facilitate understanding when referencing these materials.

SY 2023-24 Program of Work

Areas of work and attendant summaries of recommendations submitted to the School Board follow:

³ Other documents listed in this section are also available under the “resources” tab.

- **Pre-Capital Improvement Plan (CIP):** The FAC began work in the summer of 2023 to familiarize ourselves with the elements of the Pre-CIP and partner with F&O staff to be a resource to the community in understanding and contributing to plan. We supported APS' proposed framework and methodology for assessing priority facilities, as well as major proposals to include to finish redevelopment of the Arlington Career Center (ACC) site (i.e., moving the MPSA program to the legacy CC building and demolition of the Patrick Henry building to provide needed green space on the site), options for boundary changes, swing space, and moving the Immersion program out of Gunston MS to help relieve overcrowding. Key additional recommendations included that:

 - APS publish data on Career and Technical Education (CTE) enrollment vs. capacity of classes offered, which CTE courses are over-requested and by how many students, and “waitlists” for classes. This information has been requested for the last several years, but not shared.
 - APS seek input from civic associations affected by potential boundary changes to prioritize planning units that should go to the same school, and to rank the list of “Tools to Manage Enrollment” from the most ideal to the least ideal considering impacts on students, families, the budget, and capital improvement needs.

Action items FAC recommended for itself were that a liaison be appointed to JFAC to facilitate work on joint use issues, including shared transportation concerns, and that a Subcommittee on Sustainability be formed. (See below for more information.)
- **Long Range Plan (LRP)/Methodology:** In addition to general support for the LRP framework and the Methodology that underpins it, the FAC recommended that:

 - The School Board limit the number of Deep Dive (DD) studies to no more than three in a CIP cycle, thereby allowing the potential list of DDs to be refreshed every two years as circumstances warrant.
 - Savings from foregoing more DD studies than could be accomplished within any 10-year CIP be used for other F&O projects.
 - The School Board retain flexibility to adjust top tier projects based on available funding.
 - Any joint facility renovation costs be shared with Arlington County Government (ACG).
 - Facility Condition Index (FCI) data be updated every two years, not five, in alignment with the Pre-CIP release cycle.
 - The criteria in the Methodology be updated as priorities, polices, and standards evolve, and that the criteria be weighted.
 - Pre-K numbers be included in planning.
 - The School Board not support reducing student load to educational space ratios as a remedy to addressing classroom inadequacies.
 - Criteria be removed that, even if deficient, would not change overall priority rankings.
- **MC/MM Recommendations:** The FAC was invited to serve on the MC/MM Committee. FAC was provided one of 13 votes on the Committee, which was otherwise comprised of APS staff. FAC recommendations included:

 - Moving annually recurring activities, such as staff salary and various safety inspections, from the MC/MM account to APS' operational budget. These are important line-items but not appropriate for MC/MM funding.
 - Combining all contingency funding into one account. Staff said that APS sub-category contingency funds were fungible. So, prognosticating separate amounts for plumbing or HVAC or “air quality” is unnecessary.

- Full funding for all MC/MM projects. If full-funding was not possible, FAC did not support cutting school-specific requested projects before any staff identified projects.
- Ensuring that funding be more equitably distributed among schools if full funding was not possible. Proposed projects would allocate 22 percent of funds to two schools.
- Ranking projects with a safety/security nexus above beautification projects, such as painting or stained carpet replacement.

Regrettably, none of these recommendations were accepted this SY.

- **FY 2025 Budget:** The final FY 2025 APS budget impacted F&O functions and workload. One of the reasons that FAC’s MC/MM recommendations were not supported this year was the budget deficit APS faced in FY 2025. This account was cut \$1.5M over FY 2024. Going forward it is hoped that use of the new Methodology to objectively identify and prioritize needed “local projects” (deferred maintenance) will justify the allocation of sufficient MC/MM funding. Forgoing any one DD study is estimated to save between \$800K and \$833K. The average cost of an MC/MM project is \$81.5K. The other impact from the FY 2025 budget was a reorganization of the Superintendent’s office that saw the return of planning and evaluation functions to F&O. While largely budget neutral, these functions are critical to F&O work, and the FAC recommends monitoring reorganization outcomes to assess its efficacy or needs for additional support.
- **Policy & PIP Reviews:** The FAC reviewed School Board policies and Policy Implementation Procedures (PIP) proposed for revision and commented on those relevant to the Committee. This SY, the FAC submitted comments on the Boundary Policy and PIP; Purchasing Policy; and the Buildings & Grounds Maintenance Policy.

