

BOARD MEMO

Date: 07/07/22

For ACTION X

For INFORMATION X

Board Agenda: Yes X

No

FROM: Sophie Huemer, Planner II
Erika Gulick, Director of Capital Programs, Planning and Design

THROUGH: Dr. Alicia Hart, PMP, Acting Chief of Facilities & Operations
Dominic B. Turner, Chief Financial Officer
Gregory C. Hutchings, Jr., Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

TO: The Honorable Meagan Alderton, Chair, and
Members of the Alexandria City School Board

TOPIC: Simpson Field Status Update

ACPS 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL:

Goal 1: Systemic Alignment

Goal 4: Strategic Resource Allocation

SY 2022-2023 FOCUS AREA:

N/A

FY 2023 BUDGET PRIORITY:

Improving Customer Relationship Services and Management

SUMMARY:

The Simpson Field site comprises 4 acres of existing recreational space on the east end of E. Monroe Avenue in the Del Ray neighborhood. It is currently used by Recreation Parks and Cultural Activities (RPCA) as soccer and baseball fields. As part of CDD2007-0001 and Concept Plan Amendment for Potomac Yard/Potomac Greens, a portion of this site was designated for ACPS use if jointly agreed with the City to be developed into a school (language included in Attachment 1). If ACPS determines that it does not want to use this site for a school, it is returned to the City for its use. Alternatively, as an interim use, ACPS staff can negotiate the use of the fields by RPCA.

Challenges:

One major challenge with the site is that Dominion Energy has a 230 kV line underneath the property that restricts development above it. The City of Alexandria conducted a limited analysis in 2006 to determine if a school could fit on the site without developing above the transmission line. It determined that it is possible, however, please note that the City used the

BOARD MEMO

Samuel W. Tucker Elementary School ("Tucker") footprint as its model for this analysis. Tucker Elementary is only 80,000 square feet, roughly 40,000 square feet less than we would likely develop now for a new elementary school. The analysis also documented challenges related to site circulation, availability of parking and limited developable area. Please note that this analysis was not a thorough study and other challenges might be identified at a later point if ACPS chooses to develop the site.

Additionally, even though this site has been designated for school use for over a decade, it is currently highly used by the Alexandria community for recreational activities and developing on this site would displace those uses to possibly less convenient and already heavily used facilities. Developing on this site could therefore be a challenge politically.

Other Considerations:

In considering school capacity as a whole, ACPS has other options in the area for additional capacity. ACPS is redeveloping George Mason and Cora Kelly to add elementary capacity to this area of the City within the next ten years. From the secondary standpoint, this site is very close, but not contiguous to, George Washington Middle School which would not make it the optimal site for added middle school capacity. ACPS also has designated space in the Potomac Yard Small Area Plan, near this site, which could allow for a larger building and less of a political challenge in development than Simpson Field.

Athletic field lighting is already approved at the site making the development process easier for the City to add lights. Lit fields in the City are greatly needed according to RPCA.

BACKGROUND:

Recently, ACPS has received questions about its intent with the Simpson Field site due to interest from Alexandria Soccer Association (ASA) and Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities (RPCA) in upgrading those fields to synthetic turf and potentially lighting. Staff wanted to provide the Board with all relevant information regarding this site and its options in an effort to make an informed decision.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Superintendent recommends that the School Board allow the use of Simpson Fields for a minimum of ten years and permit staff to negotiate the final details of field use by RPCA.

IMPACT:

Change in ACPS available sites for future school development

ATTACHMENTS:

1. CDD2007-0001 Language
2. Potomac Yard Site Analysis
3. Simpson Fields Map

BOARD MEMO

REFERENCES:

N/A

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