

**Arlington Community Facilities Study
Study Committee Meeting #6 – April 22, 2015
Prepared by Sarah McKinley, Columbia Heights Civic Association**

Major conclusions:

- **The County is currently updating its Public Spaces Master Plan, which will include a classification system for parks, plazas and all open spaces. The county is seeking public input through surveys.**
- **The “Big Picture” of services in Arlington demonstrates that it is a well-run community facing stresses from aging infrastructure and population growth. We need to increase our salt storage facility in the Dominion Hills neighborhood of North Arlington. The fire department needs another station and a larger response center, also targeted for North Arlington.**
- **The County is rebuilding the Lubber Run Community Center and will be adding a third level of parking at the Trades Center, but these efforts will not be enough. It needs to find an additional 13-18 acres for all its needs for centralized services. This includes ART buses, school buses, storage, police impoundment, fire training. This needs to be sited on properly-zoned areas adjacent to arterial streets, on sites of two-acres or larger.**
- **Concentrating bus facilities at the Trades Center actually adds to cost when additional facilities in North Arlington could create economic efficiencies in fuel economy, travel time and traffic congestion.**
- **The county owns 918 acres of parkland, which includes over 130 parks, 95 outdoor sports fields, 15 community centers, four aquatic centers, three nature centers, and has steadily purchased individual plots over the past two decades. But this effort still isn’t enough. Some of these areas are protected environmental habitats and can’t be developed. The rest of the facilities are oversubscribed and population growth is driving use.**
- **Growth in school population has led to renovation and additions to many schools. This fall APS is opening Discovery Elementary and finishing renovations to Washington-Lee High School. But all of the construction in the pipeline will not alleviate the fact that the system needs a new grade school in South Arlington. The heaviest increases are projected in the Southwest quadrant of the County.**
- **The County will have to rely on shared facilities and creative solutions to meet our growing needs. Options to be considered include: land acquisition; changes to zoning requirements; the possibility of undergrounding basic facilities or building multiple layers, with parks and other public space on top; looking at solutions created in other communities; and engaging in productive conversations with neighborhoods.**

Inventory of Public land

The sixth meeting of the Arlington Community Facilities Study included presentations by various divisions within County government, outlining property owned by local government. Chairman John Milliken began with an overview of the previous meetings, with a special message about an article that appeared in the Washington Post on April 19 citing census data showing that Arlington had experienced negative population growth in 2014. He stated that the Post got it wrong, and that Arlington demographers had concluded just the opposite. He encouraged someone from the current County Board to write a letter to the Post rebutting the story. Milliken also welcomed two members of the Arlington Public School Board (Nancy Van Doren and Vice Chair Emma Violand-Sanchez), County Board Chairman Mary Hynes, County Board Member Libby Garvey and State Senator Barbara Favola. The first public open house is scheduled June 2 at the Courthouse Plaza lobby.

Public Spaces Master Plan

Jane Rudolph, Deputy Director for Facilities and Engineering in the Dept. of Environmental Services, outlined the ongoing revision to the Public Spaces Master Plan, one of the ten elements of the County's current "Comprehensive Plan." It identifies major public spaces, natural resources and recreational priorities. The plan provides a framework for decisions and management of public spaces. This update will include a classification system for parks, plazas and all open spaces. The plan requires demographic surveys, benchmarking, assessing current facilities, programs and services, and works with stakeholders and focus groups. Ms. Rudolph encouraged community input through surveys, public meetings and stakeholder interviews.

The Big Picture

George May, Deputy Director for Facilities and Engineering in the Department of Environmental Services (DES), outlined the big picture for Arlington services. Between 2010 and 2040 the county is expected to grow by 32%, reaching a population of 283,000 and providing jobs to 301,300. Of the 26.2 square miles in our County, the government (including schools, parks and all county facilities) owns only 2.2 square miles. A 2012 survey indicated that 89% of residents were "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with the quality of services provided by the county.

But Mr. May outlined a number of stresses on the system. The County operates 500 miles of water mains, 60% of which are 50 years or older. It provides about 23 million gallons of water per day and its crews repair more than 150 water line breaks per year. Last year it had 209 breaks and this year so far it has had 125. The waste water

treatment plant, a relatively new facility, processes 30 million gallons per day, serving both Arlington and its contracts with Alexandria and Falls Church.

