Long Range Educational Facilities Planning Work Group

Meeting #5
City Hall – Sister Cities Conference Room, #1101
Wednesday, November 6, 2013 – 6:00pm
Meeting Summary

Meeting notes are recorded by City Staff to provide a written record of principal items of discussion, key comments, decisions of the Work Group, and comments from the public. They are not intended to be a verbatim transcription of the meeting.

Meeting Attendees

LREFP Work Group Members
Ken Billingsley
Bill Campbell *(attending for Ronnie Campbell)*
Debra Collins
Dr. Alvin Crawley
Karen Graf
Mayor Euille
Chris Hartman
Dr. Tammy Mann
Julie Rocchio
Justin Wilson

Members not in attendance
Herb Berg
Judy Noritake

ACPS
Bill Finn
Laurel Hammig
Tammy Ignacio

City of Alexandria
Katherine Carraway
Steve Chozick
Pat Mann
Karl Moritz
Ryan Price
Amber Wheeler

Hughes Group Architects
Amado Fernandez
Gavin Myers

Community Members
Jim Durham

Welcome and Introductions

Steve Chozick, Division Chief, GIS, City of Alexandria, welcomed attendees and provided an overview of the meeting's agenda, as well as a review of the Work Group's purpose and roles of the Enrollment Forecasting/Demographics Subcommittee and Facility Capacity Needs Analysis Subcommittee.

Report Out on Student Enrollment Findings

Current School Year Enrollment

Laurel Hammig, Facilities Planning/GIS Specialist, ACPS, presented a summary of student enrollment data for this current school year, FY14. Total enrollment for this year reached 13,623, an increase of 4% from FY13. Growth was highest at the middle- and high-school levels, followed by the elementary level; this represents a departure from last year.

Mayor Euille asked if part of the reason for the increase in middle school numbers was a result of students entering ACPS from other systems or private schools. Justin Wilson said that the Enrollment subcommittee concluded that the increase was a result of cohort survival. Ms. Hammig added that the subcommittee hasn't explored this year's data to that level yet, but programmatically there was an outreach effort to families of 5th graders that could be part of the reason for the increase.

Ms. Hammig continued with a summary of growth by region and actual vs. projected numbers for this year. The 2013/14 data shows that enrollment numbers at the elementary level were over-projected, while the numbers at the middle- and high-school levels were under-projected – illustrating that larger growth than anticipated is occurring at the secondary level. (Ms. Hammig noted that the projections used for comparison are those that are included in the ACPS operating budget submitted in the January/February time frame.)

Kindergarten and 9th grade are two of the key grades where projections were inaccurate. Mr. Wilson summarized the Enrollment subcommittee's earlier discussions surrounding these projections, stating that overall projections were on target; however, Kindergarten is historically very difficult to project. The Enrollment subcommittee had discussed possible reasons for the inaccuracies in Kindergarten and 9th grade, chief among them being that the larger cohort seen at the elementary level is now matriculating through the system and moving into the secondary level. The smaller numbers entering the elementary level may be due to improving economic factors – families may have more options available to them and aren't necessarily choosing to stay in Alexandria or may be enrolling children in private school.

Short-term Projections

Ms. Hammig reviewed the major areas involved in short- and mid-term enrollment forecasting: changes in births; changes in the Kindergarten capture rate; changes in cohort survival; and changes to student generation rates.

The projected capture rate for this school year was 64%, while the actual rate reached only 58%. Ms. Hammig said that the Kindergarten capture rate projection for this school year used a 3-year average capture rate. She is recommending that for next year a 5-year average is used, which would take this year's enrollment number into account, yet would not be an overcorrection. Additionally, projections for this year's cohort survival rate used a 3-year average, which Ms. Hammig recommends using again for next year as it appeared fairly constant over the near-term and is reflective of recent trends. This data will be used for the upcoming operating budget, and the next step is to apply these short-term projections to capacity implications.

Even though this year's Kindergarten capture rate decreased from what was expected, Alexandria births are continuing to increase. Ms. Hammig presented data illustrating that Alexandria birth rates are higher than those of Northern Virginia and the nation as a whole. The data shows the potential for births to increase in the near term as well as its inconsistencies over time – demonstrating the challenge in predicting Kindergarten enrollment.

Mayor Euille asked why data is being obtained from the Virginia Department of Health – how can it's accuracy for Alexandria be confirmed. Mr. Wilson shared that the Enrollment subcommittee questioned this as well, but that data is being pulled based on the mother's home address – meaning if a mother lives in Alexandria her child is considered an Alexandria birth, regardless of where the child is born. So, there is a fairly high level of confidence that the information is accurate.

Mayor Euille pointed out that there are many methodologies used in determining Kindergarten capture, but there are also a lot of best practices. He wondered what the subcommittee's approach is to ensure that the methodology it recommends has merit. Karl Moritz, Deputy Director, City of Alexandria Planning and Zoning, assured the group that determining cohort survival rates and Kindergarten capture rates is very much the standard nationwide.

