

**ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY CONSERVATION COMMISSION**

c/o Department of Environmental Services

2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 705

Arlington, VA 22201

August 20, 2014

The Honorable Jay Fisette, Chairman  
Arlington County Board  
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 300  
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Mr. Fisette,

The Environment and Energy Conservation Commission (E2C2) reviewed Arlington Public School's (APS) Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) Checklist for McKinley Elementary School (ES), and received a status briefing on the McKinley ES Addition/Renovation Project ("the McKinley Project") from APS at E2C2's June 23, 2014 meeting. E2C2 also received an updated EA and status briefing at its July 28, 2014 meeting. APS informed E2C2 of its use permit submission and the purpose for this letter is to indicate E2C2 support for the use permit and the current design.

E2C2 has maintained an awareness of design progress through active participation on the Public Facilities Review Committee (PFRC). E2C2 continues to be pleased with APS' commitment to sustainability as reflected in the additions and renovation designs, and we applaud the continued efforts of APS to reduce the overall carbon footprint as well as provide excellent educational opportunities. We support granting the use permit because the project balances energy, environmental, and community interests. The following are noteworthy:

*APS Commitment to Sustainability:* It is clear that the McKinley Project is being planned to achieve sustainability, minimize resource use, comply with regulation, and decrease operating costs. The project will treat stormwater quality and quantity to the new 2014 design requirements, minimize soil disturbance, minimize removal of mature trees, utilize energy efficient HVAC and lighting systems, improve indoor air quality, and make the addition expandable to solar photovoltaics in the future.

*Successful APS Community Engagement:* APS has been actively engaged with the community to address issues of tree canopy, parking, stormwater management and flooding mitigation, energy use, and more. For example, the McKinley Project developed ways to address storm water pooling near the SW corner of the site

("Lake McKinley"), and communicated environmental impacts to E2C2 in a timely fashion via provision of the Draft EA Checklist for McKinley ES concurrent with use permit submission.

*APS Lessons Learned from Prior School Projects:* E2C2 observed APS, to its credit, incorporating lessons learned from prior projects, most recently the Ashlawn ES Addition/Renovation, in terms of strategy, planning, communication, and design. For example, APS brought on an arborist early in the design process, designed to minimize the loss of trees on site in response to community requests, documented analyses, communicated findings to the community, and responded to PFRC feedback; as a result E2C2 feels the planned use permit submission reflects community interests in preservation of tree canopy and that APS attention to trees early on should help minimize changes to tree plans and avoid community consternation similar to that associated with the Ashlawn School project.

*Additional Funding Would Promote CEP Goals:* E2C2 requests that the County and APS work together to identify funding that would support further alignment of this with Community Energy Plan goals, specifically energy recovery systems for existing HVAC and solar photovoltaic panels.

*Additional Funding Required to Support "Build Up, Not Out" Design Options:* E2C2 is aware of the need to expand schools and in the future we encourage the County and APS to minimize school footprints and avoid the use of natural lands for schools (sometimes referred to as the "build up, not out" option). At the outset of the McKinley ES Addition/Renovation design process no "build up, not out" option could seriously be considered, largely due to a lack of funding. E2C2 recommends the County and APS work together on changes in the Capital Improvement Planning process so as to support such options for school designs on future projects.

*Grant Reduction in Onsite Parking:* APS informed E2C2 that it submitted a request to reduce onsite parking from 26 to 20 spaces (referred to as the "Alternate Parking Option"). E2C2 supports granting that request.

At the July 28<sup>th</sup> E2C2 meeting APS presented information on upcoming plan changes associated with Fire Department requirements, which APS had only recently discovered. E2C2 recommends those requirements be incorporated in a way that minimizes new impervious surface, maintains the existing bioretention area, and minimizes the impact on water systems.

We thank APS for providing the EA Checklist to E2C2 in a timely manner, we thank the County Board for the opportunity to provide feedback on the McKinley ES

Addition/Renovation Project use permit application, and look forward to seeing continued APS commitment to sustainability in this and other school designs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott Dicke". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent loop at the end.

Scott Dicke  
E2C2 Chair

cc: APS Board  
John Chadwick  
Scott Prisco  
Ajibola Robinson  
Cathy Lin