

**Arlington Redevelopment Board
January 11, 2016 Minutes
Town Hall Annex, Second Floor Conference Room, Town Hall – 7:00pm**

Approved: February 1, 2016

This meeting was recorded by ACMi.

PRESENT: Andrew Bunnel (Chair), Kin Lau, Andy West

ABSENT: Mike Cayer

STAFF: Laura Wiener, Ted Fields, David Fields, Joey Glushko

Non-members Present: Wendy Richter, Ann LeRoy, Joe Barr, Pam Hallett, John Worden, Wynelle Evans, Bill Copithorne, Joe Baum, John Belskis, Chris Loreti, Gabrielle Lawrence, John Carney, Bruce Fitzsimmons, Bob Bowes, Steve McKenna

Documents Used:

Application from HCA for 20 Westminster Avenue, submitted to the Zoning Board of Appeals

The Chairman opened the meeting at 7pm and stated that ACMi is recording the meeting. The Chairman turned to the first agenda item of appointing an ARB representative to Open Space Committee, Wendy Richter is proposed for this opening. Wendy Richter introduced herself to the Board and summarized her past experiences on committees within Arlington, which includes membership on the Master Plan Advisory Committee and the Master Plan Implementation Committee. Ann LeRoy, Chair of the Open Space Committee introduced herself to the Board as well. Ms. LeRoy said the group thinks Ms. Richter would be a great addition to the group. Mr. West moved to appoint Wendy Richter as ARB liaison on the Open Space Committee. Mr. Lau seconded. All voted in favor.

Ms. Wiener mentioned that in a previous meeting David Fields, Technical Planner, was appointed by the ARB to the Arlington Preservation Fund, but Mr. Fields has resigned and will be taking a position in Lexington so the Board will have to reappoint someone at a future meeting.

Mr. Bunnell moved to the agenda item of commenting to the Zoning Board of Appeals on the 20 Westminster Avenue Comprehensive Permit filed by the Housing Corporation of Arlington. Ms. Wiener summarized the proposal to create 9 affordable rental units in this former church building. A comprehensive permit is needed to build multi-family housing in a single family zone. Pam Hallett of HCA introduced herself to the Board. Mr. Lau asked where the trash would be collected at the property. Ms. Hallett clarified the new plans submitted to the Board, and discussed the new parking options within the plan.

John Worden, Jason Street, made three suggestions on behalf of the Historic District Commission. He stated that they wanted the retaining wall to be brick faced, the trash not to be at street level, and the windows to match a certain configuration. Ms. Hallett responded that by removing the parking lot from their proposal, there will be no retaining wall needed.

The Board discussed the landscaping, the use of open space, and handicap access with Ms. Hallett. Mr. West asked if HCA considered donating the open space to the Town. Ms. Hallett said that option has not been considered, but they would make every effort to make the open space accessible to the neighborhood. Mr. Bunnell asked if HCA has done any work with the Town over traffic mitigation. Ms. Hallett said they think the traffic situation is as good as it will get at Downing Square. Because there will be no parking, there will be no traffic added to town streets. Mr. Bunnell asked what input HCA has received from abutters. Ms. Hallett said that originally abutters were concerned about parking, but the parking plan has changed since then. The Board said they were fairly comfortable with the plans presented. Ms. Wiener will send a comment letter to the ZBA for the Board.

Mr. Bunnell moved to the next agenda item of Proposed Residential Zoning Amendments. This discussion is a continuation of previous ARB meeting discussions, where Town Meeting Members asked if they could present a PowerPoint. Wynelle Evans will be presenting a PowerPoint and then the floor will be opened up for

discussion. Laura Wiener added that during the Master Plan process, people commented that they wanted more revitalization, and development in commercial areas while protecting residential areas from development. The staff has been working to make modest changes to residential sections of the Zoning Bylaw to control the size of new additions and new homes.

Ms. Evans introduced herself to the Board. She participated in the Master Plan process and saw that people were concerned with new construction in Arlington and want to preserve their neighborhoods. This presentation is not to single out houses, but to show trends. Ms. Evans discussed duplexes, oversized houses, and examples of positive development throughout Town. Ms. Evans said she would like to see hearings for neighbors prior to granting demolition permits, and a policy to protect older, smaller houses that are in good shape. Regulations should also be added to protect mature trees, and new plantings. Mr. Bunnell turned the floor over for public comment.

Joe Barr, 24 Park Street, is a member of the Master Plan Implementation Committee. He said he is hopeful that between the multiple committees working on this issue the Town can work to resolve these problems.

Bill Copithorne said that many of these homes are being sold by longtime Arlington residents to a developer. Some of these restrictions are going to make it impossible for some development on these properties. He said he doesn't know any developer that is going to cut down a tree that he doesn't have to cut down. The idea of replanting trees could be helpful, but some of the regulations proposed could be a hindrance to future development.

