

May 23, 2018

Mr. Mark Schwartz  
Arlington County Manager  
2100 Clarendon Blvd.  
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Mr. Schwartz:

It is with pleasure that I submit for your consideration the final report of the Fire Station No. 8 History and Legacy Working Group. You created the fourteen-member Working Group to develop and recommend strategies to recognize, emphasize, and honor the history and legacy of the Hall's Hill/High View Park Volunteer Fire Department and Fire Station No. 8 to incorporate into the planning and design of the replacement fire station at 4845 Lee Highway. After seven meetings, extensive discussions, a public forum, support from County staff and individual community members, and a transparent process, our work can be summarized as follows. The Working Group:

- Believes that the rebuilt Fire Station No. 8 should be the preeminent fire station not just in Arlington County, but in the National Capital Region, and one that meets the current demand and projected future needs of its area of responsibility.
- Believes designing a state of the art fire station with the best equipment and facilities should be the first priority for this station that historically did not receive equal treatment.
- In all of its discussions, considered the impact on emergency preparedness and response systems and personnel and made clear that no recommendation should interfere with any functioning aspects of the station's operations.
- Considered the historical significance and contributions of Fire Station No. 8 to Hall's Hill/High View Park, Arlington County and the surrounding areas.
- Considered internal and external themes, concepts and designs which would be highly visible, authentic and prominent displays used as a learning experience for residents, visitors and public safety personnel.
- Members actively and constructively communicated and worked with one another, County government and the public in a civil, respectful and reasonable manner.

- Focused on transmitting a narrative to current and future generations about the historical struggles, courage, sacrifice and professionalism of Fire Station No. 8's volunteer and paid firefighters and EMS personnel.
- Balanced the need to deliver recommendations without overly prescribing levels of specificity that could "box anyone in" with particular elemental demands.
- Strongly believes Station No. 8 is a valuable community resource that extends beyond its role as an operational fire station.
- Considered fiscal implications and cost issues related to honoring the history and legacy of the Station.

On behalf of the Working Group, thank you for the opportunity to examine the important issues related to the history and legacy of Fire Station No. 8. We trust you will read the report in its entirety to make sound and reasonable decisions based on all of the available information the Working Group has compiled and analyzed. We look forward to closely following your deliberations.

Sincerely,

*Noah Simon*

Noah Simon  
Working Group Chair

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## **I. Members of the Working Group**

### **WORKING GROUP MEMBERS**

Mr. Noah Simon – Chair

Ms. Kitty Clark Stevenson – Community Member

Ms. Marguarite Gooden – John M. Langston Citizens Association

Mr. James Schroll – Public Facilities Review Committee

Ms. Lydia Cole – Community Member

Ms. Edith Gravely – Lee Highway Alliance

Mr. Richard Lolich – Lee Highway Alliance

Ms. Saundra Green – Community Member

Dr. Elizabeth Morton – Public Art Committee

Ms. Jennifer Burgin – Arlington Public Schools

Mr. Dale Smith – Community Member

Mr. Denny Truesdale Smith – Emergency Preparedness Advisory Commission

Mr. Andrew Wenchel, Jr. – Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board

Ms. Wilma Jones – Community Member

## **II. Acknowledgments**

A sincere thank you from the chair is offered to the Working Group members for their dedication, effort and service during the three months of existence of this group. Their open-mindedness, willingness to learn and listen, collegiality and thoughtfulness are truly appreciated.

We wish to express our appreciation to Arlington County staff for their responsiveness, hard work, insight, patience and collaborative approach to our collective work. Specifically, we thank June Locker, Joseph Reshetar, Kellie Brown, Rick Pinskey, Catherine Matthews, Bryna Helfer, John Stanton, Angela Adams, Deirdre Ehlen, John Liebertz, and Dr. Lindsey Bestebreurtje. We'd like to thank our meeting hosts Langston-Brown Community & Senior Center and the Lee Highway Alliance.

Finally, we want to recognize the brave men and women, past and present, in the emergency preparedness and response profession. Our firefighters, emergency

medical services personnel and emergency call center operators are heroes who work each day to save lives. For that we admire and thank you.

