



**Town of Arlington, Massachusetts**  
Department of Planning & Community Development  
730 Massachusetts Avenue, Arlington, Massachusetts 02476

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## **Public Hearing Memorandum**

*The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the Arlington Redevelopment Board and public with technical information and a planning analysis to assist with the regulatory decision-making process.*

**To:** Arlington Redevelopment Board

**From:** Jennifer Raitt, Secretary Ex Officio

**Subject:** Environmental Design Review, 49 & 51 Grove Street, Arlington, MA  
Docket #2150 as amended by Docket #2618

**Date:** February 16, 2021

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### **I. Docket Summary**

This is an application by the Town of Arlington, 730 Massachusetts Avenue, Arlington MA, to consolidate Town operations, including Public Works, Inspectional Services, Facilities, and Information Technical, through the renovation of four existing buildings, construction of one new building, site improvements, and construction of ancillary support features at the Department of Public Works Yard, 49 and 51 Grove Street, Arlington, MA in the Industrial District. The reopening of the Special Permit is to allow the Board to review and approve the development under Section 3.4, Environmental Design Review.

Materials submitted for consideration of this application:

- Application for EDR Special Permit;
- Zoning and Layout Plan, prepared by Weston & Sampson, dated January 4, 2021;
- Existing Conditions Plan, prepared by Weston & Sampson, dated February 16, 2018;
- Overall Layout and Materials Plan, prepared by Weston & Sampson, dated January 22, 2021;
- West and East Layout and Materials Plan, prepared by Weston & Sampson, dated January 22, 2021;

- Utility Plan, prepared by Weston & Sampson, dated January 22, 2021;
- Overall Grading and Drainage Plan, prepared by Weston & Sampson, dated January 22, 2021;
- West and East Grading and Drainage Plan, prepared by Weston & Sampson, dated January 22, 2021;
- Landscaping and Planting Plan, prepared by Weston & Sampson, dated January 22, 2021;
- Planting Details, prepared by Weston & Sampson, dated January 22, 2021;
- Building Plans, prepared by Weston & Sampson, dated November 20, 2020;
- Renderings of the redeveloped DPW Yard;
- Proposed Building Materials for Building E; and
- LEED Checklist, dated January 21, 2021.

The Project involves the renovation of four buildings and the construction of one new building, plus the replacement of operations support features such as the fuel island and the salt shed. As part of this effort, two of the existing salt shed buildings will be demolished. The new, approximately 38,000 square foot, building will include office/administrative space, motor equipment repair maintenance area, trade shops, and a vehicle wash bay. A new salt shed will also be constructed.

Town Meeting recently rezoned a portion of the DPW complex at the Special Town Meeting in November 2020. A portion of the property was zoned R1, which prohibits municipal public works yards and associated maintenance, storage, and office facilities. The ARB recommended favorable action on the rezoning.

## II. Application of Special Permit Criteria (Arlington Zoning Bylaw, Section 3.3)

### 1. Section 3.3.3.A.

**The use requested is listed as a Special Permit in the use regulations for the applicable district or is so designated elsewhere in this Bylaw.**

A municipal public works yard and associated maintenance, storage, and office buildings require a special permit. Some of the buildings on the site date to 1920, and no significant changes have been made the property since the 1970s. The Board can find that this condition is met.

### 2. Section 3.3.3.B.

**The requested use is essential or desirable to the public convenience or welfare.**

The Department of Public Works is essential to the operation of the Town. The existing buildings are outdated, undersized, and contain code deficiencies and inefficiencies to property support the operations of DPW and the other departments accommodated at the site. The proposed renovation will properly accommodate the Town operations that occur at the site. The Board can find this condition is met.

**3. Section 3.3.3.C.**

**The requested use will not create undue traffic congestion or unduly impair pedestrian safety.**

The existing traffic and circulation patterns will be improved. Site access is a bit haphazard currently, although the non-public areas of the DPW Yard are restricted by a gate. The proposed redevelopment of the site will create a counterclockwise vehicle path utilizing the existing curb cuts from Grove Street for the DPW vehicles, with clear direction to parking for personal vehicles and recycling drop off. Sidewalks will be reconstructed with concrete along Grove Street and internal to the site. The Board can find this condition is met.

**4. Section 3.3.3.D.**

**The requested use will not overload any public water, drainage or sewer system or any other municipal system to such an extent that the requested use or any developed use in the immediate area or in any other area of the Town will be unduly subjected to hazards affecting health, safety, or the general welfare.**

The DPW Yard has operated at this site for many decades, and it will not overload the public water, drainage, or sewer system. The redevelopment of the site will be sensitive to the presence of the historic contamination and the design takes steps to mitigate any future intrusions to the engineered barriers and direct contact barriers. The Board can find this condition met.

