

July 5, 2022

The County's Joint Facilities Advisory Commission (JFAC) is tasked with helping the County Board plan for future infrastructure needs. At its June 29, 2022 meeting (insert link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FI-LwGOVUQ>) JFAC strongly criticized the County and Arlington Public Schools (APS) for their inability to carefully plan for the county's future needs for facilities such as schools, parks, fire stations, etc. We provide a few key excerpts that illustrate how JFAC believes the county needs to do better, including on planning for potentially major impacts of Missing Middle upzoning. We will provide comments without naming Commissioners, but you can follow the inputs by viewing the meeting.

Commissioner #1 stated “ we just heard from the County [on the proposed Capital Improvement Plan – CIP]; I saw a number of places where we talked about meeting emerging needs, which sounds like surprise needs or things we hadn't thought about. **I didn't see and don't hear a commitment to a long-range plan for the County. This ties into the Missing Middle rollout, because the community's biggest feedback is that they don't feel they can even have a conversation about Missing Middle** because they don't see any evidence the County is planning for the medium and long-term. That's a really big message. Our community is really, really frustrated with us.” (45:50)

Commissioner #1 also offered: “If the need for swing space for Arlington Regional Transit buses was a surprise, we are simply not doing a halfway decent job at medium and long term planning. We had the buses, we knew we needed parking, we knew Trade Center renovation was in the future. Not that different than salt dome replacement which was forecast decades before, or fire station 8 expansion, etc. **We have to do better to anticipate and be transparent about needs.**”

The JFAC Vice Chair observed: “We need to inventory all these needs – fire stations, schools, nature centers, bus parking, . . . If we were not expecting to have ART bus parking needs then we aren't really thinking about demand in a

long-range way. **All these needs are going to be competing for space that is getting more and more limited and also competing for money that is also limited.**” She also noted, “In the [final] years of the proposed 2023-2032 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) **we will be very close to the 10% limit we place on the ratio of debt service as a percentage of general government expenditures. If . . . it turns out we need more money, then the County will have to consider . . . trade-offs. . . .** We have economic and price volatility (including inflation, supply chain problems), so we can’t assume we’ll get the best-case scenario. . . . What if APS enrollment goes up and we need to build another elementary school or add to a middle school? It is important to do some planning for what those trade-offs might be.” (1:19:00)

JFAC’s Chair indicated there needs to be more of an alignment between APS and the County on the CIP. In this round there were some misunderstandings between the two. **We need to make sure that the public has a level of comfort and assurance with the planning process so if we are going to add housing or rezone single-family neighborhoods that the public can see that the long-term planning has been done and we are sure that the infrastructure can support it. For example, if the County’s predictions for how many missing middle units will be built turn out to be on the low end and it turns out that we actually get many more such units than predicted, then we have to know what has to happen for the right level of infrastructure to be created to support it. If we’re already doing that level of planning, then we need to make it obvious to the public that we have done it.**” (1:31:54)

Commissioner #1 posted in chat that the JFAC record shows that the commission had projected a need in 2017 for ART bus parking already in 2017. She also wrote that the community made clear its **desire for “true site-level master planning and comprehensive long range planning”** when JFAC was created. . . . **After 5 years of JFAC, we are still not clear what will it take for us to support our county staff and community members in making progress on this.”**

JFAC Commissioner #2 said he demand on Arlington’s parks exploded during the pandemic and continues. But Arlington’s tiny budget for land acquisition means we miss opportunities to acquire the needed land. He said the county need to devote more resources to land acquisition to take steps to ensure better use of our parks much sooner than the proposed budget would allow for. (38:44)

Given this level of doubt, ASF wonders whether we should now entrust the Board to move forward with the most consequential change in 45 years to Arlington's population and housing model (rezoning the whole county to allow 8-plexes in all SFH areas) when they haven't done the necessary medium- and long-range planning to manage current requirements?