

**Arlington Redevelopment Board
February 1, 2016 Minutes
Central School, Lower Level Meeting Room – 7:00pm**

Approved: February 29, 2016

This meeting was recorded by ACMi.

PRESENT: Andrew Bunnell (Chair), Mike Cayer, Kin Lau, Andy West

ABSENT:

STAFF: Laura Wiener, Ted Fields

Documents Used:

Letter from the Capital Planning Committee dated December 10, 2015

Lease amendment for Mystic River Watershed Association dated February 17, 2016

Memo from Laura Wiener and Ted Fields dated January 27, 2016

Proposed Zoning Bylaw Amendment, revised by Laura Wiener dated January 26, 2016

The Chairman opened the meeting at 7pm and stated that ACMi was recording the meeting. The Chairman turned to the first agenda item, a discussion with the Capital Planning Committee about the Central School. Steven Andrew and Barbara Thornton of the Capital Planning Committee (CPC) were present for the discussion. Mr. Bunnell reviewed a letter submitted by the Capital Planning Committee to the ARB stating that a capital fund request to repair the Central School and other buildings in the civic block were not being recommended for funding by the CPC. Ms. Thornton said that Christine Bongiorno was working with an architect to get an estimate of what needs to be done in the building, and the Capital Planning Committee did not have an estimate at the time of the funding request.

Mr. Cayer pointed out that Ms. Bongiorno is addressing the needs of the Senior Center, but there are other tenants and uses going on in that building as well. If the major projects such as the stairs and doors aren't fixed, then no tenant is going to want to lease the space in the future.

Ms. Thornton said that a request for improving the infrastructure would be easier for them to support than one for senior services.

Mr. Lau suggested making a plan with short term fixes and longer term fixes that support the Master Plan. Mr. Andrews agreed that would be productive. Ms. Thornton added that Capital Planning was not trying to advocate for a particular use of the civic block buildings, but to keep in mind how this area will be used for civic purposes in general. Mr. West asked how to start the process of looking at the bigger picture. Ms. Wiener said she would like to talk to the Town Manager first, and then the Master Plan Implementation Committee. This is on the Master Plan Implementation list for the near future.

Mr. Bunnell moved on to the agenda item of the lease amendment for Mystic River Watershed Association (MyRWA). Ms. Wiener summarized MyRWA's use of the space in the Central School. They have asked for 305 additional square feet. The Town is proposing to expand their leased space at the same rate they are currently paying, by moving them into a space now occupied by the Building Craftsman, who can be moved to another space. Mr. West moved to accept this amendment to the lease as described and authorize the Chairman to sign the lease. Mr. Lau seconded. All voted in favor.

Mr. Bunnell turned to the next agenda item of the mixed use zoning amendment discussion. Ted Fields, Economic Development Planner summarized the proposed changes in the amendments, which have a goal to rejuvenate commercial properties and revitalize the business districts. Mr. Fields turned the floor over to the Planning Department's consultants, David Gamble and Brian Gregory. They presented a Powerpoint that showed what could be built under the proposed mixed use zoning. On a 10,000 square foot lot, a mixed use development with four stories, 3000 square feet of commercial space, 8 residential units of 675-900 square feet, and parking for 15 vehicles was possible.

Mr. Bunnell introduced members of the Master Plan Implementation Committee, Charlie Kalauskus, Joe Barr

and Ralph Willmer. Mr. Kalasuskas stated that mixed use is not a new concept in Arlington, but it is coming back in a new form. The Master Plan Implementation Committee fully supports this form of redevelopment and revitalization. It would also be revenue positive for the Town. Mr. Barr discussed the Master Plan Implementation Committee's support of the proposed parking changes, which are in keeping with what many communities are doing by reducing the required parking where transit is accessible. Mr. Barr added that not forcing a developer to meet all parking requirements could result in more productive use of the available space.

Mr. Cayer asked for clarification of the table provided for Article 6. How far back is the step back on each building? Mr. Fields said that standard has not been determined yet. Ms. Wiener said they would take the advice of Gamble and Associates to determine that measurement. Mr. Cayer said he could see a four story with step back working within the landscape of Arlington, but not necessarily a five story building with a step back.