The County also maintains about 1,000 lane miles of roads, with plans to repave 75 lane miles in 2015. It repairs about 7,400 potholes every year. So far this year staff has fixed about 5,100 potholes. Each snow event requires 60 staff and 45 vehicles working in 12-hour shifts. It used 13,000 tons of salt in the 2014-15 winter season, and had a salt shortfall in the last two seasons. That means that we need to increase our salt storage facilities.

The ART bus service has grown fourfold since it opened in 2005. Its fleet of 52 buses provided 2.8 million trips last year. The Shirlington Transit Center serves over 2,000 commuters a day. Our police answered 90,000 calls in 2014 and Arlington now has its lowest crime rate since 1961. Our fire department, with 10 fire stations and 1 fire training academy, answered 27,000 calls in 2014, most of which are EMS calls. Arlington has earned a Class 2 fire rating, which lowers insurance premiums. (Alexandria has a Class 3 rating, and Charlottesville is the only community in Virginia with a Class 1 rating). The County is trying to maintain a response rate of 4 minutes 80% of the time for all areas of the County. Right now they're having trouble reaching that minimum in the far northern tip of the county and one area in the Southwest portion of the county. In order to meet this standard, the Fire Department needs to relocate part of its services and add one additional fire station.

There's just a limited space to work with in the County. Private property accounts for 14.4 square miles, and 6 square miles consist of rights-of-way for county, state, federal and other transportation (I-66, Lee Highway as examples). County facilities consist of 2.2 square miles and other government land takes up 3.5 square miles.

Of the 2.2 square miles the County has to work with, 62% are parks, 26% are schools and only 12% represent the remainder of county services. The County owns 87 facilities (like the Arlington Courts & Detention Facility, the Trades Center, Arlington Mill, the Water Pollution Control Plant) and leases 18 other buildings (including Courthouse Plaza and the Sequoia Human Services Center).

In the 2015-2024 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), the county identified a number of improvements, including: redesigning the North Arlington Salt Storage facility; relocating Fire Station #8 from Lee Highway northward, adding facilities for central operations; and rebuilding the Lubber Run Community Center. The county will start construction in 2015 of a facility near S. Eads and Rte. 1 for light maintenance, washing and fueling of 46 ART buses. In the spring of 2016 the county will begin adding a third level of parking to a garage at the Trades Center, which will hold 130 additional cars.

In addition to these projects, which are already in the works, the County also needs major new facilities for its ART buses. The ART fleet will grow from 65 vehicles in 2015 to 90 vehicles in 2022, when ART will be taking over several routes from the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA). Arlington can operate these routes at half the cost that we are currently paying WMATA, so it makes economic sense. ART Ridership is expected to grow by 50% between 2014 and 2020. But we'll have to find space for the buses. Building 8-10 bays for CNG-fuel capable buses requires 25,000 square feet. So with parking and staging, the county needs at least 2-3 acres of land for buses.

Providing high-capacity transit for Columbia Pike and Crystal City will require another 4-5 acres for service and maintenance facilities, as well as parking and storage, for a new fleet of longer, accordion attenuated buses.

Storage is also a major problem. We have police and fire equipment, water pipes and other equipment that we need to keep on hand. The county is currently using temporary police storage in Jennie Dean Park, which needs to be relocated somewhere. And it needs increased storage space at the Trades Center. That 42-acre site is used for County infrastructure services, but also supports Parks and Schools maintenance operations and provides parking for the school bus (APS) fleet. It also houses the police impoundment lot and the fire training academy, which the county would like to locate somewhere else.

In all, the county needs 13-18 additional acres for all of its needs for centralized services. It needs areas that are zoned correctly, adjacent to arterial streets, with contiguous sites of 2 acres or more. This is a tall order. About 60 acres in Arlington are zoned for industrial use, now privately owned. There are no easy answers. The demands for land by County services, schools and parks far exceed supply. The county must consider co-locating services to piece together a solution.