Among the Boundary Policy recommendations were those to:

- strengthen policy uses for swing space;
- include consequences of inaction;
- update and clarify wording about public notice;
- better define the goal of “multimodal transportation options” to determine “proximity” to a school;
- employ APS’ resident verification process; and
- add “socioeconomic” as a modifier to “disparate impact” in the PIP.

A recommendation for the Purchasing policy was to consider adding a reference to the “prevailing wage” resolution, and for the Buildings and Grounds Maintenance policy was to explicitly state who is responsible for what task.

Finally, FAC also provided comments on the Superintendent’s proposal prevailing wage resolution. The FAC supports the principle of ensuring fair labor practices in APS contracts. However, we presented some issues that may prove to be unintended consequences. These include impacts on:

- The increased demand for MC/MM projects given that prevailing wages are expected to increase covered project costs between 12 and 15 percent when the MC/MM budget was already cut by \$1.5M in FY 2025.
- Small businesses that may drop out of the bidding process, not because they are unwilling to pay prevailing wages but because of the administrative costs to validate compliance.

Other questions about how the resolution will be implemented await clarification. The FAC intends to monitor the implementation of the resolution and will keep the Board apprised of issues if any that may warrant attention in the future.

- **FY 25-34 CIP:** Easily the most important initiative of this SY was the FAC's work on the CIP. In comments to the School Board, the FAC chose to focus on four areas for recommendations: Major Infrastructure (MI) projects; DD studies; the repurposing of the legacy CC building for the MPSA program; and additional considerations, broken into three groups, to enhance and improve CIP outcomes and support the Board's prerogative to exercise flexibility consistent with community values and evolving circumstances.
 - MI: The FAC supported the five projects proposed by the Superintendent, identified through application of the Methodology: Hoffman-Boston ES, Hamm MS, Oakridge ES, Williamsburg MS, and Jamestown ES.
 - DD Studies: As noted above, the FAC recommended that no more than three studies be undertaken in this CIP based on an expectation that any project going forward would be completed within the CIP's 10-year timeframe. Of the five DD studies proposed, the FAC, after independently applying the methodology established by APS staff, recommended three of the five APS-identified studies: Barrett ES, Taylor ES, and Thomas Jefferson MS. Additionally, the FAC recommended withholding MC/MM funding at schools undergoing DDs until it is determined that renovation/rebuilding at the schools would negate the need for the MC/MM projects.
 - Legacy CC Building/MPSA: The FAC has a long history with efforts to repurpose the Career Center site. To finish the plan, the FAC supports the relocation of the MPSA program to the legacy CC building and recommended that the Board select option 2 for the repurposing. This last decision was based on a combination of guidance from the School Board and public comment while being mindful of budgetary constraints.
 - Other Considerations –
 - For MI or DD Projects:
 - Recommend consideration of other factors not currently captured in the Methodology when picking DD studies and Major Infrastructure projects, especially as the data in the Methodology becomes increasingly dated.
 - Recommend prioritizing schools that qualify for DD studies due to substandard educational spaces that are also over-enrolled due to the capacity of the building (not including relocatables).
 - Support boundary changes as an option to better use existing schools and not support use of relocatables as a permanent solution to overcrowding.
 - Recommend consideration of equity principles when selecting facilities for DD studies and investment.
 - Long-term Recommendations for Methodology Improvements:
 - Recommend that staff provide the public a simplified step-by-step explanation of how the Methodology was used to select schools as part of the staff proposal.
 - Recommend that the evaluation factors used in the Methodology be weighted.
 - Recommend addition of a glossary of all acronyms used in the LRP or other documents supporting the Methodology.
 - School Bond/Budget:
 - Recommend public outreach to support the Fall school bond.
 - Support necessary actions to preserve Arlington's AAA bond rating.

