

As a neighbor of Patrick Henry Elementary School and pending realignment, a future parent, I felt compelled to make a request and offer insight regarding the improvement project feasibility study.

My request is to urge you to stay focused on the real decision that needs to be made at this point in the process as you review the plans for Patrick Henry Elementary and not let small details get in the way.

There is really one decision that needs to be made at this point from three possible scenarios.

Scenario 1 – Build a new school while leaving the existing school in place (Option 1a or 2)

Scenario 2 – Build a new school while demolishing the existing school (Option 1b)

Scenario 3 – Renovate the existing school (Option 3 – Renovation/Addition)

These scenarios are what you have before you for a vote not anything more. At this point the details of the design: the amount of glass, entrances and classroom layouts should not be the focus of the decision or process. There is plenty of time to work on those details once this decision has been made and the real planning for the project starts.

Scenario 1 is the option that the ACPS staff has put forward as their recommendation; and as a resident, neighbor and potential future parent I agree completely with their recommendation.

Scenario 1 is the best option for several reasons: 1) it does not utilize swing space, whether it be trailers on the grounds or some neutral site, swing space does not foster a positive learning environment and should be avoided; 2) It provides a new state of the art building which should be a superb learning environment for years to come; 3) Although contrary to some belief it has the least and best impact on the neighborhood and immediate community.

Listening to comments from the board last night, I felt that the only comments you have received are negative to the project. I want to offer my positive support of the project and hope that Option 2 (My scenario 1) is chosen. There needs to be a change at this site and a brand new school while keeping green space is the best case.

The situation now in the neighborhood the way the current school is situated is not working properly. Bus drop off, vehicle drop off and parking are chaotic and inefficient. The parking on Latham Street when the fields are in use is dangerous. The school is not in good repair and is only going to get worse. Very few people even realize there is a rec center attached to the school, which is why it is so underutilized.

The reality of the situation is that the status quo cannot remain. If we want to move forward and create a better environment for our students, something has to change. The current state of the school needs to change, that is inevitable. A bigger more modern school is a very positive thing for the neighborhood and will create a better learning environment and increase values. Change scares a lot of people, but it is necessary to improve.

I implore you to stay focused on the decision that is needed at this point in the process and to think about the big picture as you make that decision and support the ACPS staff recommendation of Option 2 (My scenario 1 above).

Thank you for your time and efforts serving on the school board.

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