

Arlington Redevelopment Board
October 22, 2020, 7:30 p.m.
Remote Open Meeting
Meeting Minutes

This meeting was recorded by ACMi.

PRESENT: Rachel Zsembery (Chair); David Watson; Eugene Benson; Kin Lau; Katie Levine-Einstein

STAFF: Jennifer Raitt, Director, Planning and Community Development; Erin Zwirko

The Chair opened the meeting at 7:30pm with warrant articles for the Special Town Meeting. The first article was number 20, zoning bylaw amendment with parking reductions in B3 and B5 district.

Ms. Raitt explained that granting variances due to parking shortages would saturate most of the small developable lots along Mass Ave; that they are trying to find alternatives to vehicle use; and the warrant article is consistent with the Master Plan.

The Chair opened the meeting to the Board. Ms. Levine-Einstein, Mr. Benson, Mr. Watson, and Mr. Lau supported the article.

The Chair turned the meeting to the public.

Chris Loreti stated the Planning memo is misleading and recommended further study.

[Darcy Judney] was concerned about requests for overnight parking waivers and insufficient handicapped parking for residential buildings.

The Chair turned the meeting to the Board.

Mr. Benson clarified that the proposed change to the bylaw applies to businesses only, not residential.

The Chair stated it is added as one of the potential options that the Board may consider in addition to the other requirements already included.

The Chair moved to the next item, Article 16, open space definitions.

Ms. Raitt stated the intention is to make definitions of open space more usable.

Petitioner Steve Revilak stated the article proposes to change the terms "open space," "open space usable," and "open space landscape" but does not propose to change the definitions or associated regulations.

The Chair turned the meeting to the Board.

Ms. Levine-Einstein supported the article, as did Mr. Benson, who also suggested the terms "open space," "open space usable," and "open space landscape" be changed to "private open space," "private open space usable," and "private open space landscape" be changed across the board, if possible. Ms. Raitt stated she would follow up with Town Counsel. Mr. Lau agreed with Mr. Benson, as did Mr. Watson, who favored making the distinction between private and public.

Mr. Revilak supported Mr. Benson's suggestion to use the term "private."

The Chair turned the meeting to the public.

John Worden stated this is a solution in search of a problem and did not see the point in bringing in new definitions.

Patricia Worden stated the article is an attempt to confuse the definition of open space and could be damaging to Town Meeting.

Carl Wagner called the article an obfuscation, and its long term goal is to devalue open space for the benefit of density and urbanization.

Don Seltzer questioned the sense of burdening Town Meeting with a "semantic quibble" at this time.

Chris Loreti stated Mr. Revilak's article is unnecessary and his changes add to confusion. He stated it is not up to Town Counsel but to Moderator to make changes across the board. He suggested the Board vote it down but if not, adopt Mr. Benson's recommendations.

Steve Moore asked if "sidewalks" in yard space include public sidewalks. Ms. Raitt clarified that definitions in the zoning bylaw would not be changed but pertain to everything within a private lot. Mr. Lau confirmed public sidewalks do not count, only spaces within the property line.

Mr. Revilak confirmed Ms. Raitt's statement that the only changes to the definitions are the strikeouts and additions in red, and is not proposing further changes.

The Chair turned the meeting to the Board. There were no further comments.

The Chair moved to the next item, Article 17, zoning bylaw amendment, notice of demolition et al., adding a sentence requiring Building Inspector approval of applicant compliance.

Ms. Raitt stated this is a wise companion to the "Good Neighbor Agreement" that should be added to the zoning bylaw.

Michael Ruderman, proponent, stated the article was about giving adequate notice to residents as to scope and schedule of projects in the area.

Mr. Lau asked Mr. Ruderman whether under this amendment, the Building Department would not be allowed to issue a permit unless the good neighbor policy is put in place. Mr. Ruderman answered yes. Mr. Lau supported the article.

Ms. Levine-Einstein supported the article.

Mr. Watson stated the article was unnecessary because such a requirement is already in Article 7. Mr. Benson agreed and asked Mr. Ruderman if there were instances of noncompliance. Mr. Ruderman stated that while some neighbors had received notice of compliance, others hadn't, and still others could not remember, and that improvements could be made. Mr. Benson called it a "belt plus suspenders" scenario, and if this hasn't been a problem since the article was adopted in July 2019, he didn't see the need to add it. He also had an issue with the wording. Mr. Ruderman stated he would seek examples of noncompliance.

The Chair turned the meeting to the public.

Steve Moore supported "belt and suspenders" because compliance doesn't always go smoothly, and addresses tree removal and site prep.

Peter Fiore supported the amendment and described how the Good Neighbor Agreement worked for him.

Don Seltzer clarified some dates pertaining to the Good Neighbor Agreement.

Chris Loreti stated the amendment does not add any new compliance requirements but strengthens the ones already in place.

The Chair supported the amendment, agreeing with Mr. Moore.

Mr. Lau stated only trees in setbacks require approval before owner removal. Mr. Moore agreed with Mr. Lau.

Mr. Loreti suggested changes to parking in B3 and B5 districts to avoid apartment operators claiming they are operating a business, and should allow for Board discretion entirely.

The Chair requested a motion to continue to October 26. Mr. Watson so moved, Mr. Lau seconded. The Board voted unanimously in favor.

Meeting adjourned.