

June 9, 2023

The Honorable Christian Dorsey, Chair  
The Arlington County Board  
2100 Clarendon Boulevard  
Arlington, Virginia 22201

*RE: Arlington Career Center – Use Permit Application*

**Overview:**

The Public Facilities Review Committee (PFRC) consists of representatives from County Commissions, as well as project-specific representatives. The PFRC’s mission is to ensure that the highest quality of land use planning, design, transportation planning, and other important community aspects are incorporated into civic projects as assigned to the Committee by the Arlington County Board. The PFRC uses the Principles of Civic Design to inform the design of civic facilities in Arlington.

**Process:**

In addition to six (6) meetings held jointly with the Building Level Planning Committee (BLPC) during the concept and schematic design process, the PFRC held three (3) meetings during 2023 to consider the APS use permit for the Arlington Career Center (ACC), with the first two (2) meetings on March 15, 2023, and April 19, 2023, held jointly with the BLPC, and the last meeting on May 17, 2023, with only PFRC members. All three meetings were well attended by PFRC members.

For each of the meetings (held virtually) to review the use permit proposal, APS staff presentations were followed by PFRC and BLPC discussion, where meeting attendees asked questions and provided feedback on the project. At each meeting feedback informed plan refinements to the proposed ACC project for the subsequent meeting.

**Key Findings:**

The PFRC has reviewed the ACC use permit proposal. After eight (8) joint meetings with the BLPC, our final PFRC meeting was held on May 17, 2023. At our final meeting, members expressed overall support for the design and massing of the new ACC building including increased setbacks and step backs from the streets, revision of the roof design, reduction of the garage footprint and setback increase from the streets, overall increase in vegetative screening and tree canopy throughout the site, and increasing the sidewalk width on 7th Street South to six (6) feet as an interim improvement. Issues raised at the meeting included concern about the unknown future of the Montessori Public School of Arlington (MPSA) building, the lack of open space while the MPSA building remains in this interim condition, the delayed delivery of streetscape improvements adjacent to the MPSA building, the design and accessibility of play

areas, fence height being too tall for enclosed play areas, and the reduced size and extent of decorative metal panels proposed for the parking garage.

As stated in the PFRC Letter to the School Board on the concept design and another PFRC Letter to the County Board on the schematic design, this process was unfortunately limited because the [2023-2032 Capital Improvement Plan \(CIP\)](#) does not include long-term goals for the entirety of the ACC campus. Members of the joint BLPC/PFRC involved in the concept, schematic design, and use permit processes requested guidance on long-term plans. APS has been clear they want to separate the issues of the overall site development from the specifics of the ACC project and remaining site elements may be included and funded in a future CIP process. Though we acknowledge this limitation, having a holistic view of the site goals would have greatly helped inform the best plan for the site.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide the Committee's feedback on this project.

Respectfully submitted,

**Sara Steinberger, Chair**  
Public Facilities Review Committee

Cc: Mark Schwartz, County Manager  
Michelle Cowan, Deputy County Manager  
Shannon Flanagan-Watson, Deputy County Manager  
Anthony Fusarelli, Planning Director, CPHD  
Arlington County School Board Members  
Dr. Francisco Durán, Superintendent, APS  
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