

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JUNE 8, 2015

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: MARK B. JINKS, CITY MANAGER /s/

DOCKET TITLE:

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Public Hearing and Consideration of the Long Range Educational Facilities Plan.

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ISSUE: Plan for elementary and middle school educational facilities that can meet educational needs over the next 25 years.

RECOMMENDATION: Conduct a public hearing on the Draft Long Range Educational Facilities Plan, and schedule consideration of endorsement of this Plan for the June 23, 2015 City Council meeting.

BACKGROUND: On April 28, 2015 City staff and staff from the Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) updated the City Council on the Draft Long Range Educational Facilities Plan (LREFP). The City of Alexandria and the Alexandria City Public School System jointly developed the Long Range Educational Facilities Plan to improve facilities planning, accommodate the growing student population, and enhance educational programs and services. As part of the program, a 19 member work group was established and was comprised of members from the community, ACPS School Board, City Council, Campagna Center, and the PTA Council, supported by ACPS and City staff. The workgroup met on a regular basis to explore the major issues that will impact public school facilities over the long term and to guide staff in the development of the draft Long Range Educational Facilities Plan. A full description of the development of the Plan, including all civic engagement, is included in Appendix A of the LREFP. An online civic engagement to seek additional public input on the Draft Plan took place in late May/early June. That public input is included as Attachment 3.

DISCUSSION: Key challenges facing the Alexandria City Public School System over the next 25 years include rapid enrollment growth and inadequate existing school facilities. Since 2007, ACPS has faced rapid increases in enrollment, averaging nearly 4% per year from 2007 through 2014. This is a 35% growth in K-12 enrollment from a low of 10,246 in 2006 to the 2014 fall enrollment of 13,847, a level not previously exceeded since 1975. See Attachment 2.

The engine of this enrollment growth was not new development. Nearly all recent growth in enrollment came from an increase in the number of students living in housing that had been built prior to the latest enrollment growth. Current ACPS projections and City forecasts indicate that ACPS is now not quite to the middle of a period of rapid enrollment growth expected to last another 10 to 15 years. While growth may be decelerating based on 2014 enrollment data, which confirms a significant slowing in growth of kindergarten enrollment, students are staying in Alexandria schools longer. This means that total enrollment is expected to continue to increase rapidly, even if kindergarten enrollment begins to decline, as today's much larger elementary school classes move up through the grades.

Most of the City's public schools were constructed prior to 1960 and currently require a relatively high level of maintenance and repair expenses just to keep basic systems operating and structures safe and sound. In order to identify the scale of the problem, an analysis of the ability of existing school facilities to meet newly defined educational specifications was conducted. Based on the anticipated 2020 enrollment forecast for each school, the analysis determined that meeting those standards would require substantial additional investment at many of these schools even without increases in enrollment beyond 2020. Mini-Master Plans were prepared for each school to illustrate a means of meeting these standards and accommodating the mid-range increase in enrollment anticipated on the current school sites.

Given the challenges of enrollment growth and inadequate facilities, the Plan recommends the following:

1. **Set maximum school size:**
 - a. Elementary schools - 850 students for new schools with School Board flexibility for expanding an existing facility beyond 850 students
 - b. Middle Schools - 1200 students for new schools with School Board flexibility for expanding an existing facility beyond 1200 students
2. **Locate a new elementary school on the west side of the City** as four of the elementary schools on the west side are expected to exceed 850 by 2020. A second new elementary school should be considered if growth continues to increase and in absence of pursuing other options to address capacity.
3. **Locate a new middle school in the City** as Francis C. Hammond is expected to exceed 1,500 students in 2020 and George Washington will be over 1,400 students in 2020.
4. **Consider options for new school sites:**
 - a. *On the east side of City:*
 - i. Retain two existing elementary sites for future determination – one near Simpson Stadium Park and one in North Potomac Yard. This plan does not call for a school on either site in the near-term. This Plan supports the continued use of the Simpson Stadium Park site as open space utilized for active recreation purposes.
 - b. *On the west side of City:*
 - i. Reserve a site in the Eisenhower West Small Area Plan

