

**Enrollment/Forecasts Demographics Subcommittee Meeting
of the Long Range Educational Facilities Planning Work Group
Meeting #4
City Hall, 301 King Street
Tuesday, October 29, 2013 – 6:00pm
Meeting Summary**

Meeting notes are recorded by City Staff to provide a written record of principal items of discussion, key comments, decisions of the Work Group, and comments from the public. They are not intended to be a verbatim transcription of the meeting.

Meeting Attendees

Subcommittee Members

Ken Billingsley
Yvonne Folkerts
Chris Hartman
Justin Wilson

Members not in attendance

Herb Berg

Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS)

Bill Finn
Laurel Hammig

City of Alexandria

Steve Chozick
Pat Mann
Ryan Price
Amber Wheeler
Katherine Carraway

Community Members

Scott Newsham
Jerry Foley

Welcome and Introductions

Steve Chozick, Division Chief, GIS, welcomed attendees and gave an overview of the meeting goals, which included presenting a preliminary short-term enrollment projection, as well as initial drafts for the long-term forecast based on development and student generation scenarios.

Summary of Findings and Research Process

Mr. Chozick began the [presentation](#) by 1) reviewing the role of the subcommittee, which includes examining the details of the forecasting elements proposed in its work plan; collaborating on the development of a short-term and long-term enrollment forecast; and reporting results to the Long-Range Educational Facilities Plan (LREFP) Work Group as a whole; and 2) summarizing the subcommittee's accomplishments to date as they relate to the following research elements: births; capture rates; cohort survival; and student generation.

Short-Term Enrollment Projections

Laurel Hammig, Facilities Planner/GIS Specialist, ACPS, reported on the [2013/14 school year enrollment numbers](#). For pre-K through 12th grade, the number of students totals 13,560 – a growth of 4% from last year. The largest percentage growth is seen at the middle- and high-school levels, while the elementary level shows the least. This development represents a departure from previous years. The 2013/14 data shows that enrollment numbers at the elementary level were over-projected, while the numbers at the middle- and high-school levels were under-projected – illustrating that larger growth than anticipated is occurring at the secondary level. (Ms. Hammig noted that the projections used for comparison are those that are included in the ACPS operating budget submitted in the January/February time frame.)

Kindergarten and 9th grade are two of the key grades where projections were inaccurate. The group discussed possible reasons chief among them being that the larger cohort seen at the elementary level is now matriculating through the system and moving into the secondary level. The smaller numbers entering the elementary level may be due to improving economic factors – families may have more options available to them and aren't necessarily choosing to stay in Alexandria or may be enrolling children in private school.

Chris Hartman questioned the suggestion that the economy is a driver affecting enrollment numbers. Mr. Chozick indicated that the group is considering a possible link between these numbers and economic factors only in terms of how it may allow for more options to be available to families.

Yvonne Folkerts asked if ACPS tracked the individual students in these grades – Is it known, for example, if a large number of the 9th graders are enrolled in the International Academy, as that program has resulted in a lot of growth at the high-school level.

Ms. Hammig said that while ACPS worked over the summer to track individual students, it has not yet looked to see if those students are enrolled in a specific program (e.g. International Academy or Satellite Program). Growth could also be the result of the Satellite Program or the fact that the middle school administrations organized an outreach campaign directed at 5th grade families in the previous year, which could have resulted in higher numbers in middle school.

Ken Billingsley reviewed regional enrollment data he collected, which indicates a shift in enrollment numbers for outer jurisdictions in recent years. Prince William County, for example, is showing a significant decrease in enrollment in the last few years. Mr. Billingsley believes that in previous years there was an out-migration from Alexandria to these outer jurisdictions, which may be subsiding now as there seems to be a greater interest in living closer to the city. It's difficult to determine yet if the decrease in Kindergarten capture is specific to Alexandria. Once this current year's enrollment data is received from other jurisdictions, a clearer picture may develop.

Justin Wilson cautioned that the group not read too much into one year's worth of data, but if cohort survival does suddenly spike a larger secondary school issue may develop in terms of space constraints. Mr. Chozick pointed out that the subcommittee would discuss in January how to periodically refresh this data in order to maintain accuracy. In an effort to assist with this, the group discussed various aspects involved in making enrollment projections, including tracking students by grade and by neighborhood, programmatic changes such as the role Modified Enrollment (MOE) plays, facility capacity issues, and student movement within Alexandria.

Mr. Hartman suggested that in terms of coming up with a methodology for projecting enrollment, the group attempt to determine the standard deviation in the change in cohort survival from year to year – overall and by grade.

Mr. Billingsley pointed out that when thinking in terms of long-term projections, a certain period of time may show an overall decline; however, individual years that make up that linear progression may show a more random result – his point being that one year can be misleading.

Mr. Wilson asked for clarification on the birth data ACPS obtains for its projections. Ms. Hammig said that birth data is obtained from the Virginia Health Department, and includes data by mother's address –meaning if a mother lives in Alexandria her child is considered an Alexandria birth, regardless of where the child is born. The group discussed birth trends in other jurisdictions.

