

Colin L. Powell Academy Construction Update Meeting | October 17, 2022 Questions & Answers

At future meetings, will PGCPs add County Planning Representation? This question is specific to construction as there will be road changes, and yet sidewalks must come through county approval. When will we hear from the county about what the sidewalks will look like where our students will walk?

The Department of Public Works and Transportation is the county agency that would be involved in those issues. The Program Director has forwarded a request for a specific contact to answer questions related to the process. He will continue to follow up.

Powell is a school in the heart of a vibrant, walkable community. What steps is the construction team taking to ensure there are sidewalks and bicycle paths from the community to the school?

The team is installing new sidewalks along Swan Creek Road and Ft. Washington Road. There will also be a dedicated bike lane on Swan Creek Road. It is the obligation of the developer and construction team to deal with sidewalks on the property that fronts those roadways. So, those teams do not make connections in communities outside of the property limits.

The construction meeting on Friday and the website seem more focused on the small group against the school instead of the thousands of people who have family members attending and working at the school. Will this shift soon? For instance, there is a great video on flooding, a major issue for those against the school, but no visually compelling resources on the building plan, amenities, FAQ page is down, etc.

The alliance community group reached out last winter and requested a meeting. The Program is open to meeting with any group or individual with concerns or questions about the project. We established a monthly meeting that is open to the general public. These meetings have not altered the design or objective of the construction project. The program and project team are receptive to any suggested engagement opportunities or meetings. The Program remains dedicated to creating an open line for the project team and providing timely communication to all stakeholders.

How are emergency exits constructed to support our children leaving the school in case of an emergency?

There are 15 points of egress around the perimeter of the building. While the students in the morning are generally expected to funnel into one or two entrances, there are 15 exit points that are approved by the fire marshal and emergency personnel.

Why not just delay the opening until August 2024? Starting school in November will be such a hassle.

This was a decision made by the District to take advantage of the new school building with significant amenities it can provide to students.

What is the design/construction plan for the outdoor amenities (playgrounds, football and soccer fields, track, etc)? Will they be open for community and evening use or secured for student use only?

This is a community-use school. The expected usage of the school will not change. There are no restrictions except those put in place by school leadership. The school is expected to be a community hub.

When were the geotechnical studies done on the site, and why were the soils on the site found so late to cause a 3-month delay?

When the RFP was issued by the county, there were four geotechnical borings done to give a general sense of what was out on the site. As construction proceeded, the team needed to do additional borings and found isolated pockets that were unable to support the loads of the building that we had designed. So, it wasn't something the county would have known before the project. It was something the team could only have learned after the start of construction as well as the design of the building, in order to learn how much the building would weigh.

Who decided that a softball field was the necessary field for this area? I don't recall seeing a survey asking us parents of this nor of those in the community.

Taking into consideration the natural wetlands to the north and south of the area as well as the building design, a softball field fit the allotted configuration.

Will the fields have lighting, or will it be like the current school, with no nighttime lights?

No. The Districts Middle School program does not include lights on playing fields. There will be lights in the surrounding area, like the parking lot and surrounding the school building.

PG County government has a tendency to plant trees that are highly allergenic, such as silver maple trees. Are you taking allergies into consideration in the planting and streetscape choices?

The focus of the landscape design is native species.

Are there blue light-styled emergency lights for kids/teachers/admin/staff in need of emergency support or help?

The blue light call stations are not typical for a school design. They are mostly found in more isolated areas like parking garages or unsupervised areas on college campuses.

There's currently a small river behind the construction site. Will this section be drained, as it is not noted in your visual overview of the site? If it will not, how will you plan to keep this site? Will it be the budget responsibility of the school and/or PGCPs, or will it be the community's responsibility for upkeep?

There is a sediment trap at the bottom of the site. This is how the team manages the runoff from the site. It all drains to the trap, settles out, and then discharges through gravel to a storm drain outfall location. That is for while the project is in construction. In the spring, the team will completely drain it in sections and backfill it with gravel bio media, and do landscaping. It will result in a submerged water wetland in its final condition.

