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Ms. Libby Garvey, Chair
School Board
Arlington Public Schools
1426 N. Quincy Street
Arlington, Virginia 22207

Re: Yorktown High School Project Parking Report

Dear Ms. Garvey:

I am writing on behalf of the Yorktown Civic Association to provide comments to the report on Yorktown High parking and traffic issues that was requested by the Board at your February 1, 2007, meeting.

The report falls short in providing adequate details and analysis to answer these key questions: 1) how much parking is needed to meet the total core daily parking demands (including students); 2) what are the site's expected peak parking demands and how will those demands be met and mitigated; 3) what steps can be taken to minimize the use of neighborhood streets -- especially to the south of the school -- by drop-off traffic; 4) what actions will be taken to improve pedestrian and traffic safety near the school; and 5) what specific policy changes will be implemented that will result in actual traffic and parking volume reductions?

Unfortunately, the report still does not provide a full count of the total number of vehicles parked at the site on a daily basis. In particular, the report continues a failure we have seen throughout the BLPC process to account for the high number of students that drive to school each day at Yorktown High. While the report does acknowledge that "Yorktown students are the heaviest users of automobiles to get to school," the report itself fails to discuss that the school-by-school breakdown of responses to the recent Teen Transit Initiative survey has revealed (see Appendix G) that Yorktown students are twice as likely as Washington and Lee students to drive to school and three times as likely to drive as Wakefield students. That data indicates that 20% of Yorktown students drive, resulting in the need for as many as 320 parking spaces for that one parking component alone.

When you couple this high number of student drivers with the 237 staff that are given free parking plus the need to provide parking to pool and parking users, there is clearly strong factual support for our position that at least 400 off-street parking spaces must be provided just to meet the core daily parking demands of the site.

The neighborhood is certainly supportive of efforts to reduce the number of both faculty and students that drive through traffic demand management (TDM) efforts. However, while the report dedicates several pages to discussion of TDM goals, we found little in the way of real and meaningful TDM solutions in the report. To provide much confidence that TDM solutions can be counted on to help solve the Yorktown/Greenbrier parking problem, economic incentives/disincentives and concrete policy changes must be identified and implemented.

While the report provides previously unavailable data on peak event-related attendance patterns at the school and the park, the analysis of that data also falls short in several areas. First, the data is for the number of people attending and not for the number of cars. Because there clearly are categories of events that generate different ratios of cars to people, the data would be much more useful if it were based on cars.

Second, now that Greenbrier Park is reopening and events are being scheduled there, we are getting a clearer picture of how heavily the park's fields are going to be used. The event attendance data in the report is predominately based on past, rather than future, attendance patterns. It is already becoming clear that the new park facilities will be very heavily used. In particular, the new synthetic turf field is already scheduled seven days per week, with a number of tournaments on the schedule. There are also plans being developed for multi-sport district tournaments that will indeed result in concurrent use of all of the new fields. Our own recent counts of pool and park parking exceeds the estimates provided for in the report by DPRCR.

Third, while the report provides rough data on peak event-related attendance, there really is no clear analysis of how many cars will end up in on-street spaces on how many days of the year, and how that on-street parking will properly be managed. Given the number of large events at the site, a more detailed analysis and mitigation planning of peak demands must be provided.

The report discussed two alternatives for additional surface parking, and five options for structured parking. The report concludes that both of the surface parking options be adopted. However, those surface-parking options appear to fall short in providing the parking needed at the site. In particular, Option 2, use of the drop-off lane for parking, does not help when help is needed the most, as those spaces cannot be safely used for parking during critical daily drop-off hours, nor during many events.

In a resolution that our civic association approved in January, we concluded that our preferred solution was the use of structured parking in the area of the existing swimming pool (as in Option 3). In our deliberations, we also had discussed the same locations for structured parking as identified in the staff report. We do not see anything in the report's discussion of the other structured parking alternatives that would lead us to change our conclusion. We prefer the "Option 3" location for structured parking because it provides the best access from both the school and the park facilities. However, please note that our preference is that the parking structure be directly attached to the school at that location, and not set physically apart from the building.

It has been our conclusion that parking spaces east of the building (as in Option 2 and Option 6) simply would not be used for many park events due to the distance from the synthetic field.

Thank you providing us with the opportunity to comment on the report. Please contact me if you have any questions about the concerns I have raised.

Sincerely,



David Haring
President
Yorktown Civic Association