

Long Range Educational Facilities Planning Work Group
Meeting #2
Rotunda, T.C. Williams High School
Tuesday, January 15, 2013, 5:30pm
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

LREFP Work Group Members

Ken Billingsley
Ronnie Campbell
Debra Collins
Mark Eisenhower
Yvonne Folkerts
Karen A. Graf
Chris Hartman
Dr. Madye Henson
Dr. Tammy L. Mann
Judy Noritake
Julie Rocchio
Justin Wilson

Members not in attendance

Mayor Euille
Herb Berg
Keith Jabati

ACPS

Dr. Morton Sherman
Bill Finn
Laurel Hammig
Tammy Ignacio
Dr. Gwen Carol Holmes

City of Alexandria

Karl Moritz
Steve Chozick
Pat Mann
Katherine Carraway
Ron Kagawa
Dana Wedeles
David Ghezzi

Welcome and Introductions

Karl Moritz, Deputy Director for the Department of Planning and Zoning, welcomed attendees and invited members of the Long Range Educational Facilities Planning Work Group (Work Group), members of the public, and City of Alexandria (COA) staff to introduce themselves.

Mr. Moritz turned the presentation over to Laurel Hammig, Facilities Planner/GIS Specialist for Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS), Pat Mann, Urban Planner for the City's Department of Planning and Zoning, and Bill Finn, Director of Educational Facilities for ACPS.

Presentation: Joint Long Range Planning Update: Capacity Needs

Laurel Hammig briefly reviewed action items resulting from the first Work Group meeting, which took place on November 28, 2012. As noted at the first meeting, the first two meetings of the work group (November 28, 2012 and January 15, 2013) were to focus on school enrollment and capacity issues related to the upcoming budget discussions. These meetings allowed the work group to review and discuss school enrollment forecasts and alternative approaches for addressing enrollment growth in the upcoming budget.

Ms. Hammig emphasized that the school enrollment forecasts are reviewed and updated annually to accurately reflect expectations. Staff will also continue to research and analyze the factors affecting school enrollment.

At the November meeting, staff showed "high" and "low" enrollment scenarios that were defined as 1% above and below the medium, or most likely, forecast. Work group members asked staff to develop high and low scenarios reflecting specific assumptions. Staff agreed to do this, and Mr. Mann presented updated school enrollment forecasts and explained the assumptions underlying the three possible scenarios for projected school enrollment growth through FY 2019 – high, medium, and low enrollment growth. ACPS and COA staff shared that Scenario 2 was the most reasonable maximum forecast for planning purposes.

The Work Group discussed how these scenarios were reached.

Ken Billingsley noted that the Kindergarten capture rate developed by staff is higher than the historic rate published by the Weldon Cooper Center. Mr. Mann suggested the difference may be the result of staff directly acquiring individual birth records by address, which allowed staff to remove births to addresses that are outside the City.

Chris Hartman asked what had happened in the last three years to indicate that the enrollment trend would continue. Mr. Moritz discussed the combination of factors contributing to the school enrollment trend in the last three years, including the recession. Staff is watching for evidence that improving economic conditions will reverse trends, but this is not occurred – in fact, school enrollment growth is accelerating. Judy Noritake and Yvonne Folkerts noted that young professionals are choosing to move to Alexandria and stay to raise their families, and that higher enrollment could be due to the fact that schools are getting better – not just for economic reasons.

Mr. Moritz also reminded the Work Group that ACPS and COA staff will further investigate these trends with the Work Group as part of the preparation of the Long Range Educational Facilities Plan.

Mr. Finn discussed the implications of the current school enrollment trend on existing facilities, and what options are available to address those concerns including:

- Learning Cottages – temporary construction
- Modular construction – permanent construction
- New school construction
- Core facility projects (e.g., cafeteria, parking, library).
- Addressing Modified Open Enrollment (MOE)/Magnet/Choice options
- Shared spaces (e.g., recreation center classroom space)
- Recapturing pre-school classrooms

Mr. Finn and Ms. Hammig also included the possibility of increasing class size as part of the solution to enrollment growth, while acknowledging that it was a School Board decision.

The final recommendation from Ms. Hammig and Mr. Finn was to employ a combination of approaches to address capacity issues, including an additional Prek-8 school in the vicinity of Cora Kelly - for which a potential location is the planned school site in North Potomac Yard.

During his presentation, Mr. Finn discussed the new proposal that Patrick Henry may be renovated/expanded as opposed to having an entirely new school constructed on that site in addition to keeping the old school. Ms. Rocchio noted that the alternative to an additional new school would provide less capacity and shared her concern that the community may not be aware that a change to the strategy for Patrick Henry is under consideration.

Ms. Noritake shared that recreation centers have limited available capacity to augment school capacity and that there are programs in recreations centers during the day for non-student populations, such as seniors.

Ms. Noritake also suggested that ACPS and COA seriously consider the possibility of constructing a school on the Potomac Yard site. The site is in an urban environment and there are a number of interesting and successful urban school models to study. In addition, an urban location offers the potential to construct a more flexible building that could be used for other purposes if school enrollment declines, such as a senior center.

The Work Group engaged in an active discussion and the following points were raised:

- Not feasible to look at classroom capacity alone as a solution to overcrowding
- A combination of solutions will best address the city's needs
- Temporary classrooms (e.g. learning cottages) may be less expensive in the short run, but not necessarily in the long run
- Modular construction cost needs to include core facilities (e.g., cafeteria, library, restrooms, parking)
- Must evaluate age and condition of facilities when deciding how much money to invest in repairing vs. new construction
- A&E (Architectural/Engineering) study already put in motion by Mr. Finn would be very helpful in determining course of action

Action items for ACPS and COA staff

- Continue to track and analyze available data to expand knowledge about trends affecting school enrollment for further discussion by the Work Group.
- Completing the detailed assessment of school structures (such as, but not limited to: inventory of rooms, capacity of core facilities, physical condition of the building envelope and systems, maintenance and replacement costs) is necessary information for the Work Group to consider in order to develop recommendations for solving long range educational facilities issues.

Next Steps

Ms. Hammig reminded meeting participants that on January 24th there will be a CIP presentation to the School Board along with operating budget recommendations. Staff will poll Work Group members to finalize a date for the spring 2013 Work Group session.

Meeting participants were made aware of the project's new website and that all materials presented during the Work Group sessions will be posted online.

Meeting Handouts

Presentation on Joint Long Range Planning Update: Capacity Needs