



June 30, 2016

The Honorable Emma Violand-Sanchez, Chair
The Arlington County School Board
1426 N. Quincy St.
Arlington, Virginia 222071

RE: Schematic Design for Wilson School

On June 7, the PFRC met to discuss and review the final schematic design as related to the upcoming use permit application for the new Wilson School. The use permit is expected to come forward to the County Board in December 2016. The PFRC met six prior times in 2015 and 2016 to discuss the evolving design for the new school.

Arlington Public Schools (APS) design team, represented by its architect Bjarke Ingels Group (BIG) architects, Leo A. Daly architects and Toole Design Group, presented the schematic details for the project. Generally speaking, the details provided at schematic design phase for this project are scant in comparison to many other school projects. Generally, PFRC members felt that BIG and other team members offered a plan for superb architecture, but several details need to be addressed. The main points of discussion are detailed below:

18th Street

The project proposes limited vehicular access to 18th Street as an essential component for plans for bus operations and for arrival and dismissal of Stratford program students, which is inconsistent with the Rosslyn Sector Plan. Staff is suggesting that this restriction apply only in the case of the Stratford program being located at Wilson. PFRC members generally supported this proposal. Members raised questions about changes to the proposed grade of the street. Some members felt that the current grade is inadequate and would like to see improvements. Also, members raised questions about monitoring of bus operations for pollution.

Parks

There was discussion about whether use of the on-site recreation space should be a shared use or joint use between APS and the County. The Parks and Recreation Commission would like to see either joint use or an enhanced shared use agreement so that there are no barriers to use of the school after hours, especially since this area has virtually no park or open space. Details of a Memo of Understanding regarding use of the on-site amenities such as the gym, athletic field, and rooftop open space has not yet been developed.

The Parks and Recreation Commission (“Parks and Rec.”) submitted a letter providing the background and expectations for open space and shared facilities use at this site as foreseen through the WRAPS planning process. The PFRC supports Parks and Rec. and would like to review the details of an agreement between APS and the County. Such

details would include specifics about public use after hours, ingress and egress points for users, the plans for covered bicycle storage, and plans for programming the use of the first floor terrace.

Parking

There is still considerable uncertainty about how parking will be handled at the site. The uncertainty extends to the extent to which off-site parking will be provided in nearby parking garages or the proposed Penzance development.

Tree canopy

Committee members generally agreed that plans should include improving the tree canopy and maximizing opportunities for installation and maintenance of full-size trees both along the sidewalk and wherever possible on-site. A desire for a full tree canopy along 18th Street was specifically mentioned.

Stormwater Management

PFRC felt such plans were an important part of site design, but that details are not yet known. Members expect that planning specifics will be part of the Use Permit discussion.

Historic Preservation

PFRC members expressed a desire to incorporate the historic nature of Wilson school into the new design. While one member would like to see a part of the existing structure incorporated into the new school, other members preferred to incorporate creative use of materials into the site overall such as benches or a wall rather than the building itself. In general, the sense of the committee was that the current proposal of a model of the prior school, likely placed in the library, was inadequate and not in keeping with APS' commitment to historic preservation on the site.

In a straw poll at the end of discussion, PFRC members, by a vote of 12 to 1, supported the proposed schematic design and believe that the school will enhance the community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stephen Sockwell". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Stephen Sockwell, Chairman
Public Facilities Review Committee

Cc: Mark Schwartz, County Manager
Gabriela Acurio, Deputy County Manager
Bob Duffy, Planning Director, CPHD
Arlington County Board Members
Arlington County School Board Members
Dr. Pat Murphy, Superintendent, APS
John Chadwick, APS
Ben Burgin, APS
Jennifer Xu, APS
Michelle Stahlhut, CPHD
Michael Cullen, CPHD