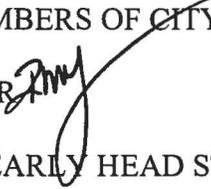


City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MARCH 26, 2012

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: RASHAD M. YOUNG, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: BUDGET MEMO #22: HEAD START/EARLY HEAD START CLASSROOM SPACE

This memorandum is in response to a request by City Council to provide additional information regarding the future of classroom space for the Alexandria Head Start and Early Head Start programs as presented by Dr. Tammy Mann, President and CEO of The Campagna Center, at the March 5, 2012, budget public hearing. The 5 classrooms currently located at Jefferson-Houston Elementary and one classroom located at Northern Virginia Community College are not included in the new construction plans at those locations.

Background

The City of Alexandria is the grantee for the Alexandria Head Start (AHS) program. The Campagna Center (TCC) has been the delegate agency since 1966. Over the years, the City and TCC have worked in partnership with the Schools to administer AHS, including the contribution of in-kind space and other support services by ACPS at several school sites. AHS provides early childhood education, along with family support (including health, nutrition, mental health and case management services) for 309 children, from three to five years of age, whose family income is at or below 100% of poverty, which is an annual income of \$22,056 or less for a family of four. There is a waiting list of 205 children. In addition, TCC is the grantee for Early Head Start (EHS) which serves 108 children from birth to age three, 48 in ACPS classrooms, 12 in family child care homes and 48 who receive home-based services. There is a waiting list of 150 children for EHS.

The Campagna Center operates 26 AHS/EHS and other early childhood classrooms provided in-kind at eight locations as shown in the table below. Of the 26 classrooms, 24 are located within ACPS school sites.

	HS Classrooms	EHS Classrooms	Additional Early Childhood Classrooms
Cora Kelly ES	2		
George Washington MS	2	3	1 (fee-based)
Jefferson-Houston ES	3	1	1 (VPI)
John Adams ES	5		
Patrick Henry ES	3		
TC Williams HS	1	2	
Northern Virginia Community College	1		
St. Paul's Episcopal Church	1		

Elimination of AHS Space

The Schools are in the process of finalizing building concepts for the construction of a new Jefferson-Houston school. Current versions of the plans include demolishing the AHS annex at the corner of Cameron and West Streets. ACPS has committed to not demolishing the annex for two years as part of the last phase of construction of the new school. However, the Schools have not identified alternative space for the five AHS/EHS classrooms currently located at the site, which were built with Head Start and City funds. ACPS estimated the cost for incorporating the lost annex space into the new Jefferson-Houston School to be \$1.75 million. The \$1.75 million is in addition to the identified cost of \$41.4 million to build the school system's concept of a preK-8 school on the Jefferson-Houston site.

The Northern Virginia Community College (NVCC) is scheduled to demolish the Tyler Building at the Alexandria Campus and plans for reconstruction do not include replacement of the AHS classroom. NVCC administrators have indicated that AHS will have to vacate the site by June 2013, and there are no other space options on campus.

Increasing enrollments would require the Schools to determine the priority uses for all classrooms, including Head Start classroom space. In prior school years, ACPS has required TCC to shift AHS classrooms from one school site to another to accommodate increased kindergarten enrollment. The classrooms at Jefferson-Houston, George Washington and TC Williams are configured for infants, toddlers and preschoolers and are not in elementary schools where space has been an issue. As a result, TCC has historically been able to count on those sites for AHS classrooms. However, the Superintendent has stated during City Council-School Board Subcommittee meetings over the past year that the school system may need to consider the use of the 24 classrooms located within schools to accommodate growing school enrollment.

Citywide Space Issues

City and TCC staff have worked collaboratively over the past year to explore alternative spaces that meet Head Start and State licensing requirements. Staff contacted the National Head Start office to inquire about federal funds that might be available to build classrooms but the outlook for such a solution is not optimistic. Staff also reviewed space options at all City recreation facilities and were not able to identify appropriate space for preschool age children. Staff contacted the Virginia Theological Seminary which has a campus-based child care center but they cannot accommodate a Head Start classroom. Churches and other religious institutions

within the City also lack capacity because many already have a preschool of their own, rent to another program or have insufficient and/or inappropriate space.

Possible Alternative Option

Staff recommends exploring the identification of appropriate lease space within the City to serve as temporary “swing” space until a more permanent City site can be found to replace the lost AHS/EHS classrooms. Under this option, the City would lease space that meets Head Start and State licensing requirements for the period between the demolition of the Jefferson-Houston Annex and the construction of a new Patrick Henry Recreation Center. The FY 2013 Proposed Capital Improvement Program (CIP) includes \$6.1 million for the Patrick Henry Recreation Center project in FY 2015-2016. The cost of the classrooms is not currently included in the Patrick Henry project. Since that project is still in planning stages, staff can develop proposals to include these classrooms in the recreation center project.

This is a desirable option because it builds permanent classrooms in the West End, where there is the greatest need for additional early childhood program, that are controlled by the City and not subject to compression if ACPS capacity needs continue to grow. If City Council approves this concept staff will begin to explore sites and develop more detailed cost estimates associated with developing and operating leased space, as well as any the capital costs associated with adding classrooms to the Patrick Henry Recreation Center project. These costs would need to be considered as part of the FY 2014 budget.

Staff: Debra Collins, Assistant City Manager
Laura Triggs, Acting Chief Financial Officer
Morgan Routt, Acting Budget Director
Kendel Taylor, Assistant Budget Director
Michael Gilmore, Director, Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS)
Deborah Warren, Director, Center for Children and Families, DCHS
Carol Farrell, Chief, Early Childhood Division, DCHS
Ryan Touhill, Budget/Management Analyst