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Subject: testimony re MGL 40A requirement for MBTA Communities

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February 7, 2021

Re: MBTA Community Overlay District

Dear Chairperson Zsembery and members of the Redevelopment Board,

With respect to the Planning Department's suggestions for Zoning Bylaw Amendments pertaining to zoning for MBTA communities it would be best for Arlington to avoid proposing changes which greatly maximize profits to developers incentivizing speculation while causing overcrowding, loss of trees and valued businesses and open space. Instead, the Planning Director should seek to ensure that the Governor's requirements are satisfied without the draconian density increases and destruction to thriving businesses that her proposals would enable and that are much in excess of the Governor's requirements. (It is a sad commentary that, although Arlington's Master Plan emphasizes that the housing which Arlington needs is affordable housing, the Governor's requirements are only for 10% affordable units –lower than Arlington's own 15% affordability. That is an example of the Governor's emphasis on developer's preference for more lucrative market and luxury construction rather than the needs of lower income families.)

There are many facets of the damage that her proposals could cause. As a former member of the Arlington School Committee I will mention just two of these:

First, the area of East Arlington which is designated for MBTA community changes is very close to two of the most crowded schools in Arlington. It should not be forced to accommodate increased population or build a new school (for which there is no land);

Second, the feeding frenzy of landowner/developer speculation caused by the Planning Director and Arlington Redevelopment Board's continuous attempts to greatly increase housing density (mercifully thus far unsuccessful) would be exacerbated by these proposals. It has already caused damage for our high school students by enabling destruction of the renovated video lab opposite the high school which students used. That was permitted by you to be replaced together with restaurants in that block – destroyed last week to make way for apartments which violate Arlington's Zoning Bylaw.

There is much more that could be said about the importance of caution in the zoning proposals that you decide upon. It is to be hoped that your decisions are in accordance with your responsibilities under Section 1.2 of the Zoning Bylaw of the Town of Arlington.

Sincerely,

Patricia Barron Worden

Please include this testimony with materials for the meeting on February 8, 2021 – MBTA Community District.