

## BOARD BRIEF: TALKING POINTS

Date: March 12, 2019

For ACTION \_\_\_\_\_

For INFORMATION X\_\_\_\_\_

Board Agenda: Yes \_\_\_

No X\_\_\_\_\_

**FROM:** Helen Lloyd, Director of Communications

**THROUGH:** Gregory C. Hutchings, Jr., Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

**TO:** The Honorable Cindy Anderson, Chair, and  
Members of the Alexandria City School Board

**TOPIC:** Updated FAQs and Talking Points on the Douglas MacArthur/  
Patrick Henry Swing Space

**BACKGROUND:** On April 4, 2019, the School Board voted to move forward with using the old Patrick Henry building as a swing space for the Douglas MacArthur modernization project. Following the vote, the FAQs were updated and re-shared with the public. These frequently asked questions and answers were originally posted to the website on April 6, 2019.

### Updated FAQs and Talking Points on the Douglas MacArthur/Patrick Henry Swing Space

#### What has been decided about the old Patrick Henry building?

The Alexandria City School Board has voted to move forward with using the old Patrick Henry building as a swing space for the Douglas MacArthur modernization project. To reassure the community that the Board heard their concerns, they added the following language to the vote:

- ACPS commits to work with the City of Alexandria to further examine the plan's impact on traffic and student drop-off, and to make needed adjustments to alleviate traffic concerns.
- ACPS commits to work with the City of Alexandria to further examine the plan's impact on parking, and to identify, in advance of the Douglas MacArthur move-in, both on-site and off-site options that will ensure adequate parking for school staff and parents of both schools, and members of the community.
- ACPS commits to demolish the old Patrick Henry School upon completion of the new Douglas MacArthur Elementary School.
- ACPS commits to immediately explore the feasibility of renovating/replacing George Mason Elementary School and Cora Kelly School for Math, Science and Technology while the existing school sites remain in operation, and to identify alternative (non-Patrick Henry) swing space options for those sites in the event swing space is needed.
- ACPS commits to working with the City of Alexandria, including its Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities (RPCA), to identify possibilities for enhancement of neighborhood open spaces and playgrounds that could be used by students and community members.

## **BOARD BRIEF: TALKING POINTS**

### **How will this affect the completion of the new Patrick Henry facilities?**

The new play areas along Latham Street will be completed on schedule and ready for use in September 2019. The new fields, pre-K playground and parking lot designed to replace the old Patrick Henry in front of the new recreation center will be delayed by approximately four years. They are expected to be ready for use in Fall 2023.

### **Why is this option being pursued?**

Using the old Patrick Henry as temporary space for Douglas MacArthur Elementary School from September 2020 to December 2022 instead of demolishing it now will allow ACPS to extend its useful life as a school building for the express purpose of accelerating the modernization of Douglas MacArthur, which is in desperate need of replacement.

### **How much savings will there be from using this modified approach?**

ACPS expects that pursuing the approach to use the old Patrick Henry now before demolishing it will allow an estimated \$60 million, currently slated for general ACPS elementary school swing space, to be reallocated by the City for other ACPS capital improvement needs. The ACPS Capital Improvement Program (CIP) budget is expected to grow in the FY2021 and FY2022 budgets and ACPS leadership believes that this approach maximizes our fiscal responsibility of these taxpayer dollars.

### **Is the City in support of this idea?**

The City Manager is in support of this idea and has committed to working with City Council to ensure that the budgeted \$60 million is redirected to other ACPS CIP needs. The emphasis on using existing assets to accelerate swing space needs also aligns with the spirit of the recommendations made by the Ad-Hoc Joint City-Schools Facilities Investment Task Force in 2018 (Task Force Final Report [PDF]).

### **Patrick Henry didn't need temporary swing space when it was being built, so why do other schools need this?**

The Patrick Henry site was large enough to build the new school while the school continued to operate in the old building. Each ACPS school site is unique. Preliminary studies confirm that the Douglas MacArthur school site and surrounding land is not large enough or conducive to building a replacement school building while continuing to house and operate the existing school at the same time. The entire school population (approximately 700 students and 80 faculty and staff) will need to relocate while the old school is demolished and construction takes place for the new school.

### **Why use the site at Patrick Henry? Aren't there other sites in Alexandria that could be used instead?**

The old Patrick Henry School is an operating school building that, with some renovation, can continue to be used a few more years. Finding available, existing space or land in Alexandria that can be converted or utilized for a large school has proved to be challenging thus far. In addition, converting office space would cost significantly more than the approach that has now been approved for accelerating the Douglas MacArthur replacement.

