

ARLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Item C-1-a

Work Session on Proposed Refinements to High School Attendance Zone Boundaries

November 9, 2016

The Arlington School Board convened on Wednesday, November 9, 2016, at 7:04 PM at 1325 S. Dinwiddie Street, Arlington, VA.

Present were:

Nancy Van Doren, Chair
Barbara Kanninen, Vice Chair
Reid Goldstein, Member
James Lander, Member
Emma Violand-Sánchez, Member (arr. 7:20 PM)
Melanie Elliott, Clerk

Also present were:

Dr. Patrick K. Murphy, Superintendent
John Chadwick, Assistant Superintendent, Facilities and Operations
Linda Erdos, Assistant Superintendent, School and Community Relations
Cintia Johnson, Assistant Superintendent, Administrative Services
Dr. Tara Natrass, Assistant Superintendent, Instruction
Lisa Stengle, Director Planning and Evaluation
Lionel White, Director, Facilities Planning

Introduction

Ms. Van Doren welcomed the group and briefly reviewed the agenda. Acknowledging staff efforts, Dr. Murphy reviewed the priorities that informed development of the proposed boundary refinements and provided a brief overview of the options being presented.

Ms. Stengle reviewed Board feedback received on refinement options presented on November 3, briefly highlighting the boundary policy and explaining the proposed sibling transfer options and estimations on how they are expected to affect capacity. She then reviewed capacity utilization projections at each school for the options previously presented, and highlighted the estimated need for relocatables in the 2020-2021 school year (SY 2020-21). She also reviewed capacity considerations at the high schools, such as increasing capacity through creative use of space, expansion of the Arlington Tech program, and other adjustments.

Three new options, which combined previously proposed options and addressed Board questions and concerns, were then presented by Ms. Stengle. These options move between 339 and 389 students over the four-year period, and Ms. Stengle explained the rationale used to develop each of the options. Staff responded to Board questions, confirming that the options avoid creating an “island” that isolates students from attending the same school as their neighbors. Staff also explained how they looked to address concerns about moving students who currently walk to school to a school that requires them to ride the bus. It was recognized that there are some planning units that span the walk zone and bus zone, and staff acknowledged this will affect some students with the proposed moves. Mr. Goldstein was interested in having the walk maps for schools

available for the Board and community to review. Staff then explained how the free and reduced lunch percentages were calculated and how those percentages were considered as the options were developed. Responding to questions, Mr. White explained why capacity utilization drops after SY 2020-21. Reasons include the addition of new seats as well as the movement of a larger cohort through APS over the next several years. He also briefly reviewed how projections are developed.

Additional topics discussed were whether enrollment in the International Baccalaureate (IB) program should be considered in this process, and the procedures for determining the number of IB transfers allowed each year. Dr. Violand-Sánchez stated her support for expanding the IB program in APS. The group also discussed how to manage use of relocatables in SY 2020-21. It was noted that high school boundaries will be revisited at that time, so projections may change significantly. Board members commented on the newly presented options, appreciating that they take into consideration Board comments, but recognized that none are perfect. Mr. Goldstein suggested developing a choice zone made up of planning units in less crowded areas, where families can choose which school to attend. The Board recognized that there are transfer options and teams that allow some flexibility, and Ms. Van Doren suggested that Mr. Goldstein's idea would be a good topic for future consideration.

Board members then shared questions and requests for additional information needed to inform their decision. There was a preference for keeping students in schools within walking distance of their homes. One Board member felt too many students are being moved to Yorktown with these options, and another suggested moving fewer students. Dr. Murphy commented that if fewer students are moved, that will likely increase the need for relocatables. The Board also suggested looking at additional combinations of the original seven options, and suggested a few alternate combinations. Ms. Van Doren confirmed that even if new options are developed, the Board will only consider moving the planning units already identified and will not add new planning units to the discussion. The group also recognized that it will be helpful to continue to look at additional ways to add capacity, such as increasing enrollment in Arlington Tech and possible future use of the Education Center site.

Summarizing the conversation, staff agreed to provide transportation maps and walk zone maps. Ms. Van Doren recognized some Board support for option 2, and she confirmed the Board would like to ensure maximum walkability to all schools. Staff agreed to prepare an additional option combining Wakefield A with Yorktown B, maintaining the goal of moving 400 students. The group agreed with the importance of publicizing the new option widely and through various mechanisms, particularly prior to the November 15 public hearing. Ms. Van Doren reiterated that any new proposal will stay within the original planning units, and asked that a summary of the options being considered be shared prior to public comment on the 15th.

Ms. Van Doren thanked all participants and the meeting adjourned 8:45 PM.

ATTEST:

Melanie Elliott, Clerk
Arlington School Board

Nancy Van Doren, Chair
Arlington School Board