

Arlington County Civic Federation

Resolution Regarding Site Planning Of Arlington Public School Facilities

WHEREAS the Arlington County Civic Federation both recognizes that the number of students in the Arlington Public Schools (APS) are rapidly increasing and supports the need to build additions and schools on tight timelines to address the critical overcrowding;

WHEREAS the Arlington County School Board has submitted a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for FY 2013-2022 which includes the construction of two new elementary schools and major additions on several others by 2016;

WHEREAS the November 2012 bond referendum will include funding which is intended to support the construction of one new elementary school and the design of a second as well as funds for major additions on others;

WHEREAS the construction of new or major expansion of existing schools have the potential to severely impact the surrounding neighborhood and to a lesser extent the community at large;

WHEREAS the consideration of the specific effects on neighborhoods was not a significant factor during the Capacity Planning Process, which became the basis for the School CIP;

WHEREAS the County Board intends to use the Public Facilities Review Committee (PFRC) during the entire site review process as a means to ensure that community concerns are identified and addressed; and

WHEREAS the County Board has indicated its intent to have the information from the PFRC on these issues available before the end of the conceptual design stage for the County Board to decide whether the issues have been adequately addressed.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE COUNTY BOARD:

- recognize that construction of new or major expansion of existing schools can have significant impact on the surrounding neighborhood and the community at large;
- in its capacity as the approver of the final site plan, takes an active role during the conceptual design phase to ensure that community concerns are adequately addressed in a timely manner;
- reaffirms its commitment to reject plans which do not adequately address those issues.

Alternate proposed last bullet from Glencarlyn - "needs to reaffirm its commitment that it will reject plans which do not adequately address those issues, whether or not an alternative location for a new school or expansion has been identified".

Comments Accompanying the Revised Resolution Regarding Site Planning Of Arlington Public School Facilities

The Glencarlyn Citizens' Association (GCA) had initially submitted a resolution to the ACCF in June 2012 because of the concern of the impact of the construction of a third building on the Kenmore / Carlin Springs site. A major concern is that Carlin Springs Road from Columbia Pike to north of Arlington Blvd is frequently a traffic nightmare in large part because there are currently three schools (Kenmore / Carlin Springs and Campbell Elementary) within 1/3 mile. Adding another choice school of 600 students will make it much worse. In addition to traffic there are other issues including additional required parking and the loss of substantial recreation space, which is used by numerous groups from across the County.

This is a substantially revised Arlington-wide resolution reflecting actions of the County and School Boards which have occurred since June. It reflects the joint position of the ACCF Schools committee, with only one difference, that is the language of the last bullet under the "Be It Resolved" where Glencarlyn would prefer a stronger statement (see alternate language at the bottom of the resolution).

Community Impact - A County-wide Issue

Construction of new or a major expansion of existing schools have the potential to severely impact the surrounding neighborhood and to a lesser extent the community at large. The School Board was for the most part limited to existing APS properties for new APS facilities because of the extremely high cost of property and limited options for property offered by the County. Although the School Board committed at the beginning of the Capacity Planning process to include Neighborhood Resources as a criterion in the site selection process, that factor played a very limited role. The focus of the School Board has been on the seats needed for students and not impact on the neighborhood. The School Board had intended to defer any serious discussion on neighborhood impact until the design process for a building was well underway.

County Board Involvement

Recognizing the importance of considering community concerns early, the County Board inserted itself into the conceptual design (first) phase as part of the special use permit process. In March, the County Manager presented a framework at the joint County and School Board work session. The process includes the review of each proposed site, evaluation of its impacts on the community and discussion of potential mitigations by the Public Facilities Review Committee (PFRC) with public hearings for those nearby to have appropriate opportunities to be involved.

At the follow-up July 24 work session, the County Board made it very clear that they expected to have the PFRC report to them the issues of concern of the community and how APS plans would address them. This would occur during the design's conceptual (first) phase, before any significant design monies are spent on the project. The County Board repeatedly stressed the importance of transportation (including traffic management) and siting as two of the more critical elements. The County Board further indicated that they intend to make decisions on whether the community-wide issues are adequately addressed before the Schools begin work on the next phase of design.

Purpose of the Resolution

The intent of the resolution is for the Civic Federation to state a position that we fully support what the County Board has indicated they plan to do (describe above) and that we expect the County Board to hold firm on that position for the numerous schools construction projects planned over the next few years. This resolution is not intended to be used to obstruct the urgently needed construction of new additions and schools in Arlington County.