

From: "Jenny Raitt" <JRaitt@town.arlington.ma.us>
To: "Mary Muszynski" <MMuszynski@town.arlington.ma.us>
Date: Mon, 26 Oct 2020 11:31:47 -0400
Subject: Fwd: Proposed Article 18 and 19

Jennifer Raitt
Director, Department of Planning and Community Development
Town of Arlington

Arlington values equity, diversity, and inclusion. We are committed to building a community where everyone is heard, respected, and protected.

From: Elizabeth Pyle <elizabeth.m.pyle@gmail.com>
To: Jenny Raitt <JRaitt@town.arlington.ma.us>, Erin Zwirko <EZwirko@town.arlington.ma.us>
Cc: Eugene Benson <EBenson@town.arlington.ma.us>, KLau@town.arlington.ma.us,
DWatson@town.arlington.ma.us, RZseberry@town.arlington.ma.us, KLevine-Einstein@town.arlington.ma.us
Date: Mon, 26 Oct 2020 11:24:50 -0400
Subject: Proposed Article 18 and 19

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the Town of Arlington's email system. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the REAL sender (whose email address in the From: line in "< >" brackets) and you know the content is safe.

Dear Members of the Redevelopment Board and the Arlington Planning Department,

I am writing to strongly urge you to vote "no" on proposed Article 18, which would eliminate single family housing in Arlington, and on proposed Article 19, which would permit Accessory Dwelling Units ("ADUs").

For three years, I was a volunteer member of Arlington's Residential Zoning Study Group (the "RSG"), which was an advisory panel created by Town Meeting in 2016 to study the impact of new development and zoning changes in Arlington's residential districts. The RSG's members consisted of diverse stakeholders within the Town, including citizens, realtors, developers, and representatives from Town boards and offices.

The overriding take-away from the RSG's 3-year analysis of zoning and residential development in Arlington was that even small changes can have enormous unintended negative consequences, and that any changes to the Town's Zoning Bylaw must be carefully studied before implementation.

Based upon my time in the RSG, and also my professional experience as a zoning and land use attorney for 20 years, it is clear that Article 18's proposal to eliminate single-family housing in Arlington would have drastic negative consequences for our community. Although the Article's proponents claim that Article 18 would increase affordability and diversity in the Town, the opposite effect is likely to occur instead.

In the RSG, we learned that the two-family zoning districts in Arlington are already targets for developers to maximize profits by ripping down affordable single and two-family starter homes and replacing them with luxury two-family homes that often sell for more one million dollars for each unit. If single family zoning is eliminated, it will be giving carte blanche to developers to tear down existing affordable housing stock in Town and replace it with luxury duplexes, further driving up prices and decreasing affordability. In short, in the context of Arlington, where demand for luxury condominiums far outstrips supply, elimination of single-family zoning will hurt the laudable goals of affordability and diversity. Article 18 will have the effect of replacing older, more affordable housing stock with new, unaffordable luxury housing.

Article 18 is the type of zoning change that the RSG would have reviewed for unintended consequences if the group was still in existence. Since the RSG is no longer meeting, and since all public debate is curtailed at this time because of the Covid-19 pandemic, I strongly urge you to vote "no" on this change, which will have far reaching negative consequences for Arlington.

As to Article 19, Town Meeting last year rejected an ADU proposal that contained safeguards to ensure that accessory dwellings were used properly, and to ensure that ADUs would not become de-facto two-family houses that would create an incentive for tear down/rebuilds on larger building footprints. The RSG reviewed the 2019 ADU proposal and voted "no action" on it, in part because of concerns expressed by the Fire Chief and Inspectional Services that public safety would not be protected in the event of a fire. Members of the RSG also believed that a "task force" should be created to further study ADUs, and that such a group should include the Fire Chief and representation from Inspectional Services. Despite the RSG's recommendation, no such "task force" was ever convened, and this new Article 19 does not even contain the same provisions to protect against unintended consequences as were present in last year's proposal. Therefore, I urge the Redevelopment Board to vote "no" on Article 19 until such time as a task force is convened with varied stakeholders to ensure that ADUs are managed responsibly for our Town, without creating unintended negative consequences.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments. Please ensure that this email is circulated to all current members of the Redevelopment Board.

Sincerely yours,

Elizabeth M. Pyle
Town Meeting Member, Precinct 10
Former member of Arlington's Residential Zoning Study Group
66 Gloucester Street
Arlington, MA 02476
781-643-4913