- ii. Consider the Lower Hammond site
 - c. Consider retrofitting an existing commercial building and continue to consider a K-8 model as a facility solution when the programmatic instruction is appropriate
 - d. New schools should consider an urban school model
- 5. **Renovate and/or replace Douglas MacArthur Elementary School to alleviate failing infrastructure and capacity issues**, allowing the new building to house up to 850 students as the zoning, site and educational program allows. Additional information can be found in Chapter 4.
- 6. **Renovate interior East side schools to meet the Educational Specifications (Ed Specs)** and allow Cora Kelly and Jefferson-Houston Schools to absorb overages from Matthew Maury and Mount Vernon schools. Short and mid-term recommendations are shown, by site, in Chapter 4.
- 7. **Continue to renovate all schools to meet the Ed Specs through the Capital Improvement Plan.** Short and mid-term recommendations are shown, by site, in Chapter 4.
- 8. **Recalculate enrollment projections and capacity utilization annually.** Schools that are projected to be at or above 120% utilization within three years should be considered for portable classrooms, a capacity project and/or a boundary study or other policy considerations.
- 9. **Consider schools in future small area planning efforts as outlined in Chapter 1.**
- 10. **Consider schools in the development review process as outlined in Chapter 1.**
- 11. **Implement a joint City/Schools Transportation Demand Management Program to encourage use of alternative modes of transportation as outlined in Chapter 1.**

The Plan does not include an analysis of high school capacity. Given the current and projected growth at the high school level, the Plan recommends that additional analysis be undertaken to develop recommendations for addressing future high school enrollment. The Plan also recommends that discussions between the City and ACPS continue regarding the delivery of Pre-K instruction, as Pre-K programs housed in neighborhood schools and centralized locations impact future educational facilities and capacity.

FISCAL IMPACT: Chapter 5 of the Plan describes the fiscal impacts of the Plan.

At the April 28 briefing to Council, the chapter on Fiscal Challenges was still being written and Council Members expressed concern over the fiscal impact of the Draft Plan. This chapter (Chapter 5) has now been drafted and is included in Attachment 1. The new chapter on Fiscal Challenges clearly highlights that while the final scope and cost estimates for each of the Mini-Master Plans have yet to be finalized or incorporated into the City's capital plans, implementation of the modernization, educational specification and capacity related improvements will require the development of a long range fiscal plan for the years 2018 until

2040. The range of costs for the eleven existing facilities and two new facilities (one elementary school and one middle school) on an unconstrained basis over the next 25 years is \$443.2M to \$496.5M in 2015 dollars. The Plan also notes that these costs do not include all ACPS capital needs, such as Patrick Henry and T.C. Williams – Minnie Howard, nor do they include the maintenance of existing capital infrastructure. The results of the LREFP and other capital infrastructure needs demonstrate the need for the City and ACPS to create a fiscal plan to address the financing and timing of implementation of the LREFP.

The Fiscal Challenges Chapter includes the City Debt Policy History and Guidelines. It also details four funding/procurement options to help inform the long-range financial plan for funding the projects in the LREFP:

- Option 1: Constrained funding with bonds and cash capital
- Option 2: Raise debt limits
- Option 3: Fund improvements with cash
- Option 4: Consideration of Public Private Partnership Opportunities for addressing the City's educational facilities needs

The primary recommendation of the Fiscal Challenges Chapter is for City and ACPS staff to work on a comprehensive financial plan in FY 2016.

ATTACHMENTS:

- 1) Draft Long Range Educational Facilities Plan (May 27, 2015)
- 2) Long-Term Enrollment Forecast Scenario Chart
- 3) Results of Civic Engagement May/June 2015

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