

## Twelve city schools gain full accreditation

### Jefferson-Houston denied for the sixth consecutive year

BY MISSY SCHROTT AND DENISE DUNBAR

Twelve of the 16 Alexandria City Public Schools, or 75 percent, received

full accreditation for the 2017-18 school year. This is slightly below the state-wide average of 86 percent being fully accredited.

Jefferson-Houston was denied accreditation for the sixth consecutive year. Only one school in Virgin-

ia — Vernon Johns Middle School in Petersburg — has been without accreditation longer.

Despite being denied accreditation, Jefferson-Houston has made considerable improvement in its Standards of Learning test scores

during the past four years. Last year, it surpassed the state benchmark in history, but fell three points short in science and was four points low in math.

“The news for us, in

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## Council approves West End school

### Concerns remain from neighboring organization ASCD

BY ALEXA EPITROPOULOS

The planned West End elementary school at 1701 and 1705 N. Beauregard St. passed its biggest hurdle at a public hearing on Saturday when city council unanimously approved its development special use permit.

The approval means construction can begin on transforming the vacant office building into a school that

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## Bishop Ireton expansion approved

### City council reverses planning commission vote on Catholic school

BY ALEXA EPITROPOULOS

City council unanimously approved a development special use permit for Bishop Ireton's expansion at its public hearing on Saturday. The decision reversed a vote by the planning commission the previous week that had altered an agreement hammered out during a year of meetings between the school, affected neighbors and city staff.

The DSUP was formed, in part, by a long-in-the-works agreement between the Catholic school and the

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PHOTO/TINA GEHRING

## A stroll through art

A woman walks through the display of Eugene Perry's sculpture installation during the 15th Annual Alexandria Art Festival on Sept. 17.

The art festival was held last weekend and drew more than 220 artists to Old Town. Located on King Street from Washington to Union streets, the festival gave visitors the opportunity to meet the artisans and to make one-of-a-kind purchases. The Alexandria Times also participated in the art festival by inviting young artists to visit the Times table and draw with our staff. To view a selection of those drawings, please see page 14.

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“ We are so pleased that the Alexandria City Council approved the plans for the brand-new academic center. This is such a significant moment in Bishop Ireton’s history and for Catholic education in Alexandria. ... Once the new academic center is complete, it will provide much-needed classroom space, an enlarged cafeteria, and new STEM labs which will allow us to expand our curricular offerings. The future is bright for Bishop Ireton and we are grateful for all the support we’ve received from City of Alexandria as we embark on this exciting new chapter.”

– Dr. Tom Curry,  
head of school, Bishop Ireton High School



IMAGE/ MAGINNISS + DEL NINNO ARCHITECTS

Rendering of the proposed Bishop Ireton expansion, which was approved unanimously by the city council at its public hearing on Saturday.

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surrounding Clover College Park neighborhood. Bishop Ireton began hosting community meetings about a year ago and a total of eight public meetings have taken place since then.

Bishop Ireton gained approval to expand its facility by 47,000 square feet in four phases over a number of years. Issues worked out with the community included parking, safety and noise concerns.

The compromise involved a total increase of 60 parking spaces over the course of the project, from 247 to 307 spaces and a 925-student cap for the school.

When the planning commission met on Sept. 7, Vice Chairman Nate Macek and Commissioner Maria Wasowski expressed concerns about some of the conditions includ-

ed in the DSUP. The commission recommended that city council approve the DSUP, but struck several conditions from that document and directed that they be included in a separate, non-city coordinated memorandum of understanding.

The planning commission eliminated conditions from the DSUP related to renting out use of the parking lot, to events held on the exterior of the school building and to use of the school’s gymnasium and auditorium facilities and sports events on Fannon Field.

Macek said some of the conditions were overly restrictive and went beyond the role that the city should play.

“We’re overly limiting what the school is able to do with its facilities when the bottom line ought to be for a use that you’re able to use it when you’re able to use it,

regardless of whether that is for the school or for events,” Macek said at the meeting. “I think that’s going beyond what the city should require.”

Macek and Wasowski also expressed concern with limiting enrollment.

“The student population has increased all over the city and all over the region, so why should Bishop Ireton be any different?” Wasowski said. “Their population has also increased, so they should be able to accommodate that.”

At its public hearing on Saturday, city council voted to reject some of the planning commission’s recommendations. It reinstated conditions that had been relegated to the memorandum of understanding back into the DSUP, including regulation of activity on Fannon Field and the use

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**CRIME**

**Robbery near Potomac Yard**

Police are searching for a suspect who committed a robbery near Potomac Yard over the weekend.

The suspect stole a handbag from an unnamed victim while brandishing a handgun on the 2900 block

of Montrose Avenue, Alexandria police reported on Saturday. There were no injuries.

No arrests have been made at this point.

- *aepitropoulos@alextimes.com*

**Old Town bomb threat**

Police issued an “all clear” two hours after a bomb threat was made against an office building on the 600 block of Prince Street on Sunday.

The bomb threat was made against 699 Prince St., which houses the headquarters of the Center for Missing & Exploited Children. Police reported that they were in-

vestigating the threat at 8:39 p.m. and they gave the “all clear” at 10:35 p.m.

The incident follows a bomb threat made against the same building on Aug. 5. That investigation also ended in an “all clear” in a matter of hours.

- *aepitropoulos@alextimes.com*

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of the Bishop Ireton gymnasium. Councilors approved the original staff recommendation, with amendments to two conditions that regulate documents made available to the public through the school’s website and that prohibit satellite parking for nearby businesses, because it was a duplicate of another condition.

Mayor Allison Silberberg and councilors praised Bishop Ireton’s collaboration with the community at the public hearing.

“We want to recognize that BI’s new leadership is really turning a page, and we’re encouraged by that and grateful to Miss Porter and her community and Clover College Park for going to all those meetings and working together,” Silberberg said.

“I can’t tell you how much I appreciated the negotiations that went on,” Councilor Del Pepper said in the meeting. “... This is the kind of thing I like to see when you bring it here. You’ve already solved almost every last thing. This is a feeling of not ‘us against

them,’ but ‘this is our situation, we all owned the issues and we’re going to work together to solve them.’”

Silberberg cautioned the planning commission on their role moving forward.

“The planning commission has an important role to play, and we appreciate their hard work, including on the DSUP. We do pay close attention to their thoughts and concerns, but, with all due respect, I was concerned about some of the comments. It seemed to be beyond their official function as the planning commission and went into the responsibility of council,” Silberberg said.

Councilor John Chapman suggested a joint meeting with the planning commission to discuss those roles.

Bishop Ireton expects to finish both its first and second phases by 2019. The first phase will involve demolishing the Oblate House and replacing it with classroom space, a cafeteria and administrative offices and the addition of 38 parking spaces. The second phase includes adding an auxiliary gymnasium and new main entryway,

as well as the modernization and expansion of classrooms and the completion of a permanent northern parking lot. Phases three and four will be completed within five to ten years.

“We are so pleased that the Alexandria City Council approved the plans for the brand-new academic center. This is such a significant moment in Bishop Ireton’s history and for Catholic education in Alexandria,” Bishop Ireton Head of School Dr. Tom Curry said in a statement. “It’s been a massive group effort getting to this point, but we are excited to see our building project go from concept to becoming a reality. Once the new academic center is complete, it will provide much-needed classroom space, an enlarged cafeteria, and new STEM labs, which will allow us to expand our curricular offerings. The future is bright for Bishop Ireton and we are grateful for all the support we’ve received from City of Alexandria as we embark on this exciting new chapter.”

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