

DEPARTMENT OF FACILITIES AND OPERATIONS

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February 4, 2022

Arlova Vohnm
Zoning Administrator
Arlington County
2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 1000
Arlington, Virginia 22207

Re: Statement of Support and Consent for Use Permit U-3468-16-1 Amendment
Application for The Heights Building Phase 2 Project

Dear Ms. Vohnm:

This letter and enclosures comprise an application for an amendment to Use Permit U-3468-16-1 for completion of The Heights Building capital project, as originally intended, through construction of a predominantly below-grade structure, providing improved building access and on-site transportation facilities, with a lighted synthetic turf field above, collectively called “The Heights Building Phase 2” or “Phase 2”. Completion of the elements within Phase 2 was deferred due to the selection of the APS site to temporarily house Arlington County Fire Station 10 during construction of its permanent home. Now that Fire Station 10 is no longer on the site APS can proceed with Phase 2. Once complete, Phase 2 will provide substantial operational improvements for the school and provide several community benefits.

Background

Consideration of a new school at 1601 Wilson Blvd. dates to 2014 and has had a lengthy history of public discourse and engagement. An abbreviated project timeline is included in [The Heights Building Accessibility and Capital Project Planning](#) School Board Work Session, August 18, 2020 (slides 6-7).

On February 25, 2017 the County Board approved Use Permit U-3468-16-1 for construction of a new school at 1601 Wilson Blvd. Though APS sought approval for the Phase 2 scope concurrent with approval of the new school and interim site plan illustrating the temporary fire station (“Phase 1”), the County Board ultimately decided to defer consideration of Phase 2 until removal of the temporary fire station from the site.

Operational Challenges Since 2019 School Opening

Virtually all elements currently in place between the Heights Building and 18th Street were constructed as a temporary condition, knowing that a final condition would be installed once the temporary fire station was removed. In its current condition, this is the only APS facility that has no on-site transportation facilities for handicap parking, short-term parking, or infrastructure to support parent pick-up/drop-off.

Since the new school opened in 2019 APS has contended with a variety of operational challenges associated with the temporary conditions. Specific operational challenges include:

- No ability on-site to support staff/visitor parking or short-term/long-term accessible parking. The APS-funded and constructed fully accessible parking spaces on N. Quinn has helped, but these spaces are often occupied by other vehicles and APS has no direct enforcement ability.
- Requires APS to rely on off-site leased parking, a financial and management burden to school staff. Long-term availability of leased spaces in Rosslyn is uncertain; leases are month-to-month with 30-day notice of termination by either APS or landlord. Availability of leasable parking space may diminish and/or increase in cost over time.
- Now that the dedicated APS parking spaces are available within the adjacent Aubrey building (Penzance property) the parking situation has improved, however, since the parking is managed by a third-party APS has limited options for control/management.
- Short-term or infrequent visitors must find metered spaces on the street, or park temporarily, enter the building to obtain a fob or pass, drive to the leased spaces down the block, find a parking space, and then walk back to the building, which leads to considerable parking anxiety for visitors to the building.
- Temporary switchback ramp from N. Quinn St. to the ground floor entrance (adjacent to Shriver administration area) is lengthy and challenging for individuals with differing abilities with many complaints of being soaking wet by the time they enter the building.
- Temporary natural grass field is awkwardly sloped and not readily conducive to the physical education requirements and other recreational uses with the hazard of balls and students conflicting with traffic on 18th St.

Other Options Considered and Ultimately Dismissed

APS explored several options for the Phase 2 project prior to arriving on the proposed scope. The options considered are summarized below and can be viewed in greater detail in [The Heights Building Accessibility and Capital Project Planning](#) School Board Work Session, August 18, 2020 and [Superintendent's Proposed FY 2022-24 Capital Improvement Plan \(CIP\)](#) School Board Work Session #1, May 11, 2021.

- Option A – option approved by the School Board as part of the adopted [FY 2022-24 Capital Improvement Plan \(CIP\)](#), described in detail further below.

