



Cool Spring–Adelphi Elementary School

Project Planning Committee (PPC) Meeting #2 Minutes

Date: May 8, 2025

Time: 2:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Location: Virtual

Facilitator: Brittney Bennett, Communications Specialist, Department of Capital Programs

Attendees:

Brittney Bennett

Dahiana Edwards

Brianna Blackaby

Rosario Blanco

Joseph Howell

Pamela Boozer-Strother

Doug Ostazeski

Council Member Wanika Fisher

Moona Barikdar

Senator Malcolm Augustine

Chelsea Hill

Valerie Keil

Niki Newman-Brown

Rachelle Pardue

Summary

The second Project Planning Committee (PPC) meeting for the Cool Spring–Adelphi Elementary School project focused on reviewing the overall design, site plan, and phased construction strategy for a new 900-student facility that will consolidate Cool Spring and Adelphi Elementary Schools. The design team presented plans emphasizing safety, sustainability, and student-centered features, while stakeholders, including elected officials, raised concerns about long-term capacity, outdoor learning opportunities, traffic safety, and flexibility for future expansion. The project team responded to questions regarding site limitations, design decisions, and opportunities for community input, reaffirming that while major structural elements are largely set, feedback on interior layouts and certain features is still welcome.

Meeting Minutes

Project Purpose and Team Introductions

Brittney Bennett opened the meeting by welcoming participants and providing an overview of the goals of the Cool Spring–Adelphi Elementary School project. The project aims to combine Cool Spring and Adelphi Elementary Schools into one modern facility serving approximately 900 students, including an integrated Judy Hoyer Early Childhood Center. Attendees were introduced to the core members of the planning and design team responsible for delivering the new consolidated elementary school, including:

- PGCPS Capital Programs:
 - Director Shayla Jackson (not present)
 - Senior Mechanical Engineer Dawn Holton (not present),
 - Project Manager Joe Howell
- Gilbert Architects (Project Architect):
 - Scott Adams (not present)
 - Brianna Blackaby
- Adtek Engineers:
 - Doug Ostazeski
- PGCPS Instructional Leadership:
 - Dr. Nikki Newman Brown (Instructional Director for Cool Spring and Adelphi)

Design Overview

Brianna Blackaby, one of the project architects, presented a high-level summary of the educational and design goals for the new building. These include state-of-the-art classrooms, collaboration spaces, and sustainable design features tailored to support modern learning.

Key Features:

- Classrooms: 6 Pre-K, 6 Kindergarten, 16 Primary, 10 Intermediate, and 5 Special Needs.
- Support spaces: Library, STEAM lab, gymnasium, cafeteria, music and art rooms, breakout and collaboration zones.
- Judy Center integration and dedicated outdoor play and learning spaces.

Design Objectives:

- Safety and Security: Controlled visitor entry, secure classroom wings, and distributed administrative offices.

- Sustainability: Green roof, solar panels, geothermal heating, net-zero energy performance.
- Student Well-Being: Daylight-filled classrooms, individual restrooms, calming color palette, sound isolation.

Site Constraints and Civil Design

Doug Ostazeski, the project's civil engineer, explained the site's physical and environmental limitations, which heavily influenced the building's layout and access design.

Site challenges include:

- No swing space during construction.
- Steep grade changes across the site.
- Limited area for stormwater treatment.
- Traffic congestion at Riggs and Metzerott Roads.
- Buffer zones around an on-site stream.

Site design solutions include:

- Separate bus and vehicle access points.
- Expanded and reconfigured parking.
- Relocated Riggs Road entrance for safer traffic flow.
- Use of off-site modular construction to minimize disruption.
- Environmental and outdoor classroom areas integrated into the site plan.

Phased Construction Plan

The team outlined how the project will be delivered in phases to maintain uninterrupted school operations and meet tight construction timelines.

- Phase I:
 - Construct a new school, fields, front parking, and a temporary bus loop.
 - Students and staff remain in the current buildings until the new school is complete
- Phase II:
 - Relocate Judy Center tenants to a temporary space
 - Demolish the existing Judy Center
 - Construct the annex, additional parking, and an outdoor classroom.

- Final Phase:
 - Demolish the old Cool Spring building.
 - Complete bus loops, Metzerott entrance, and sitework.

Interior and Exterior Design

The presentation moved into more specific design elements, including architectural aesthetics and material choices.

Exterior:

- Materials: Durable faux wood siding, brick, and masonry in neutral tones.
- Design intent: A welcoming presence that complements nearby schools like Sonya Sotomayor Middle School.

Interior:

- Materials: Resilient flooring, wall protection, and acoustic panels.
- Strategy: Each floor has a unique accent color for navigation; classrooms feature calming tones.
- Focus on maintainability, wayfinding, and bright, student-centered spaces.

Community and Elected Official Feedback

Stakeholders, including elected officials, shared concerns and recommendations about school capacity, outdoor learning, and innovation. These comments sparked meaningful discussion among the project team and attendees.

Capacity Concerns:

- Councilmember Wanika Fisher questioned whether the 900-student capacity will meet future needs and advocated for larger or expandable designs.
- Senator Malcolm Augustine encouraged planning for future enrollment surges and asked if expandable shell space or a fourth floor could be included.

Outdoor Learning:

- Councilmember Fisher proposed rooftop learning gardens or yoga spaces.
- The project team responded that the rooftop will be fully covered with solar panels for the net-zero design.
- Ground-level outdoor learning, environmental classrooms, and multiple playgrounds are included.

Safety:

- Officials raised concerns about student proximity to Riggs and Metzertott Roads.
- Engineers noted retaining walls, fencing, and vegetative buffers for protection.
- Student paths through wooded areas will be blocked off for safety.

Inter-School Connectivity:

- The potential for direct access between the new school and Sonya Sotomayor Middle School was raised, highlighting broader district interests in campus integration.
- The project team explained that physical barriers, such as retaining walls and a Verizon property, prevent a direct connection between the schools.
- Though desired by community leaders, no safe or feasible pathway currently exists between the two campuses.

Discussion on Flexibility and Expansion:

Elected officials questioned whether the building design allows for flexibility, such as reconfigurable classrooms or future expansion.

- Flexible/movable classroom walls are not currently included in the design.
- Classrooms are designed for 23 students each.
- Adding another floor or shell space is not planned due to cost and time constraints, though feedback will be shared with leadership.

Questions About Process and Transparency:

Some attendees sought clarity on whether the design process remains open to feedback or whether major decisions have already been finalized.

- Senator Augustine expressed concerns that the community engagement felt “performative”.
- Brittney clarified that while structural and site limitations constrain significant changes, input on layout, design features, and future use is still welcomed and will be evaluated.

Next Steps and Engagement Opportunities

To continue the planning process, two upcoming PPC meetings were announced. These will focus on detailed floor plan feedback and potential refinements.

- PPC Meeting #3: May 22, 2025 — Elementary School Floor Plan Review
- PPC Meeting #4: June 5, 2025 — Annex Building Floor Plan Review



Community members and leaders are encouraged to email additional feedback or questions to the project team.

The meeting adjourned at 3:00 PM.