



Charles County Public Schools

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October 20, 2020

Commissioners of Charles County
200 Baltimore Street
La Plata, MD 20646

**Re: School Allocation Policy Changes
Comments from Steve Andritz, CCPS**

Dear Commissioners,

My name is Steve Andritz and I am the Director of Planning and Construction for Charles County Public Schools. Below are the comments I shared at the October 20 Public Hearing regarding the Adequate Public Facilities Manual. I have been with Charles County Public Schools for 13 years and involved with the school allocation process for over 20 years. In the past, there have been changes to the policy that were made after committees and stakeholders were engaged. The changes that arose from these committees represented the best compromises based on all the data and stakeholder involvement.

I wanted to clarify and provide staff positions on several items:

- It has been presented in various public forums that Charles County Public Schools is sitting on 3,720 available school seats and that Charles County’s APF policy is the most restrictive in the state. This data is derived from the April 29, 2020 County Commissioners and Board of Education Joint Meeting, School Allocations for the Annual 2020 Cycle.
 - As of September 30, 2019, there are 793 actual seats based on State Rated Capacity (SRC) and official September 30th enrollment.
 - The 3,720 represents 110% of SRC and any added CIP capacity, scheduled to open within 18 months, as allowed by the policy.
 - The 3,720 is also the total of Elementary (1,212), Middle (350), and High (2,158).
 - The current policy requires capacity at all three levels and this is not proposed to change. The limiting level is Middle school (350) and therefore, only 350 additional allocations can be offered.

It’s all about teaching and learning.

Steven M. Andritz
Director of Planning & Construction

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- A significant proposed change allows allocations to remain valid for 5 years, as opposed to the current policy of 2 years for allocation with the ability to request an extension of 2 years. These allocations are time sensitive commodities and should be moved through the development process as quickly as possible. The current 2 year life expectancy should be ample time for a developer to record lots and permanently lock in the allocation. If more time is needed, the developer has the ability to request an extension of 2 years. The strict adherence to the time limits on allocations is even more important when you implement the change of offering allocations using the student yield factors by housing type.
- The proposed legislation allows for 800 allocations to be granted to priority development projects. This number will in essence double the amount of yearly allocations currently available through all sources; St. Charles, school allocation waiting list, bulk allocations, DRRA, and the Towns of La Plata & Indian Head. The number of allocations for priority development projects should be reduced to 400 allocations a year. This is more than adequate for any stage of development for Waldorf Station based on their Development Agreement approved by the Commissioners on July 7, 2020. This also allows for future projects.
- The legislation allows for Priority Development Project (PDP) to be exempt from school allocations if the projects are located in the Priority Funding Areas (PFA). There are a number of PFA's across the county including Waldorf, White Plains, Bryans Road, Hughesville, Benedict, Bel Alton, Newburg, Swan Point, Cobb Island and the towns of La Plata and Indian Head. Not all of these PFA's are scheduled to receive new schools, renovation/expansions of existing schools or building additions in the current CIP. Any PDP in the rural PFA's create significant challenges when new students arrive at the school and will likely result in expanded class sizes, overcrowding, the use of additional portable classrooms and future redistricting. Not all of the existing PFA's have public water and sewer or other adequate facilities.
- The draft "School APF Eligibility List 2020" presented at the April 29, 2020 Joint meeting between the County Commissioners and the Board of Education contains 28 subdivisions, 18 of which have approval dates that will be 6 years old or older by the time the legislation is passed (December 31, 2020). These 18 subdivisions need 811 allocations and 25% would allow 202 additional allocations, based on the sunset provisions.
 - The sunset provisions will add 200+ allocations a year for the next 4 years.

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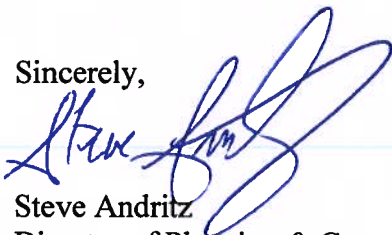
- Applying the new method of allocating to projects using the student yield factor, the projects that will be allowed to move forward in the first 4 year will generate 317 students.

The Charles County Commissioners also need to consider the development impacts that will be generated from projects within the incorporated Town of La Plata. Charles County Public Schools have several schools located within the incorporated Town of La Plata but the attendance zones for these schools serve both the County and the Town. The Town of La Plata code section 173-95 allows the Town Council to adopt the amount of yearly allocations with the caveat that “in no event shall the number of school seats available for allocation in each fiscal year be less than one hundred (100)”. The Town of La Plata has a significant development project that is looking to secure 3,100 school seats, starting in 2022, and continuing for the next 10 years. The Town of La Plata is planning for over 5,000 dwelling units for 2021 to 2032.

These additional units coupled with the changes being considered by the Commissioners will have a significant impact on Charles County’s schools and will lead to overcrowding. It can take as much as seven years to bring a new school from the planning and design phase to construction completion. With the state’s limited construction funding and the need for schools to be overcrowded before the state approves a new school, Charles County Public Schools is facing the potential of significant overcrowding and unpopular redistricting where students are moved around just to balance the overcrowding.

Charles County is a growing county and with any new development comes the pressures on existing schools for capacity and new schools. Charles County Government, in consideration of the growth in the Town of La Plata, and the Board of Education need to work together to develop changes to the APF manual that allow for controlled growth and adequate funding to build, operate, maintain and staff schools.

Sincerely,



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