## BOARD BRIEF: TALKING POINTS

### **Can ACPS buy land and build a school to be used as temporary swing space for all schools during its modernization process?**

Building a new school from the ground up is a protracted process. ACPS has been looking for available land and continues to seek opportunities that fit within the overall planning to address long term swing space, growth, and capacity needs. Using this immediate opportunity to accelerate Douglas MacArthur by two years allows ACPS to continue to seek solutions for all school modernizations.

### **Do you really need all of these new schools?**

Two thirds of Alexandria's schools are over the 100 percent utilization rate and average over 60 years old with some of our elementary schools as old as 90 years old. Our school facilities are aging and deteriorating with many no longer meeting modern building code guidelines and standards for instructional space. The growth rate and expected rise in elementary cohorts in Alexandria and the surrounding area is well documented. Keeping up with the space needed to ensure quality educational environments for our community is absolutely essential. Douglas MacArthur in particular has more than 700 students with a new larger boundary and coming residential development. The school building currently has one small gym, a number of interior classrooms without windows, and insufficient cafeteria space. Alexandria is in desperate need of new and replacement school facilities.

### **How long will it be before the Patrick Henry building is torn down and the construction is complete?**

The plan anticipates renovating the current site for a temporary condition with the old Patrick Henry in place and used from September 2020-December 2022. It will take up to four years from the original project timeline before the construction is complete, however the site will not be a construction zone while Douglas MacArthur is housed in the old Patrick Henry building. The delay will not change the final intended design of Patrick Henry.

### **How many years will it be before the new turf field can be used?**

The new turf field will be installed and open to the public by Fall 2023.

### **How will this impact my child's outdoor recess? Where will Patrick Henry and MacArthur children play?**

The new basketball court, intermediate playground and recreation playground will be installed per the original Patrick Henry plan on the west end of the site. The existing playground at the old Patrick Henry building will also be modified and available for school use, which is the playground that was used by Patrick Henry students during construction. School staff will work collaboratively to ensure students have adequate recess time.

### **Will the Recreation Center still be open?**

The new Patrick Henry Recreation Center will be open throughout the four years. However, the new playing fields will no longer be installed immediately.

### **Will any part of the outdoor space be available for use during this time?**

## **BOARD BRIEF: TALKING POINTS**

Students from both schools will have access to outdoor playgrounds and play facilities during school hours.

### **How can you accommodate students from two schools on this site?**

The City's Planning and Zoning and Building Code Compliance Offices have reviewed the concept plan, provided preliminary comments, and agree with our ability to use the entire site for the two-school population. Site modifications and properly sequenced timing to alleviate traffic will be key to gaining the approval of these bodies in the fall 2019 of an amended temporary Development Special Use Permit (DSUP). The main elements of the conceptual design approach include removing the old recreation center from the original Patrick Henry building to provide adequate separation between the buildings and a continuous traffic flow connection. An adjusted bell schedule that eliminates the overlap of drop off and dismissal for the two schools is anticipated. This will enable ACPS bus transportation to accommodate the additional student riders from Douglas MacArthur while also ensuring good site and community impact management.

What will ACPS and the City do to resolve the traffic issues on the Patrick Henry site? ACPS has been working closely with the City's Transportation and Environmental Services (T&ES) Department. T&ES has committed to studying the three-way stop at Polk Avenue and Latham Street, assessing the light signal at Taney Avenue and Jordan Street and adjusting trash truck schedules. Alexandria Police Department has also committed to additional patrolling.

### **How would you ensure sure that traffic in this neighborhood doesn't get worse?**

The two schools will have different bell schedules to ensure traffic levels remain constant during drop-off and dismissal. An addendum to the traffic study will also assess the impact to the neighborhood and propose any mitigating measures as needed.

### **Will there be a traffic study?**

An addendum to the original traffic study, dated September 2016, will be required as part of ACPS's submission for an amended Development Special Use Permit (DSUP). The study will include the added capacity and the specific impact of staggered start times. Street intersections required to be re-examined during the traffic study addendum will be determined by the City's Department of Transportation & Environmental Services. The scoping for this addendum begins in April/May 2019.

### **How will the Seminary Road project impact use of the Patrick Henry site?**

ACPS does not have control of the Seminary Road project but has communicated these concerns with the City's Transportation and Environmental Services (T&ES) Department. If any significant impact is expected from this project, it will be identified in the addendum to the traffic study.

### **How will bus drop off work?**

Bus schedules may be adjusted to ensure students from the two schools are dropped off at staggered times. The two schools will have designated teacher parking lots and separate bus loops.

## **BOARD BRIEF: TALKING POINTS**

### **How will student drop off work?**

ACPS will develop a plan with safety and efficiency in mind. We will encourage the use of school buses for all students from the Douglas MacArthur attendance zone, limiting the amount of students dropped off and picked up by car. This practice will likely change and improve over time as families become familiar with and confident of the Patrick Henry-Douglas MacArthur campus plan.