### **III. Background on the Formation of the Working Group**

In December 2015 the County Board created an eleven-member Task Force and approved a timeline for the group's work (through May 2016). The Task Force held its first meeting on January 14, 2016 and submitted its recommendation to the Board on June 1, 2016. By a clear consensus, Task Force members recommend as their preferred option building a new four bay station at Fire Station No. 8's current location 4845 Lee Highway. Eight members supported this position. Two members supported as their preferred option relocating Fire Station No. 8 to the 26th Street and Old Dominion Drive site and constructing a four-bay station at that location. One member abstained. To maintain neutrality, the chair did not vote. No single factor was determinate in adopting the consensus position; instead, two key factors drove the decision—service demand locations, now and in the future, and population density.

In support of the Task Force's recommendations, the Board voted in July 2016 to build a new four-bay station in the location of the existing Fire Station No. 8 at 4845 Lee Highway. With the design process slated to begin in the summer of 2018 for the replacement station and given the rich history of Fire Station No. 8, there is a shared desire to determine how this history and cultural legacy can be celebrated and included as part of the replacement station. On February 15, 2018 the County Manager established the Fire Station No. 8 History and Legacy Working Group. The fourteen-member Working Group was charged with developing and recommending strategies to recognize, emphasize, and honor the history and legacy of the Hall's Hill/High View Park Volunteer Fire Department and Fire Station No. 8 into the planning and design of the replacement fire station at 4845 Lee Highway. The Working Group's charge can be found under Appendix 1.

### **IV. Methodology**

#### *Meeting Structure and Content*

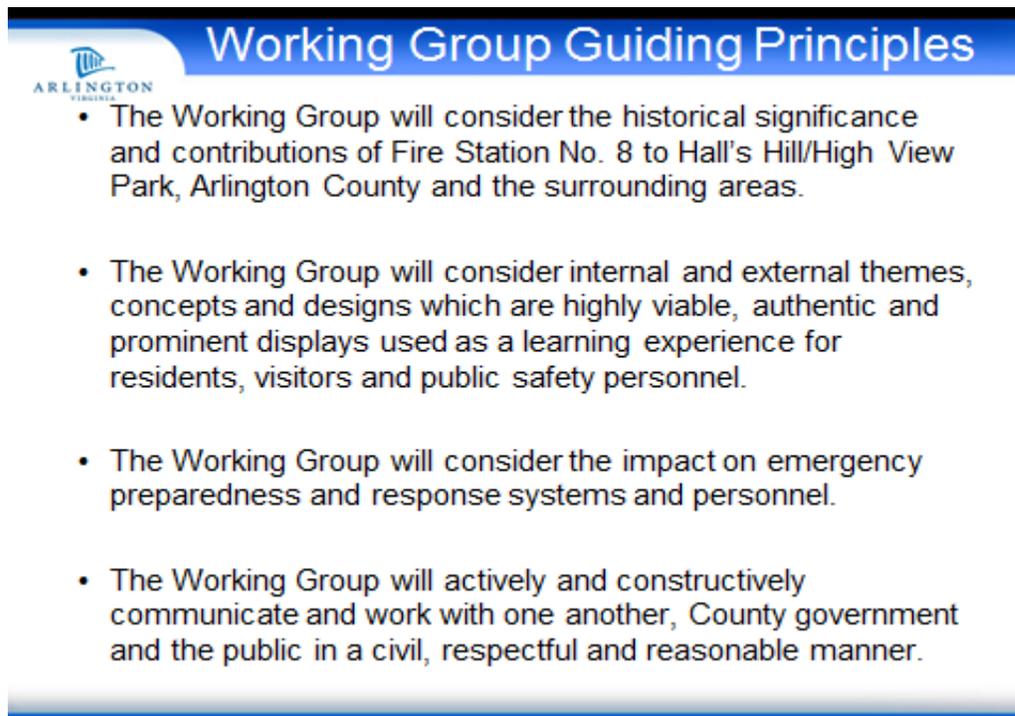
To meet the County Manager's charge, the Working Group met twice monthly, in open session, beginning March 8, 2018 and concluding May 31, 2018. Each meeting began with opening comments and announcements of relevant community meetings the chair had attended or was scheduled to attend; each meeting ended with a period of public comment. During public comment community members who had come to observe the Working Group's proceedings, addressed the Working Group.