Mr. Billingsley considers Alexandria's high degree of population turnover to be the major issue surrounding enrollment trends. A certain amount of flexibility must be incorporated into any methodology, because of that variable. Pat Mann, Urban Planner III, Planning and Zoning, added that typically over 20% of Alexandria households move every year, and there is no data point that is available to help predict Kindergarten enrollment until actual enrollment numbers are collected. Mr. Billingsley added that it would be very beneficial if ACPS could collect more detailed data from students as they enter and leave the system, so that this movement can be quantified.

Projections

Ms. Hammig said that the Kindergarten capture rate projection for this school year used a 3-year average K capture rate. She is recommending that for next year a 5-year average is used, which would take this year's enrollment number into account, yet would not be an overcorrection. Additionally, projections for this year's cohort survival rate used a 3-year average, which Ms. Hammig recommends using for next year as it appeared fairly constant over the near-term and is reflective of recent trends. This data will be used for the upcoming operating budget, and the next step is to apply these short-term projections to capacity implications.

The group discussed Ms. Hammig recommendations and agreed with her proposal to use a 5-year average for the K capture rate and 3-year average for the cohort survival rate for next year's enrollment projections.

Ms. Hammig noted that the data will be further analyzed by school and by grade level numbers, which will be reviewed at the November/December meeting. Student generation will also be analyzed and any effects from development/redevelopment will be incorporated. As part of the upcoming CIP budget process, these issues will be discussed with the School Board prior to the next Enrollment subcommittee meeting.

Influences on the Long-Term Forecast

Mr. Chozick introduced Ryan Price, Senior Planning Technician, Department of Planning and Zoning, who shared information regarding possible effects of ACPS reputation on student enrollment numbers. Information was obtained from two focus groups involving local realtors, as well as online sites which compared local school districts.

Summary points were: 1) There is a growing interest in Alexandria's urban lifestyle for families with children; 2) Despite this urban preference, school reputation often plays a larger role in the real estate decisions of families, and currently, is working against Alexandria; 3) Alexandria schools are likely better than perceived; and 4) There are many schools with higher ratings outside Alexandria.

The group discussed the degree to which the perception of ACPS affects enrollment. Ms. Folkerts suggested that if this information is going to be used in the subcommittee's work, more information should be gathered from other groups in order to have a more representative group of opinions.

Mr. Chozick noted that this information would only be addressed in terms of how it could affect long-term enrollment. If the reputation of ACPS improved, it could result in an enrollment increase. While influences, such as reputation, are much harder to quantify, they are factors that ACPS may have control over and could ultimately affect enrollment.

Long-Term Enrollment Scenarios

Mr. Mann presented alternate methods of making long-term enrollment projections. He presented [background information](#) used to create two development scenarios for the city: a [Sustained Growth Scenario based on the City's current COG forecast](#), and a [Weak Economy Scenario, which resulted in lower population and housing estimates for the 2040 horizon year](#). He then presented different enrollment forecasts based on changing student generation factors by housing type and age of housing for these two development scenarios.

He then presented information on demographic trends that are expected to change in the long-term forecast period, including age, race and ethnicity distribution in Alexandria's population. He presented two different enrollment forecasts based solely on the basic enrollment inputs of births, kindergarten capture and cohort survival, combined with the baseline sustained growth development forecast, showing the potential effect of these demographic changes on enrollment. One scenario assumed the current average kindergarten capture and increasing birth rates, which resulted in the highest enrollment forecast. The other assumed lower kindergarten capture and decreasing birth rates in line with expected long-term demographic and economic trends, which resulted in a lower enrollment forecast.

The data will be analyzed and developed further so that a more refined draft forecast with explicit demographic assumptions, together with sensitivity analysis showing how the enrollment forecast model responds to changes in various assumptions, can be presented for additional discussion at the next Enrollment and Forecasting Subcommittee meeting in the November/December time frame.

Work Group

Mr. Chozick reminded committee members that the larger LREFP work group will meet on November 6th, at which time this subcommittee will report its findings and recommendations to date. The subcommittee members indicated that they would be comfortable with staff reporting out to the work group, and offered suggestions for research topic areas to be presented.

Upcoming meetings

- November 6th – Larger *work group* meeting
- November/December – Next Enrollment *subcommittee* meeting to produce a preliminary long-term forecast and a recommended short-term forecast
- January – Enrollment *subcommittee* meeting to produce recommended long-term forecast and develop a process for regular committee updates

Meeting Handouts

- [Agenda](#)
- [Subcommittee Overview Presentation](#)
- [Short-term Enrollment Projections](#)
- [Forecast Scenario 1 Sustained Growth](#)
- [Forecast Scenario 2 Weak Economy](#)
- [Births/Rates Summary](#)
- [Kindergarten Capture Rate Summary](#)
- [Cohort Survival Rate Summary](#)
- [Student Generation Rate Summary](#)
- [Historic Regional Public School Enrollment 1980-2013](#)
- [Alexandria's Pubic School Enrollment History: 1960 to Present](#)
- [Influences on the Long-Term Forecast](#)