Mr. Lau asked how affordable housing is encouraged in mixed use developments. Ms. Wiener stated that the Zoning Bylaw requires that when there are more than 6 units, 15% have to be affordable. Mr. Lau asked how the Town could encourage more, above and beyond what is required right now. Mr. Lau also suggested that a balcony could be encouraged to be greater than five feet, because if five feet is stated as a minimum no one will build greater than that. This could be accomplished during design review.

Mr. West said he liked the idea of incentive packages for a developer to trade off one change for something else beneficial for the Town or that particular development. Mr. West said the step back after the third floor is concerning to him. Mr. Gregory discussed five foot step backs are easier to accomplish than ten foot step backs. Mr. West noted that the top floor is often the most desirable space.

Mr. Bunnell opened the floor to public comment. Chris Loreti, 56 Adams Street, asked how many lots on Broadway actually conform to the example presented by Gamble and Associates. He stated he thinks this example is unusual. Mr. Loreti suggested that the Board think about the implications of the floor area ratio requirement based on the lot size. Mr. Loreti added that he was surprised to see no proposals to re-zone certain parcels in core business areas. Ms. Wiener responded that this is also a priority but it could not all be accomplished in one year. Mr. Loreti referenced the visual preference survey portion of the Master Plan; he encouraged the Board to review the results, and see that most people do not want five story buildings in Arlington. He added that the charming, smaller chain shops will not necessarily be able to afford the ground floor retail space in new development.

Bob Bowes asked if the Bylaw will address existing properties. If a developer wanted to dramatically change old units, and renovate more than 50% of the building would they have to comply with current zoning requirements? Mr. Lau said he did not think that statement was correct if a developer was not changing the footprint. Staff will follow up.

Jill Mirak, 1167 Mass Ave, asked whether mixed use would apply to industrial zones, and is there any possibility of mixing residential into an industrial zone. Mr. Fields said the response was mixed during the Master Plan process. Some people favored maintaining the industrial zones without allowing any residential, to maintain areas for services and jobs. Ms. Wiener discussed options for allowing some residential uses within industrial zones, but not proposed in this round of zoning changes. Ms. Wiener suggested it could be addressed next year.

Pam Hallet, Housing Corporation of Arlington, asked if an owner could request that their parcel be rezoned. The Board said that an owner can make that request to Town Meeting. Ms. Hallet suggested that perhaps the units being shown in this example are too small, because there are a lot of affordable housing units that are simply too small. Mr. Lau said he thought the size of the units was spot on in terms of the market.

Mr. Willmer of the Master Plan Implementation Committee said it is important to note that these presentations are just an example of what could happen. The zoning does not determine the size of a unit. That is the developer's decision.

Cynthia Campobasso, 298 Mass Ave, said that with some of the rental units that her company owns, they receive feedback from people saying they do not have enough furniture to fit a 1000 sf unit. A 600 sf one-bedroom unit should be able to accommodate a queen size bed.

Mr. Bunnell said these issues will be further discussed at the Public Hearing on March 7, 2016. Mr. Bunnell moved on to the parking discussion. Ms. Wiener summarized the proposed changes for the Board and Mr. Barr explained how the changes coincide with the Master Plan process.

Mr. Loreti asked to confirm that as the changes read now, the Board could say to an applicant they don't need any parking. The Board confirmed. Mr. Loreti said that leaves a tremendous amount of uncertainty for a developer.

Ms. Campobasso said a developer would know not to put up a five story building with zero parking spaces. She added that about 1 in 4, or 1 in 5 applicants that come through her office do not need a parking space.

Mr. Bunnell moved to the agenda item of the upcoming scheduled meetings. The next meeting is proposed for Feb. 29.

Mr. Bunnell moved to the agenda item of January 11, 2016 meeting minutes. Mr. Lau moved to approve the minutes of January 11, 2016. Mr. West seconded. Mr. Cayer abstained. All voted in favor.

Mr. Bunnell moved to the agenda item of new business. Mr. Lau asked to put further discussion of the Central School on the agenda. The Board agreed.

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