Lisa Grandle, Park Development Division Chief with the Dept. of Parks & Recreation, discussed the 918 acres of County-owned parkland. The Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority (NVRPA) owns another 145 acres. The Northern Virginia Conservation Trust (NVCT) owns 16 acres of easements. And the Federal government owns 1,150 acres, including Arlington Cemetery, George Washington Memorial Parkway, the Iwo Jima Memorial and Theodore Roosevelt Island. The county also has 30 acres of public access easements. Of all the parkland in Arlington, the Federal government owns half and the county owns 40.6%.

County lands include 7 parks greater than 25 acres, some of which can't be developed because they are protected habitats. It also owns 21 parks in the 10-25 acre range, 16 parks that are 5-10 acres, 27 parks that are 2-5 acres, and 62 parks that are less than 2 acres in size. The county has a long-range land acquisition program that has added

over 52 acres between 1995-2014, usually one parcel at a time. In each case, the house or business that stood on the purchased land is removed and the land is returned to parkland. The department also helps to identify public spaces in sector plans for future development.

Current projects include the Lubber Run Community Center, Virginia Highlands Park, Dawson Terrace Community Center & Park, Stratford Park, Thomas Jefferson Park and three new synthetic field locations. There are master plans in the works for Mosaic Park, Long Bridge Park, Bon Air Park, Four Mile Run Park and Jennie Dean Park.

In the category of “Natural Resources Facilities” the county has 10 natural resource conservation areas totaling 130 acres (which includes protected habitat areas), seven community gardens with 225 individual plots (and plans to expand these along Four Mile Run Drive), 30 picnic shelters, 19,000 street trees, 126 playgrounds, four spray parks, eight dog parks, 27 restrooms and six amphitheatres.

In “Outdoor Active Facilities” the County has 32 diamond fields, 44 rectangular fields and 19 combination fields. Other outdoor facilities include five practice tennis courts, three Bocce Courts, two handball courts, five Petanque Courts, two pickleball courts, one skateboard park, 91 basketball courts, 87 tennis courts and 10 volleyball courts. Right now these outdoor facilities are over-subscribed, so Arlington would need to add additional facilities to meet demand.

Indoor facilities include 15 community centers, six senior centers (most located within community centers), four aquatic centers and three nature centers. Urban streetscapes include Pennrose Square and Gateway Park. Historic resources include Fort C.F. Smith, Fort Ethan Allen, Dawson Bailey House, Carlin Community Hall, Reeves House, Maury School and Boundary Stones.

Parks and Rec shares facilities with the schools through a Memorandum of Agreement for five facilities. The county also has Memoranda of Agreement with George Washington and Marymount Universities. In all, facility reservations have increased 11% in the last year. It administers 22 seasonal youth and adult sports programs (often full or on waitlists due to space capacity). Camps are operated in 25 locations and 18 schools, totaling about 12,000 participants. Classes have increased 34% and youth sports have increased 33% between 2011–2014. Parks and Rec will continue to target land acquisition for future growth.

Elementary schools. John Chadwick of Arlington Public Schools outlined the urgent capacity needs of the schools. The APS model calls for a maximum of 700 students plus PreK for the 23 existing elementary schools. Broken down by quadrant, only a handful of schools are within existing capacity next fall, while 12 schools are definitely over capacity. Overall, grade schools in the Southwest portion of the County

(Abingdon, Barcroft, Clarendon) will be overcapacity next Fall, while most schools countywide will be overcapacity by 2019. The Northwest quadrant will have the most relocatables” (i.e. trailers), with 14 installed at McKinley and 10 each at Nottingham and Tuckahoe. APS projects a deficit of 1,685 seats by 2019. APS says it needs a new elementary school in South Arlington

Middle and High Schools. The seven middle schools, intended not to exceed 1,200 students each, will be overcapacity in 2019, with a projected deficit of 224 seats. Williamsburg may be the hardest-hit by these increases. It now has 12 relocatables on site. The same is true for the high schools; most schools will be overcapacity by 2019, with Washington-Lee hardest hit. The projected deficit for high schools will be 1,007 seats by 2019.

Other school properties include the Education Center, Planetarium, and the transportation services it uses at the Trades Center.

Additions this year includes the new Discovery Elementary School, which will be completed before September, providing 630 seats. Washington-Lee School will have an interior renovation completed next fall that will increase capacity by 300 seats.