### Meeting Presentations

Four meetings were held at Langston-Brown Community & Senior Center and three at the Lee Highway Alliance office. Following the first meeting, Working Group members toured Fire Stations No. 8. The meetings were a combination of staff presentations, group presentations, and group discussions. Following each presentation Working Group members engaged in a facilitated question and answer session. Questions that could not be readily answered were taken for the record and provided at a later point. Meeting materials included meeting agendas and presentations to include a powerful presentation of video clips of several former Fire Station No. 8 firefighters recounting their service.

### Guiding Principles

The Working Group recognized early in the process that an appointment by the County Manager to create the group was not enough to bind us together. Therefore, the Working Group created, discussed and ultimately adopted a set of Guiding Principles. The adopted Guiding Principles are below:



**Working Group Guiding Principles**

- The Working Group will consider the historical significance and contributions of Fire Station No. 8 to Hall's Hill/High View Park, Arlington County and the surrounding areas.
- The Working Group will consider internal and external themes, concepts and designs which are highly viable, authentic and prominent displays used as a learning experience for residents, visitors and public safety personnel.
- The Working Group will consider the impact on emergency preparedness and response systems and personnel.
- The Working Group will actively and constructively communicate and work with one another, County government and the public in a civil, respectful and reasonable manner.

### Community Forum

To ensure maximum transparency, a public forum was held April 14, 2018 at the Arlington Central Library. Approximately 40 people attended to share their stories of the meaning of Fire Station No. 8 and to ask questions about the Working Group's process and methodology. Community members also shared their ideas for adequately and appropriately honoring the station's history and legacy.

### Subcommittees

To further execute on the charge and build consensus, two subgroups were created—the Interior Subcommittee and the Exterior Subcommittee. Special thanks to Kitty Clark Stevenson and Marguarite Gooden for each chairing a subcommittee. The subcommittees were comprised of Working Group members. Each subcommittee gave a presentation at the fifth meeting. As the names indicate, one group focused on the outside components to be considered during the rebuild, and the other the inside of the building.

## **V. Findings**

Throughout the process, the Working Group remained committed to deliberating about issues, and crafting a report that fell within the parameters of the County Manager’s charge. In our work, we celebrated the history of the Station while honoring the legacy from the original volunteers to present day emergency responders.

As such, the Working Group’s recommendations make no mention about siting, massing, room placements, new building materials or overall layout of the station. Instead, the Working Group’s recommendations are meant to compliment the building structure and grounds as envisioned and determined in future processes. In addition, the Working Group’s recommendations are meant to compliment, not replace or encroach upon existing processes. The Working Group trusts its recommendations will be considered in the planning and design of the replacement fire station.

The entire three months of the Working Group’s existence served as a powerful learning tool for the members, staff and community. We learned that Station No. 8’s transition from volunteer to professional firefighters represented a milestone for African Americans in Arlington and the surrounding region’s struggle for equal access to employment. We learned that in 1951 Mr. Alfred Clark and Mr. Julian Syphax became the first two paid African American firefighter in Arlington, eleven years after the County paid Caucasian firefighters. We watched video interviews of African American firefighters recount the extraordinary challenges they and their comrades at Station No. 8 faced during the era of segregation and Jim Crow. The Working Group heard from Mr. Syphax about a harrowing fire response in the basement of the Pentagon in the mid-1960’s. Equally as powerful, we heard about our own Working Group member Mr. Dale Smith’s response in the Pentagon following the September 11 terrorist attacks.

The Working Group learned about the equipment Station No. 8 had to procure on their own in the station’s early days and later about the substandard equipment provided by Arlington County which included faulty hoses and a fire truck with no brakes.

We learned where Station No. 8's personnel were and weren't permitted to provide response services in Arlington County and heard about residents refusing service from African American responders. We also read testimonials from Caucasians recounting the courage and professionalism the responders of Station No. 8 showed towards all Arlingtonians during segregation.

