



Aurora Highlands Civic Association

February 24, 2016

Emma Violand-Sanchez
Chair, Arlington County School Board

Libby Garvey
Chair, Arlington County Board

Dear Dr. Violand and Ms. Garvey:

Thank you, Dr. Violand, for your letter dated February 17, 2016, regarding your efforts in planning for a new elementary school in our area. And thank you, Ms. Garvey, for your February 18th e-mail on the same topic. In her February 17th letter, Dr. Violand states that as part of the process for the Superintendent's report on options and next steps regarding the possibility of a new elementary school in the Pentagon City area post-2019, a meeting will be held in early March with affected stakeholders. During a follow-up phone call with Dr. Violand, we determined that March 16 would be the best date for participation by both the community and school board members, and we look forward to hearing specifics about time and place.

This preliminary community involvement phase is a good first step toward fulfilling the SAWG's recommendation's to "plan for a *second* south Arlington elementary school in the Pentagon City area." I have discussed such a meeting among key stakeholder representatives from our area, and we believe that such a meeting will be most productive if it is held as a school board member forum. We think it would be best if school board staff would be prepared to discuss: (1) how the student projections for Oakridge take into account the fact that our area is growing more rapidly and in different ways than much of the rest of the county; (2) how the school board has considered that a new school in our area can relieve overcrowding not just east of I-395, but also west of I-395 through, for example, pre-K programs or a new choice school; (3) how the school board has considered the possibility that a new school in the Oakridge boundary can relieve overcrowding at Long Branch Elementary School; (4) how boundary changing 300+ students out of their neighborhood school will impact the Oakridge community; (5) other than capital solutions, what steps are being taken to alleviate the capacity strain at Oakridge and how other departments within APS are working to support an elementary school that has grown to over 800 students in such a short period of time.

Additionally, given that the superintendent's report is due to the school board by April 1, 2016, it would be helpful to hear what the Superintendent's preliminary draft report contains as well as its preliminary findings so we can provide feedback, not just as stakeholders in the process, but also as members of the community who have a valuable understanding of potentially good and less desirable sites in our area.

Ms. Garvey, I am truly grateful for your willingness to work with the school board to address the need for more school space, particularly in our area. Ideally, such a school board member forum would be most beneficial if county staff and a county board member representative also

attended. Particularly helpful would be the attendance of county staff who could discuss: (1) potential sites that the county owns or may be able to acquire in the next 10 years that would be suitable locations for a new elementary school in or near the Pentagon City area; (2) the acquisition of private land for school development, through eminent domain and/or in exchange for increased density in or near the Pentagon City area; and (3) the possibility of jointly locating combined county-school facilities such as, for example, a combined elementary school, library, community center, and fire house near the corner of 18th Street South and South Hayes Street; and (4) how accelerating the timeline for constructing the emergency access road from Army Navy Drive to Hoffman-Boston Elementary School may alleviate some concerns. Additionally, since this will require planning in our area, Anthony Fusarelli, the county's Principal Planner for the Pentagon City area, should be invited to participate. Ms. Garvey, any assistance you can provide in having these staff participate in such a school board forum is greatly appreciated.

I want to once again wholeheartedly thank you both for all your hard work and planning efforts in our area. I look forward to working with you here and in later community involvement phases of this issue. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or would like to discuss these matters further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Natasha Atkins".

Natasha Atkins
President
Aurora Highlands Civic Association