John Worden, Jason Street, reviewed the five articles presented by his group. These articles address the height issue, the half stories added to houses, increasing the minimum space between homes, large residential additions and new buildings within the original footprint, and lastly, the issue of two garages with wide curb cuts. Mr. Worden also discussed how to keep backyards in undersized and oversized lots.

Joe Baum, 74 Mystic Street, pointed out that each of these duplexes employs 30-40 people. This amendment will put many people out of a job. The buildings that everyone is set on preserving are often not energy efficient, and some are structurally unsound. The rebuilt houses sell very quickly, so there is a market for them currently.

John Belskis, Town Meeting Member from Precinct 18, said that Arlington has worked hard to create affordable housing, but we are losing affordable housing by taking small homes off the market and selling them to developers.

Chris Loreti, Town Meeting Member, does not view this as a way to prevent redevelopment. The issue is more about if the structures being built remain consistent with the spirit of the Bylaw. Mr. Loreti encouraged attendees to wait for the details that will be presented by the Board at future public hearings that are required for this issue. He also suggested looking at the larger existing buildings from 50-100 years ago, and see how they compare with the new construction.

Gabrielle Lawrence, 109 Bartlett, said she has watched the real estate market closely in recent years and the original home owners who are selling homes are not the ones making the money. Mr. Baum said homeowners are making money, but the developers are making more.

Ted Fields presented what the Planning Department and staff are proposing. Ms. Wiener clarified that this is the same proposal that was presented at the last meeting. Mr. Bunnell said the Board does not want people to be out of jobs, but simply that new and rebuilt buildings are consistent with the existing character of homes in Arlington.

Mr. Baum said if these amendments pass it will be impossible to build any more duplexes. The concern seems to be more over the way these buildings look, but the restrictions on square footage would put a lot of people out of work.

David Fields presented drawings that show maximum building size under current zoning and under the proposed zoning amendments. John Carney, Richfield Road, suggested making it easier to build 2 single width driveways on a lot, which now is allowed only by special permit. If this were allowed, many builders would prefer it to underground parking. It is currently allowed in Watertown and Belmont.

Mr. Lau asked Mr. Carney if he is building single family homes that are 5,000 sqft, because that is what is being discussed with David Fields examples. The Board said this issue should be discussed with a future example of two-family homes because the variables will change depending on what type of home is being discussed.

Ms. Lawrence stated this conversation seems more about scale, and keeping houses in proportion to the lot it is built on. The Board can't really regulate how a house looks, besides regulating building materials. Mr. Ted Fields agreed that this is about the size and the scale of the house.

Ms. Evans said the community is very different than when she moved here. The population is changing with the increased home prices. The Town should be for a wider array of people, not just people who can afford a 1 million dollar home.

Steve McKenna, 4 Upton Road, said that Arlington is more affordable than almost all of its surrounding towns. Buyers are moving into Arlington and staying in Arlington; the Town is in a period of growth right now.

Wendy Richter, said 'mansionization' was the word continually brought up through the Master Plan discussions, along with the issue of double underground garages. Even though the Board is saying they are not talking about aesthetics, that is an issue that Ms. Richter would like to see addressed.

Mr. McKenna suggested looking at the zoning as a whole, rather than small tweaks that would only influence a select number of homes in Arlington.

The Board expressed their appreciation to all the attendees for their input. The discussion will continue.

Mr. Bunnell moved to the next agenda item, the approval of minutes from December 7, 2015. Mr. Lau moved to approve the minutes of December 7, 2015. Mr. West seconded. All voted in favor.

Mr. Bunnell moved to the agenda item of Correspondence Received. Ms. Wiener said the first piece of correspondence is from two members of the Capital Planning Committee, Stephen Andrew and Barbara Thornton regarding the Capital Planning Request for Central School Feasibility Study in FY17, dated December 10, 2015. They would like to attend the next meeting to discuss further. Mr. Bunnell recommended that Christine Bongiorno, Director of Health and Human Services, attend as well to give a comprehensive overview of the feasibility study. Ms. Wiener said there is also a flyer in the packet for the Housing Production Plan. The first public meeting is February 2, 2016. The third piece of correspondence is from Christian Klein for the Board, dated December 4, 2015.

The Board discussed the next steps that should occur as a follow up to tonight's discussion. Mr. Bunnell said he is not sure if they are ready to go forward to Town Meeting based on this discussion. Mr. Lau agreed and said the proposed amendments should be vetted on two-family homes. Mr. Bunnell stated he thinks the business community has to be on board with these changes in some capacity in order for this to be effective in Arlington. Mr. West added that the point of this is to devise techniques to achieve more compatible development, but it is not the intention to put people out of business.

Mr. Bunnell recommended putting in a more general warrant article, which could be taken off the table if necessary. Mr. West agreed. The Board discussed upcoming meeting dates. February 1 will be a discussion of the Mixed Use zoning amendments. The schedule for the rest of February will be determined at the 2/1/16 meeting.

Mr. West moved to adjourn. Mr. Lau seconded. All voted in favor.