During the deliberations, participants in our process learned Fire Station No. 8's value as a community resource that extended and continues to extend beyond its role as an operational station. Staff and members heard stories about the Station hosting barbecues, movie nights and even serving as a place to learn to play golf for African Americans who otherwise had limited access to public and private facilities. We learned how Station No. 8 provided a safe place for African Americans to gather and interact in a segregated society. We learned how responders from Station No. 8 spawned leaders in the emergency preparedness and response profession, nationwide and multigenerational. Our group was reminded throughout the process that Station No. 8 embodies a legacy of hope and history.

We learned that the men of Station No. 8 viewed their vocation as more than just a job; it was a sense of pride for them as role models in the African American communities of Hall's Hill/High View Park, Johnson Hill/Arlington View and Green Valley/Nauck. During it all, we learned about the outstanding professionalism, courage and capabilities of Station No. 8's firefighters and EMS personnel. As we heard, a survival tactic for the firefighters and the Hall's Hill, High View Park and Nauck communities was a refusal to let one's heart harden or one's joy fade in the face of irrational, deadly actions of the Jim Crow era.

We also received clarification about portions of some of our historical assumptions. As such, an informative memorandum was developed by County staff to clarify and expand on particular aspects of the history of Station No. 8. The document can be found under Appendix 2 and is recommended reading for anyone involved in future design of the Station. For future processes, projects and groups considering similar historically significant buildings, communities and/or events, the Working Group strongly recommends that at the beginning of the process, historic preservation staff should present and share all relevant historical material that could help inform and provide background and context to the topic. The Working Group believes that providing a historical baseline at the start will support the development of the most efficient and effective process and aid the decision-making and development of recommendations.

Finally, we learned about Station No. 8 as a representation of the legacy of racial segregation and unequal treatment, and the community's ability to overcome such obstacles.

Several themes arose about Station No. 8 and its personnel from presentations, discussions and written materials — themes that serve as the foundation of our recommendations:

- Excellence despite the odds
- Cornerstone of Arlington’s African American community
- Landmark
- Source of pride
- Overcoming obstacles
- Struggle
- Professionalism
- Courage
- Sacrifice
- Dedication
- Trailblazers
- Reconciliation

## **VI. Recommendations**

As previously stated, the Working Group wasn’t overly prescriptive in its level of specificity for design or public art elements which will allow the maximum flexibility for creativity in the actual building design process. However, the Working Group fully expects the concepts outlined in this section will be discussed in future interpretive development and design processes and deliberations and decisions about the rebuilt Station. All future efforts in this regard should be focused on celebrating the history of the Station while honoring its legacy.

### Exterior Components

The Working Group believes there are significant opportunities to honor the history and legacy on the exterior and surrounding areas of the Station to develop the themes mentioned above.

- *Eye Catching*—The rebuilt Station should be eye catching as people transit Lee Highway both by automobile and on foot.
- *Iconic*—The rebuilt Station should be unique in its design and not a copy of other structures in Arlington. However, the uniqueness should complement and make connections to existing structures close in proximity to include the Langston-Brown Community Center and Hall’s Hill/High View Park Gateway Park.
- *Visually Intriguing*— From the materials to the design, the rebuilt Station should draw people to the Station as a source of curiosity for learning. The transparent bay doors of Fire Station No. 1 were

discussed as a particularly intriguing element to highlight some of the interior recommendations discussed later in the report.

- *Tangible and Representative Monuments*—Elements from the past should be strongly considered in the future on and around Station No. 8's grounds. The elements should represent who the firefighters were and should help "tell a story." For example, the County should consider salvaging the front porch pillar located at the Hicks House to include in planning the new Station. The pillar's colors, location, strength and design would provide powerful symbolism linking the past, current and future eras of the Station. The County should also consider salvaging bricks and other building materials from the current station to include as representative, not structural, in the rebuilt Station.
- *Engage the Community*—The Working Group notes the considerable opportunity to make the rebuilt Station and surrounding area an educational tool for the Arlington community and beyond by building out the themes previously listed. For example, the Working Group recommends the County consider a brick or stone "Walk of Honor." The walkway would stretch from the 2209 Culpepper Street on the Hicks property to the current location symbolizing the connection to past, present and future. Each brick or stone could bear the named inscription of a volunteer, paid firefighter or EMS technician who have and are serving at Station No. 8. The walkway would stand as a physical continuum from exterior to interior. A precedent image as a concept, not replica, can be found under Appendix 3. The Working Group encourages the County to follow the development of the Stratford Historic Path Interpretive Trail for ideas and best practices.

