

June 7, 2022

Dear Chair Kanninen and Members of Arlington County School Board,

The JFAC and FAC met in a joint meeting on May 25th to discuss the Superintendent's proposed CIP. Both respective missions and defined purpose of the FAC and JFAC include the charge to review capital improvement plans (CIPs) and long-range facility planning.

Both JFAC and FAC seek to advise on facilities decisions with a broad and long-range vision that takes in to consideration the needs of all APS students and Arlington County citizens. We advocate for full transparency of identified project costs and how defined needs fit within the constraints of bonding capacity limits, being mindful of impacts of debt service to the operating budget and providing a long-range plans that make the best use of our limited space. We aim to advise you to think long term and to make the most efficient use of every dollar and every site.

We recognize and acknowledge in our discussions:

1. APS and the Arlington community derive great value from our high-quality school system. In planning for growth, we should recognize that the education APS offers is an enormous asset to Arlington County and the goal of any plan should be to maintain our high educational standards which contribute to the high quality of life in Arlington.
2. Arlington County, and by extension APS, has limited available building sites, a limited budget, and limited bonding capacity.
3. Cost escalation is a factor that should be considered in planning for project timing and budgeting.
4. The facility needs of both APS and Arlington County and the importance of aligning and balancing those plans.
5. It is important to develop a strategic, collaborative effort between the School Board and the County Board to develop a comprehensive and strategic long- range plan for land use and capital projects across the county.
6. Enrollment projections have fluctuated over the past few years due to many factors. Over the past decade, we have seen period of consistent and rapid growth followed by enrollment leveling during pandemic and reduced birth rates show drop-off of enrollment in future. APS and the County have worked closely on projections, and the data included from County planning (i.e., new housing units) have improved long-term projections, but the next few years are difficult to predict.

We understand the CIP to be a financial and planning document that seeks to assess the impact of projected facility needs and plan capital solutions by clearly demonstrating that articulated needs are balanced and affordable and can be delivered in a timely manner. The CIP funding scenario defines the parameters for which capital projects are affordable within bonding capacity limits and timelines for those projects within and sometimes beyond the 10-year CIP timeline. With any fiscal constraints there will be trade-offs and hard decisions to be made balancing all forecasted facility needs for APS and other Arlington County priorities. We recognize that

spending more on one project will mean that less will be available to spend on other needs in this CIP.

APS has the challenge in this CIP of addressing the long-promised Career Center project including adding needed seats, long awaited common spaces and improved facilities for the current programs while balancing needs for existing facilities and a long-range renovation plan. Every decision the School Board makes on capital projects and buildings today must examine both the short-term needs and the long-term implications. Arlington County's available space is limited and must serve our growing population's needs for schools as well as the multiple other uses. Facilities planning must therefore focus on maximizing the use of our sites and providing flexibility to adapt to future and the long-range needs of all of Arlington.

FAC/JFAC consensus was found at our May 25th joint meeting for most projects included within the CIP. There was also consensus on expressing strong concerns for projects that were not included in the funding scenario of the CIP and we formed two recommendations.

We supported the following:

- Previous projects (HVAC upgrades, roof replacements, kitchen modernizations, and security entry vestibules, The Heights parking and accessible entrance).
- New projects (IT modernization, lock and key unification, and PA system modernizations).
- The inclusion of the Career Center project in the CIP. We did not discuss or find consensus on supporting or not supporting Base Ed Specs or Alternative Ed Specs

There was strong concern that Superintendent's Proposed CIP did not include or acknowledge estimated costs or placeholders for timing, money for planning or a stated plan within the 10-year time period for:

- Future use/renovation of the legacy Career Center
- Long-range plans for the Career Center site including future fields and green space
- Swing space which likely will need to be created in order to accommodate students if major renovations will be needed as part of the long-range facilities plan
- The cost of moving MPSA into the legacy Career Center and demolishing the existing building (this was shown as a possibility in the Superintendent's CIP presentation)

We found consensus on the following recommendations:

- A recommendation to include TBD placeholders for the above listed projects that are not shown within the funding scenario and for TBD long-range facilities plan projects.
 - Both FAC and JFAC understand that not all of the projects or project costs are known however, we strongly feel that showing projects with TBD placeholders is important to demonstrate timing and affordability of projects within the larger context of all of APS needs and debt service limits.
 - While there was consensus on the recommendation to use project placeholders some members stipulated that the costs shown must have some logical basis.

- A recommendation to create several different funding scenarios using TBD placeholders transparently demonstrating debt service, available funding and appropriate project timing for all known facility needs (see list above). We recommend the following scenarios:
 - Career Center Project with Base Ed Specs
 - Career Center Project with Alternative Ed Specs

This statement is meant to reflect the discussion at our joint meeting, and to underscore that we are in agreement in the importance that is fundamental in our charge to advise you, the School Board, in a way that brings a fundamental knowledge of APS and County facility needs and processes with a county-wide perspective. In addition to this letter the FAC and the JFAC are each individually writing letters and making separate recommendations.

Thank you,

Stacy Snyder- JFAC Vice-Chair
Kathleen McSweeney- JFAC Chair
Rosa Cheney-FAC Chair
Rebecca Hunter- FAC Vice-Chair

Copy:
Katie Cristol, Chair, Arlington County Board
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