Can you give us a sense of when this "later date" will be for operational questions?

The Director has reached out to the Academic team and will likely have responses in early spring once that team has started to decide on staffing and logistical operations.

What was the budget hit with the delays of 3-5%? What is the impact of the delays on the total reserves?

The financing of this model is different from typical construction financing. There is no upfront cost incurred by the school system while the school is in construction. Once the school is delivered, there will be additional costs that are factored into what we pay, which is known as an "availability payment" that will reflect any budgetary impacts to the program. However, these would be the responsibility of PGCPs. PGCPs bears the burden of site conditions as the owner of the property.

What does he mean by the developer doesn't connect to the outside sidewalks? Does he mean that they won't connect to existing sidewalks?

The developer will connect to existing sidewalks but will not make improvements to sidewalks outside the limits of the property.

Going forward, can PGCPs consider the architecture of the neighborhoods when designing new schools?

Currently, when designing new schools, the architects do look contextually at the architecture of the surrounding neighborhood when designing or selecting colors/tones.

What percentage of the electricity is being supported by solar panels (charging back to utilities), or is the idea that we are just providing vehicle charging stations?

Currently, the Program is providing the infrastructure to provide solar panels. This is something the project team is working through now, determining the potential solar capacity of the building and its ability to push back additional electricity into the grid, and its benefit to the school system as well as the surrounding community. Regarding the electric vehicle charging infrastructure, the focus would be finding a provider to navigate the challenges of having stations at a school location. The team hopes to add solar to the school prior to school opening.

Were there any changes that the Alliance has made that impacted the school?

No, there have been no design changes. There have been requests to do additional traffic studies to ensure the capacity of the roads once the school is operational. As well as requests to move toward electric buses. There have been questions on stormwater management and how that works within the construction plan, but no changes or impacts on design or the approach as we move forward.

Will the community center relocate to the new school/academy?

The community center is managed by MNCPPC as they have a portion of the Potomac landing site. That will still be there. The expected use of Potomac Landing after the school has moved to Colin L. Powell is to surplus the school back to the county for the county to determine the most efficient use of the building.

Who should we reach out to request a town hall regarding the transition? A lot of pertinent questions need to be addressed, especially with a mid-year change.

You can reach out the Raven Hill, the Associate Superintendent of Communications and Community Engagement, at raven.hill@pgcps.org.

Why would the blue lights not be included since this will have a natural wetland that won't be disturbed? I think of safety needs around water and the need to get help immediately to the area.

The project provides all the necessary safety precautions around the wetlands as required by permitting and regulations. They will be fenced, and no ready access will be provided to the wetlands. They will be protected, but blue lights were not in the requirements or regulations.

How many playgrounds are at the school?

There is one playground next to the building on the west side of the site.

What's the approximate seating capacity for the various athletic (indoor and outside) and theatre spaces?

The gymnasium capacity will fit 75% of the school population. Outside, there will be benches out by the multi-purpose and softball field. The max capacity for those areas is 30 – 40 people.

Besides a softball field, what other options were provided? With no stadium lights/setting, it prevents greater access to utilize space for possible games/activities for the school to engage in.

Other options presented were blacktop basketball courts, a baseball field, and a multi-purpose field. There is no track at the school. The lighting is a district-wide policy on middle school spaces and is not specific to this location. There are also considerations on where to place lighting to not impact surrounding houses in the neighborhood.

Can you repeat whom we should direct inquiries to so that concerns are addressed well before spring?

Raven Hill - PGCPs Communications or Dr. Kassandra Lassiter and Dr. Curry

If you do not want your child to go to Isaac J Gourdine Middle but finish the sixth grade at Apple Grove instead, what will happen?

Unfortunately, we are not able to answer. Please contact the PGCPs Enrollment office regarding school options.

Is there an indoor swimming pool?

There is no indoor swimming pool as part of this project.

Is there a plan for green roofing to recycle storm water?

Green roof areas are not a part of this project. However, the building drainage is routed to bioretention areas onsite.