As another example, the Working Groups recommends an outdoor, interactive electronic display(s) to help produce an interactive learning experience about the Station's important history and its trailblazers. For example, the display could feature voices or videos of the original paid firefighters and other historical figures telling their stories. Whether it is simply pushing a button or including smart-phone technology, the Working Group is technology agnostic on the delivery system and seeks a simple, sustainable interactive experience outside of the building.

### Interior Components

The Working Group believes there are significant opportunities to honor the history and legacy in the interior of the Station and develop the themes previously listed. We are keenly aware the Station will serve as a home to response personnel. Therefore, our recommendations are explicitly meant to be unobtrusive and non-disruptive to their comfort and meant in no way to impede operational activities.

- *Recognize Eras of the Station*—There are several eras of Station No. 8 upon which the County can recognize its history and legacy. The Working Group recommends the County consider dedicating various rooms in the rebuilt Station to signify certain timeframes and milestone periods. Designs could include photographic reproductions from each period, meaningful written or spoken expressions of those who served at Station No. 8, and other tangible memorabilia, where feasible.

For example, one room could represent the opening era begun in 1918 marking the establishment of the company by the African American residents of Hall's Hill. Pictures could include the 1917 Mitchell truck purchased in 1926 and pictures of other equipment or early volunteers. A second era could represent the era beginning Circa 1934 marking the construction of the fire house on the Hicks Family property at 2209 North Culpepper Street. Another room or group of rooms could represent the time period beginning Circa 1951 marking the transition from all volunteer to paid firefighters. The era beginning in 1963 recognizing the move to 4845 Lee Highway is another clear milestone worthy of recognition.

A final component when considering dedicating rooms is recognizing that the Station has produced several staff members who have moved to higher levels of leadership in the Northern Virginia region and across the nation. Station No. 8 also has produced several multigenerational family personnel which is worth noting. These trends cross several of the aforementioned eras.

Finally, there are a significant number of relics such as badges, boots and other operational gear that could be displayed in the Station's interior to reinforce and delineate certain eras of the Station and surrounding community.

- *Replica Command Board*—Command boards are standard tools in fire stations to track assignments of personnel and apparatus. The Working Group recommends the County consider memorializing the service of early volunteers and the first paid firefighters with replica command boards authentic to their corresponding eras. It is recommended that the command board include names, symbols and markings reflective of the particular timeframe. The command board would be displayed in the engine bays. A precedent image as a concept, not replica, can be found under Appendix 3.
- *Interactive Display*—The Working Group recommends use of the Station's interior to the fullest and most appropriate way for the public

to learn about the history and legacy. As such, we believe the front entrance, nonoperational indoor space could include interactive displays to harness the descriptive power of video imagery to “tell the story” of Station No. 8. A display could be either wall mounted or developed as a tabletop, understanding there is a limited amount of space to display content. Interactive displays have a natural appeal to younger visitors and a simple, ease of use would ensure visitors of all ages could benefit by using this tool. Once again, the Working Group is technology agnostic. Instead, it is focused on creating an interactive experience to relay engaging stories and historical context for the work in and around the Station. A precedent image as a concept, not replica, can be found under Appendix 3. The Working Group is aware that of all the recommendations, this particular suggestion could create potentially high costs for the County.

#### Recommendation Outside of the Charge

Throughout the process, the Working Group remained committed to both deliberating about issues and crafting a report that fell within the parameters of the County Manager’s charge. Therefore, the Working Group respectfully recommends the following:

- *Choose Local, When Possible* —As the Report clearly illustrates, Fire Station No. 8 is a valuable community resource that extends beyond its role as an operational fire station. Therefore, consistent with all applicable procurement regulations and laws, we encourage successive groups to consider local designers and artists who are familiar with the Station’s African American history and can help bring a knowledge base to on site details and characteristics about the community. Further, we recommend that Fire Station No. 8’s selected architect closely collaborate with the selected artist. The Working Group believes that the sooner the collaboration occurs in the process, the more likely our recommendations will be considered and potentially included.