- Option B – included a synthetic turf field without any below-grade transportation facilities. This option was dismissed because it did not address on-site transportation needs.
- Option C – included a synthetic turf field above a partial below-grade facility approximately half the width of the field. This option was dismissed since it provided less value being only slightly lower in capital investment with significantly less features.
- Option D1/D2 – options that considered extending a temporary condition by either enlarging the natural grass field or providing surface parking. These options were dismissed because each required substantial capital investment due to the required underground stormwater facilities while resulting in severe compromises to either field or transportation facilities.

Proposed Project

The proposed Phase 2 project is Option A as adopted in the [FY 2022-24 Capital Improvement Plan \(CIP\)](#). The School Board selected Option A for development because it comprehensively addresses short-term parking, on-site accessible parking, on-site parent pick-up/drop-off, covered accessible entrance, and field space needs. The scope is largely consistent with the concept considered during the initial design phase as proposed to the County Board in 2017 with the exception that constructing Phase 2 independent from the new school while school must remain in operation has resulted in a reduced number of vehicle spaces from what was originally proposed.

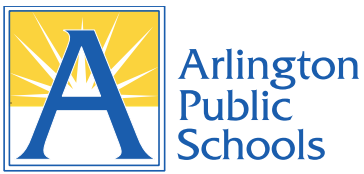
Principal features of Phase 2 include:

- An inviting and universally accessible path to a main entrance adjacent to the Shriver Program administrative area;
- Covered, off-street area for student pick-up and drop-off for those with differing abilities;
- Convenient handicap parking for staff and visitors, immediately adjacent to a building entrance; and
- The largest possible lighted synthetic turf field for school and community use.

Other features include:

- Required stormwater management infrastructure;
- Enhanced, covered bicycle facilities for students and visitors;
- Secure bicycle facilities for staff;
- Outdoor equipment storage; and
- The only on-site parking spaces within the exclusive control and operation of APS.

The project also proposes a modification to the 18th St. curb location along the APS frontage by extending the curb to eliminate the parking lane. APS proposes this to balance competing needs related to sufficient sidewalk area for anticipated bus operations, including loading/unloading wheelchairs, and a quality streetscape that includes the required street trees.



The Preliminary Multimodal Transportation Analysis (MMTA) summarizes the various transportation needs/demands based on data collected in late 2021, identifies the current challenges with existing conditions (Phase 1), and illustrates how the proposed Phase 2 improves multimodal transportation accommodations.

Phase 2 does not include any requested modification to school student capacity, anticipated level of staffing, or hours of operation as initially proposed and approved with the original Use Permit.

Requested Modifications to Parking Requirements

Consistent with many other recent projects, APS requests that in accordance with the provisions of Section 14.3.7.C.1 of the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance (ACZO), the County Board modify the required parking spaces to be as illustrated the proposed site plan. The original Use Permit approved no on-site parking and allowed parking spaces to be located off-site, subject to the conditions of the staff report. The proposed parking plan is explained in the Preliminary MMTA and demonstrates how the spaces provided between the Aubrey building and under the field fully accommodate the demand from various uses.

Lighted Synthetic Turf Field

The proposed lighted synthetic turf field will be a vast improvement to the existing sloped natural turf field, will provide a benefit to the surrounding community, and will fulfill the vision established in the Western Rosslyn Area Planning Study (WRAPS), adopted by the County Board in July 2015. It will be designed, constructed, and operated in accordance with the two Memorandum of Agreements between Arlington County and APS executed in February 2018.

Operations during Construction

Construction is expected to begin in fall 2022 and be complete in late 2023. For the entire period of construction, the existing Heights Building must remain in operation during the typical school year. During construction APS will comply with all Use Permit conditions and the requirements of the Arlington County Noise Ordinance.

Conclusion and Consent

In conclusion, APS requests that the County Board approve the Use Permit amendment application for The Heights Phase 2 project. The alterations to the school and the site will have a positive impact on the community for generations to come.



Arlington
Public
Schools

Arlington Public Schools is hereby notifying you that we are in consent of this amendment.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey D. Chambers, NCARB, AIA, ALEP, LEED AP BD+C
Director, Design and Construction

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Enclosures: *Use permit application support documents*