Ms. Hammig said that the next steps in this process will be to update student generation rates including this school year's information; detail the data by school and by grade projections; and summarize the resulting capacity needs based on those projections. Ms. Hammig noted that the ACPS School Board will be seeing detailed data by school and by grade prior to when the Enrollment subcommittee will have the opportunity to review it in January.

The group discussed where the neighborhood analysis fits into the process and that it ensures schools are having their needs met, prior to addressing student assignment for example. Ms. Hammig said that the School Board will be seeing a preliminary neighborhood analysis as part of their November 14 work session – and it is also a topic for the Enrollment subcommittee in December.

Mr. Moritz and Bill Finn asked if the Work Group is in agreement with the direction in which the analysis is proceeding and if the proposed short-term methodology is acceptable. The group confirmed that it is in agreement with the recommendations.

Long-Term Forecasting

Pat Mann, Urban Planner, Department of Planning and Zoning, provided an update on the Enrollment subcommittee's long-term forecasting research. As part of his presentation, Mr. Mann reviewed Alexandria's student enrollment history from1960-present, including factors that may cause potential changes in future enrollment trends such as housing affordability; job growth; age of housing; net out-migration of preschool and school-age children; student participation rate; race and ethnicity, income, origins; historic cohort survival; and size of housing units.

Mr. Mann then presented four possible long-term forecasting models: development forecast; demographic forecast; enrollment trends forecast; and generation rates forecast.

The Work Group discussed issues surrounding the models and potential effects on enrollment including comparisons in Kindergarten capture rates to nearby jurisdictions; effects of new development in the city; aging of older housing units; affordability issues; and ACPS reputation.

The data will be analyzed and developed further so that a more refined draft forecast with explicit demographic assumptions, together with sensitivity analysis showing how the enrollment forecast model responds to changes in various assumptions, can be presented for additional discussion at the next Enrollment and Forecasting Subcommittee meeting in the November/December time frame.

Existing Building Interior Inventory:

Ms. Hammig reported on the Facility Capacity Needs Analysis subcommittee research to date and provided an overview of subcommittee goals and objectives. She explained that Hughes Group Architects (HGA) was hired to inventory the interiors of ACPS educational facilities; classify space and determine educational appropriateness;

document general space quality; provide electronic floor plans of each school; and attend meetings with stakeholders. (See Enrollment Subcommittee meeting summary, October 3, 2013.)

Ms. Hammig also addressed community use of educational facilities indicating that there are three main users: the Campagna Center; Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities; and PTAs. Each group has its own space needs and required standards. After HGA completes its analysis, ACPS will have the ability to better analyze whether these needs and standards are being met. The subcommittee will continue to look at capacity methodology; how capacity is calculated at the elementary and secondary levels; and develop a capacity and utilization assessment for each school site.

Amado Fernandez and Gavin Myers updated the Work Group on HGA's progress to date. HGA has completed analysis on three elementary schools – Samuel Tucker, James K. Polk, and Charles Barrett. HGA expects to complete its analysis on all ACPS schools by May 2014.

Mr. Myers explained HGA's process as they evaluate each school. The information gathered from each school via a field survey is analyzed and developed into a building info model (BIM). Once all information is obtained, it can be exported in an Excel spreadsheet, in CAD format, into GIS, or can be parsed into schedules focusing on specific elements. The data also shows comparison against VDOE benchmarks.

Mr. Fernandez emphasized that once all information is entered into the model it is accessible and is an active living document – meaning that it is a usable 'up-datable' tool that immediately produces current and accurate information. Calculations can be performed on a single school or citywide and it's all electronic.

The Work Group agreed that this work is a smart use of funds – the BIM is available to relevant city departments including not only ACPS but, fire and safety, maintenance, utilities, etc.

Proposed Student Assignment Process Presentation to School Board, Nov. 7th

Ms. Hammig apprised the group of a planned presentation to the School Board on November 7th outlining the proposed student assignment process in the LREFP work program. The presentation identifies the goals and objectives of student assignment as it relates to the LREFP and describes recommendations that will be developed for a school assignment methodology. The LREFP work plan does not suggest that the Work Group do any of the student re/assignment, but only to offer recommendations for a methodology.

Mr. Wilson expressed concern that with regard to student assignment this group might be encroaching on the role of the School Board. Ms. Graf mentioned that while she's not suggesting there has been any decision by the School Board to address student assignment, if it does so in the future it should use this work group and resulting data as a resource. The research findings from the subcommittees can inform the School Board conversation on this issue.

Ms. Rocchio reiterated that regardless of where the student assignment issue is addressed – as part of this Work Group or the School Board – PTAC wants to be included.

Mr. Moritz explained that the correlation between student assignment and the LREFP is that if a priority is for students to walk to school, then it would affect decisions about facilities and their locations.

Mayor Euille suggested that a work/study group to address this issue should include all facets of community – and should not come out of this particular Work Group.

Meeting Handouts

Agenda
Enrollment Forecasting/Demographics Subcommittee Presentation
Facilities Capacity Needs Analysis Subcommittee Presentation/HGA Presentation
Student Assignment Presentation to School Board, Nov. 7th