- Recommend renovating/rebuilding facilities without student occupation as a cost-saving as well as a student safety measure.
 - Recommend taking under-utilized facilities off-line, but not out of inventory, if it would save funds.
 - Recommend exploring options to substitute HS commuting use of the iRide program for seats on school buses to reduce transportation costs.
- **Sustainability:** Current School Board policies mention APS' commitment to environmental sustainability and its goal of carbon neutrality in alignment with ACG's Community Energy Plan. In support of the Board's commitment to sustainability and energy conservation, FAC leadership proposed the formation of a subcommittee to provide a review of APS endeavors related to sustainability, including reviewing the "definition" of sustainability as it relates to APS facilities and reviewing current APS actions related to sustainability of facilities. Based on the findings of that review, the FAC would make recommendations to the School Board and APS regarding goals and policy adjustments, if any. A detailed workplan for the subcommittee was prepared and presented to the FAC by Rosa Cheney, chair emeritus. Sufficient members of the FAC volunteered to participate, but scheduling conflicts and the mid-year timing of the launch combined to table further action this year.

Looking Ahead to SY 24-25

During SY 24-25, the FAC expects to review and/or monitor and comment, as appropriate, on the following:

- The FY 26 Budget proposal for impacts to F&O non-bond funding, including MC/MM and debt service.
- Support of APS' bond request.
- Implementation of the FY 25-34 CIP, including Deep Dive studies, major infrastructure projects, and ACC site redevelopment.
- APS' enrollment management plan, 10-year projections, and option-school enrollments and waiting lists, with any attendant recommendations for boundary changes that would be part of the Spring 2025 Pre-CIP.
- Assessing planning and evaluation capabilities and needs given the organizational transfer of these critical functions to F&O.
- Focus on transportation issues.
- Update of the Facility Optimization Study.
- Monitor implementation of the APS 2024-30 Strategic Plan.
- Policy updates relevant to FAC's mission.

We look forward to working with and assisting the School Board and APS staff next SY on these items and any other items as directed by the School Board.

Other Recommendations/Observations

In no order of priority:

- **JFAC:** The Joint Facilities Advisory Commission (JFAC), which reports to both the School and County Boards, was launched in part because the County did not have a counterpart advisory group to the FAC for ACG facilities. The purpose of the JFAC is to focus on how ACG and APS can work together "once siting decision[s] have been made," and is not "to supersede the work of other

advisory groups” such as the FAC. Still, if recommendations of named advisory groups are incompatible, “the JFAC may provide recommendations on facility prioritization ... and challenges.” We understand the role of JFAC relative to other named advisory groups is to work with named groups if the recommendations of these groups are incompatible to seek common ground. If JFAC has information that it believes should be considered by FAC as we fulfill our advisory mission, we would welcome JFAC to share these views with us. We have appointed a liaison to JFAC to facilitate such an exchange from our perspective. Meanwhile, there is no value added in duplicating the work of the FAC. The value of JFAC is in working with FAC on joint use projects and looking for other partnership opportunities.

As noted, FAC has assigned a liaison to the JFAC, but it is non-voting. Given this mission of JFAC, consideration should be given to naming members, with voting rights, from those advisory groups that JFAC is charged with ensuring compatibility. Considering the work of the FAC, the vice chair would be best suited for this permanent membership position.

Projects suitable for collaborative work between FAC and JFAC would be rehabilitation of shared facilities/assets such as athletic fields, the Trade Center, and the Thomas Jefferson MS and civic center.

- CIP Work Sessions: Historically, CIP work sessions have been held over multiple days. The work sessions for the FY 25-34 CIP were held in one day. Consideration should be given to returning to a more spread-out schedule allowing participants more time to reflect on session deliberations and get clarifying questions answered that may be helpful as work sessions progress.