A 27,000 square foot addition and renovation to McKinley Elementary School will be completed by September 2016 to accommodate another 241 seats. Additions and renovation to Abingdon Elementary by September 2017 will provide 136 new seats. Work at Stratford Middle School, to be completed by September 2019, will create 1,000 new seats. The Wilson School will also be completed in September 2019, with capacity for 250 middle school students and 429 high school students for the H-B Woodlawn program. CIP funds are now scheduled to revamp the Career Center into a capacity generating high school.

Parking and maintenance of school buses at the Trades Center poses challenges. First, there aren't enough spaces to park all the buses. And locating all vehicles at one place in one corner of the County provides challenges and increased transportation costs for those buses that serve the opposite end of the County. School bus drivers leave the Trades Center for their regular routes in the morning, and return in the middle of the day, only to go out again in the afternoon. If they were housed closer to their regular routes the County would save fuel costs, work time and we would have decreased traffic. Right now the Trades Center has parking spaces for 140 buses. By the fall of 2015 APS will have 168 buses, which will rise to 180 buses by 2017.

Can vacant office buildings be used as schools? Chadwick isn't encouraging. He points to Bailey's Upper Elementary School in Fairfax as an anomaly. Fairfax purchased that empty, four-story office building, but such spaces are not available in Arlington. APS needs ground level space for Pre-K and Kindergarden. There are code requirements

for stairs and bathrooms and gymnasium space. APS will continue to look at the feasibility for new leases and acquisitions. But APS' view is that it may be cheaper to build from scratch than to renovate.

Finally, Mr. Chadwick presented a chart showing the APS schools receiving Title 1 funds, where 40% or more of the student population is eligible for free or reduced lunch. All were in South Arlington: Barrett, Carlin Springs, Campbell, Barcroft, Patrick Henry, Hoffman-Boston, Randolph, Drew Model and Abingdon. Some parents have argued that these schools need special resources.

After break a panel discussion focused on thoughts about solutions. Greg Emanuel of DES talked about the possibilities of doing shared arrangements for facilities to service, fuel and store buses. "Right now we have 19 buses with no place to park them," he said. Emanuel said the County almost had a match with a company that would have allowed the bus operations on the ground floor, with storage lockers on top. But the deal fell apart over zoning. Emanuel said the County would consider undergrounding facilities as an option.

Fire Chief Jim Schwartz addressed the firestorm of opposition from North Arlington neighborhoods when it was announced that Station #8 would be moved. "We thought we were beginning the discussion," he said. Schwartz also discussed the increased diversity of equipment required of his division, post 9-11. Fire equipment is now more varied and sophisticated, and needs storage space.

Jane Rudolph from Parks and Rec discussed the need to maximize existing facilities. The best example is installing artificial turf and lighting for playing fields, which is sometimes opposed by the neighborhoods. A grass field can handle 600 hours a year of activity. Installing artificial turf and night lights can extend that use to 3,000 hours a year.

John Chadwick and Connie Skelton from APS commented that unlike the other facilities people, in which average citizens might not have a set opinion about the best way to build a garage, everyone had an opinion about how schools should be built. APS has an obligation to serve every child that shows up.

Members of the group urged the County to be creative in sharing facilities, planning facilities that could be acceptable in neighborhoods, building up, with public space on top.

Materials:

Agenda:

<http://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2015/04/FINAL-Meeting-Agenda-15-0422.doc.pdf>

Opening Remarks:

<http://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2015/04/CFS-Mtg-6-opening-slides.pdf>

Presentation: Public Spaces Master Plan Update

<http://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2015/04/CFS-DPR-Presentation-PSMP-Update-Slides.pdf>

Presentation: Arlington County Services, Land and Facilities

<http://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2015/04/CFS-Mtg-6-Facilities-Apr-17.pdf>

Presentation: Arlington Public Spaces System Overview

http://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2015/04/CFS_DPR-Presentation-04-17-15.pdf

Presentation: Arlington Public Schools Facility Overview

<http://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2015/04/Apr-22-Facility-Inventory-04-16-15-FINAL.pdf>

Resource: Fire Stations Locations Risk Assessment

<http://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2015/04/Fire-Station-Locations-Risk-Assessment-FINAL-REPORT-12-14-12.pdf>