

**APS South Arlington Group
Meeting #1 – June 25, 2015
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The first official meeting of the “APS South Arlington Community Working Group Process to Site New Elementary School” included 41 representatives and alternates from civic associations, PTAs and other organizations. It was led by School Board Member Barbara Kanninen and its chair, Greg Greeley. Arlington Board Member John Vihstadt will also be a participant, although he didn’t attend the first meeting.

The Working Group (WG) will meet every other week, beginning July 1, with community outreach and engagement planned for the fall as the group narrows the options that appear to be most feasible. The organizers plan to report to the School Board in November with recommendations. The WG will integrate efforts with the County’s Community Facility [Study](#), as both studies are expected to report their recommendations to the School and County Boards in November 2015.

In 2019 the County will be opening three schools—the new middle school at the former site of the H-B Woodlawn program, the Wilson Street site of the new H-B Woodlawn program, and the elementary school in South Arlington. Greg Greeley pointed out that, in the 1950s when the baby boom hit, the County built 22 schools in less than a decade.

This fall (2015) there is a deficit of 566 seats in South Arlington elementary schools, which is accommodated by the use of trailers. ([South Arlington elementary projected seat deficits.](#)) While that number is expected to grow, the new elementary school, with 725 seats, will reduce the deficit to 240 seats. By 2019 the schools with the greatest overcrowding would be Oakridge (+187 seats), Patrick Henry (+176 seats), Barcroft (+160 seats), Claremont (+139 seats) and Randolph (+84 seats).

It is assumed that we will be working with the current Capital Improvement Plan ([CIP](#)) budget of \$50,250,000. John Chadwick of APS described the siting requirements:

- For a 725 seat school, APS needed about 110,000 square feet (sq) of space in one acre if built as a three-story building or slightly less if built as four or more stories. The footprint could be a three story building (needing about one acre) or higher. Pre-K and kindergarten classes would be at grade level for easy access, and APS prefers that 1st graders also be at grade.
- To that, an additional half-acre is needed to accommodate 120 parking spaces (note: structured parking is expensive and would cost about \$60,000 per

space). Parking can be accommodated off-site and through shared parking (one example would be a church parking lot).

- In addition, playground space of about one acre and some blacktop areas would be needed. These could be shared with an adjacent park.

The following is a list of some of the issues discussed.

- Would the gym need to be located on grade? No, it could be below grade or on a higher floor, but we would need to plan stairways and entrances carefully.
- Would pre-K be included in the total seats? It wasn't clear. For now it is assumed that 700 seats would be reserved for K-5th grade and the remaining 25 would be for pre-K. This is not firm.
- How about drop-off space? We would need to plan for that, along with all the transportation needs.
- Infrastructure improvements – APS would work with the County for joint funding for any off-site improvements, like street paving.
- How close can schools be? Two elementary schools close together would probably only work if one was a neighborhood school and the other was a choice program; pairing elementary and middle schools tends to work; if near a high school, there would need to be some kind of physical separation. The planned school is a neighborhood school (i.e., serving only students who live within certain boundaries around it).
- Randolph, Carlin Springs and Drew Elementary (excluding the Montessori program) have populations that are over 90% non-white, while the non-white population in the County as a whole is less than 33%. Participants asked for a racial breakdown. Any school plan should not exacerbate this racial pattern.
- Others in the audience pointed out that racial data can be misleading (for example, differences between white and non-white Hispanics, or Middle Eastern immigrants who are “white” but can't speak English). They argued that economic diversity was of greater concern, and wanted data that would reflect this.
- One person asked about the possibility of separating pre-K kids into other facilities, like churches or existing community centers, which would help eliminate the multiple trailers in existing schools. She asked for information about community centers and churches in the area. Most churches have classrooms that aren't being used during the week, have communal kitchens and areas for cafeteria seating, and some even have outdoor playground equipment. Many churches are also in financial trouble and could benefit by leasing space to the County.
- Staff pointed out that co-locating facilities or planning shared facilities might increase the time it took to build a school, and sorting out shared expenses might also increase the time.

- A number of people expressed the hope that this group could identify several locations for schools for the future, to help in future planning. The “ideal” site might have to be built as the second new school in South Arlington.
- Others expressed concern about the educational programming, and how shifting populations among the schools would be affected. Greg Greeley assured the group that one meeting would be devoted solely to programming issues.
- One person asked about the possibility of using vacant commercial space and asked for an inventory of properties that were available. Greg Greeley announced that at a future meeting we would be meeting with an architect that worked on the transformation of the Baileys Upper Elementary in Fairfax, in which a commercial building was converted for use as an elementary school.
- Zoning restrictions are not expected to be an issue.
- Arlington County pre-K programs have imposed new guidelines and fee structures that have forced children out of the program.
- We need to plan outside space carefully, not just for playgrounds, but including track facilities, outside classrooms or natural space that children can enjoy.

After the discussion APS staff posted sheets for major considerations for the schools and asked each participant to put dots on the five issues that they felt were most important. The issues that most people chose included:

- Green Space (13)
- Instructional Programs (18)
- Area of Greatest Need (26)
- Diversity Issues (29)
- Site availability to open in 2019 (time constraints) (19)
- Opportunities for location (29)

In preparation for the next meeting, participants were charged with studying a handout with aerial views of all the elementary schools in South Arlington, and a key that shows how much space a new school for 725 students would need, and formulate ideas for potential sites..

All materials for this process will be available on the APS web site under “More Seats for School” on the left hand side of the home page.

Materials:

APS Web site:

<http://www.apsva.us/Page/1>

PowerPoint for Meeting #1:

http://www.apsva.us/cms/lib2/VA01000586/Centricity/Domain/110/06252015%20SARL%20Site%20Selection%20Presentation_Final.pdf

Civil Rights Statistics by School:

<http://www.apsva.us/cms/lib2/VA01000586/Centricity/Domain/110/Civil%20Rights%202014-15.pdf>