

Statement to the School Board on YHS Contract Award

David Haring, President, Yorktown Civic Association

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Given the very attractive bids received for the Yorktown project, your decision to keep the process moving -- despite the uncertainties of the financial markets -- clearly is having its rewards.

Since our civic association argued early and often for structured parking as part of this project, you might be thinking that I am here tonight to ask that you use some of the new-found savings for that purpose. Although we still firmly believe that the parking is inadequate and poorly located, rest assured that we also very much appreciate the need to move forward with the project.

I do want to note, however, that we called for structured parking early in the process because -- to do it right -- it needed to be designed as an integral part of the overall building plan. It really wouldn't work to come back and tack a parking structure onto the building as an afterthought.

Likewise, we are extremely concerned that at the end of 5 long years of construction, this site is now expected to be home to over 2000 students, even though the building is being built for just 1600 students. Our fundamental concern remains that -- given the limited size and constraints of this site -- there are limits to what you can put here. Just as it wouldn't make sense to tack a parking structure onto this building after the fact, there is no room in this building's design for later additions or expansions. And it would be a real spoiler to keep trailers at this site, as happened at the end of the Nottingham renovation. If you indeed expect that Yorktown's enrollment will continue to increase, you are best served by starting the planning for boundary changes now. And you need to think of your vote tonight as a permanent lock on the size and scope of the program at this location.

There are a couple of areas, however, where spending a very small amount of the construction savings would pay large dividends and make this project more successful.

First, please do not scrimp on off-site parking for staff during the construction or on resources such as traffic control officers to direct traffic. We lose the bus drop off area and up to 45% of existing parking spaces during various stages of construction. Without question, the construction impacts on nearby residents and users are going to be much, much worse than previously indicated.

Second, we once again stress the need to make a number of sidewalk and traffic safety improvements near the school, especially installation of sidewalks on blocks south of the school and a median and other safety improvements on Yorktown Boulevard in front of the school. We strongly urge you to work with the county to invest some of the savings in these much needed safety improvements adjacent to the school but on county property.

It is especially critical that crosswalk improvements at the Yorktown Boulevard/28th Street intersection -- which are included in the plan -- get moved up to the beginning of the project rather than the end, since that intersection takes the brunt of the project's traffic disruptions. This is a blind intersection with no crosswalk markings today.

While this is not an area where the civic association has taken a position, I would also suggest investing some of the savings in new LED lighting technology for the building. Significant improvements in this technology have recently become commercially available which offer benefits beyond LED's energy efficiency, and which is already being deployed in renovations at the Pentagon and other federal office buildings. It would be a real shame not to outfit the light fixtures both inside and outside this building with LED lighting, given the effort to make this a LEED Silver building.

My final request comes not just as the head of the civic association but also as the parent of 2 Yorktown students. A much better job needs to be done keeping everyone informed on the project's startup details, and I would urge you to err on the side of providing too much information rather than too little. We have finally been given copies of most of the critical project documents even though they should have been available weeks ago. But, I also want to be quick to acknowledge the enormous pressure your staff has been under and note my appreciation for their efforts. Together, we all share an interest in seeing this project move forward to a successful conclusion.