### **How will parking work?**

ACPS will aim to provide parking for both schools on the Patrick Henry site through the addition of a parking lot to the west of the existing Patrick Henry. If sufficient parking is still not achieved, alternate measures will be proposed in alignment with the City's Transportation Management Plan to incentivize alternate modes of transportation.

### **How would you ensure that children are safe with more cars in the area?**

ACPS will re-examine our walk paths, safe walking practices and measures during the planning and implementation of the dual campus plan. We have already established the need to connect our planning with Alexandria Police Department and other City agencies in response to community concerns to ensure student safety and enforce traffic management and laws.

### **Will the whole of Douglas MacArthur be together on the site of the old Patrick Henry building?**

Yes. The old facility at the old Patrick Henry is large enough to house all of the expected Douglas MacArthur population during this temporary period.

### **What is the plan for the old recreation center?**

The old recreation center portion of the old Patrick Henry will be demolished in Spring 2019 to separate the buildings to meet fire code and to make room for appropriate circulation on the site, addressing traffic and safety concerns.

### **Is this just swing space for Douglas MacArthur?**

Yes. The application to the City for reusing the old Patrick Henry building and site will be as a temporary occupancy only that cannot exceed a three year occupancy of the building. The current school modernization program identifies funds for George Mason Elementary School in FY2024 and Cora Kelly School for Math, Science and Technology in 2026, respectively. Because these school projects are further out on the timeline, are much smaller than Douglas MacArthur, and have adjacent land that can potentially be used, ACPS is studying the feasibility of completing those projects on site or using a phased occupancy approach.

### **How long will MacArthur be in the Patrick Henry temporary swing space?**

Approximately two years. The entire project to prepare the site and building for the temporary condition, house Douglas MacArthur, relocate them to the new Douglas MacArthur school, and then construct the final Patrick Henry condition will overall take up to four years.

## BOARD BRIEF: TALKING POINTS

### **Why can't the old facility at Douglas MacArthur be used as swing space while the new one is built next to it?**

On March 21, 2019, we received the final report for the initial study conducted by Cole and Denny Architects around options for the Douglas MacArthur space. The initial study found that:

- As the current site stands at Douglas MacArthur, it would not be possible to build a new school on the site while continuing to occupy the old school facility.
- Site expansion into the public open space would not be a good option due to high development costs.
- The terrain immediately over the school's north property line drops into a 32-foot deep ravine which would be cost-prohibitive to fill to the elevation required to support development.
- In addition, this abutting area contains highly plastic Marine Clay soils which will require costly engineering to stabilize for construction.

You can find the full study at: <http://www.acps.k12.va.us/dmrevitalizationstudy> (PDF)

### **What condition is the old Patrick Henry facility in? Is it really suitable to use as swing space?**

Cole and Denny Architects submitted a report on the condition of the old Patrick Henry to bring it up to a habitable level for this temporary use. Their study found:

- In general, the facility is in working condition, but needs repairs in a number of areas.
- Some of the areas that can be repaired and refreshed before Douglas MacArthur students would occupy the building include the roof, drainage and HVAC repairs, ceiling and lighting changes, pest control and water intrusion mitigation and other environmental and safety upgrades.
- The facility would be painted, undergo targeted flooring repairs and be thoroughly cleaned.
- The exterior site would require extensive temporary re-surfacing to accommodate additional parking, changes to play areas. Rough cost estimates included modifying the auditorium for multi-purpose use during the temporary occupancy.

You can find the full study at: <http://www.acps.k12.va.us/phesassessmentreport> (PDF)

### **What's next?**

Now that Board approval has taken place, ACPS must proceed with a number of simultaneous and accelerated actions to ensure that maximum and efficient planning and implementation will take place. Over the next few months, these activities will include technical and operational planning, city coordination planning, and communications and engagement planning. The work will generally involve:

- Finalizing changes to contracts for this amended plan;
- Setting up project management to oversee both the Douglas MacArthur replacement school and the dual campus Patrick Henry-Douglas MacArthur development;

## BOARD BRIEF: TALKING POINTS

- Linking operational plans and community expectations and needs to the next budget cycle;
- Preparing work for permit approval for fall 2019.

### **How will the community be involved and kept up to date?**

- The ACPS website will continue to be a source for information, progress updates and meetings.
- ACPS will be seeking suggestions for a combined Patrick Henry-Douglas MacArthur dual school campus Advisory Board with a separate community subcommittee for each.
- The individual subcommittees will focus on respective design issues for their schools in line with our standard process, and also provide input to establishing and resolving joint campus use issues.
- We will be communicating regularly with both the Douglas MacArthur and Patrick Henry communities about these projects. To stay informed, please sign up for email updates.

### **What if I have further questions?**

Please review the [Responses to School Board Questions \(PDF\)](#), provided by ACPS staff on April 4, 2019.

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