**5. Section 3.3.3.E.**

**Any special regulations for the use as may be provided in the Bylaw are fulfilled.**

There are no special regulations for this particular use. The Board can find this condition met.

**6. Section 3.3.3.F.**

**The requested use will not impair the integrity or character of the district or adjoining districts, nor be detrimental to the health or welfare.**

The continuation of the DPW yard use and space for other Town departments will not impair the integrity or character of the district or adjoining districts, nor be detrimental to the health and welfare. The Board can find this condition is met.

**7. Section 3.3.3.G.**

**The requested use will not, by its addition to a neighborhood, cause an excess of the use that could be detrimental to the character of said neighborhood.**

The use will not be in excess or detrimental to the character of the neighborhood. The DPW Yard has existed at this location for decades. The Board can find this condition is met.

III. Environmental Design Review Standards (Arlington Zoning Bylaw, Section 3.4)

1. EDR-1 Preservation of Landscape

**The landscape shall be preserved in its natural state, insofar as practicable, by minimizing tree and soil removal, and any grade changes shall be in keeping with the general appearance of neighboring developed areas.**

The existing site condition is developed. The paved surfaces existing on the site provide a contact barrier to historic soil contamination and will continue to do so. Some landscaping exists on the perimeters of the property, which will be replaced with native plantings per the Order of Conditions from the Conservation Commission. The Board can find this condition is met.

2. EDR-2 Relation of the Building to the Environment

**Proposed development shall be related harmoniously to the terrain and to the use, scale, and architecture of the existing buildings in the vicinity that have functional or visible relationship to the proposed buildings. The Arlington Redevelopment Board may require a modification in massing so as to reduce the effect of shadows on the abutting property in an R0, R1 or R2 district or on public open space.**

The redevelopment of the site will not change the use of the site as a DPW Yard. Four buildings will be renovated, and another new building will be constructed, all with industrial style buildings suited for the function of a DPW Yard and Town Departments. The new building will seamlessly blend into the arrangement of the existing buildings on site and takes cues in terms of the material selections from the historic Arlington Gas Works Building presently existing on the site. Other features on the site, including the fuel island and the salt shed, will be relocated toward the rear of the site, creating an inviting streetscape for customers and visitors to this municipal complex. The Board can find this condition is met.

3. EDR-3 Open Space

**All open space (landscaped and usable) shall be so designed as to add to the visual amenities of the vicinity by maximizing its visibility for persons passing by the site or overlooking it from nearby properties. The location and configuration of usable open space shall be so designed as to encourage social interaction, maximize its utility and facilitate maintenance.**

There is no requirement for landscaped open space or usable open space for this use in the Industrial District. As noted throughout the application materials, the operational needs of the facility and the below grade historic contamination make it difficult to

provide large expanses of open space. Landscaping is provided at the perimeter of the property and in strategic locations of the renovated complex. The Board can find that this condition is met.

**4. EDR-4 Circulation**

**With respect to vehicular and pedestrian and bicycle circulation, including entrances, ramps, walkways, drives, and parking, special attention shall be given to location and number of access points to the public streets (especially in relation to existing traffic controls and mass transit facilities), width of interior drives and access points, general interior circulation, separation of pedestrian and vehicular traffic, access to community facilities, and arrangement of vehicle parking and bicycle parking areas, including bicycle parking spaces required by Section 6.1.12 that are safe and convenient and, insofar as practicable, do not detract from the use and enjoyment of proposed buildings and structures and the neighboring properties.**

The redevelopment of the DPW Yard will provide 135 parking spaces, which exceeds what is required for the Town of Arlington departments that will operate in the buildings. However, this site could provide overflow parking for other municipal facilities, including the adjacent Arlington High School complex. The ARB may want clarification on the need for 135 parking spaces.

The application materials also indicate that 9 bicycle parking spaces will be provided. The standard noted in the application corresponds to the long-term bicycle parking spaces, and there is no information about the required short-term bicycle parking, which may be 15 short-term bicycle parking spaces based on the data provided. It appears that all of the parking is outdoor bicycle parking, and presumably short-term parking due being outdoors, located in two areas adjacent to Building A. There is no specification for these bicycle racks to review. There is no indication that long-term bicycle parking is accommodated inside any of the buildings. The ARB may want clarification on compliance with the long-term and short-term bicycle parking standards.

EV vehicular charging infrastructure will be installed adjacent to Building E for future use.

The application materials indicate that certain parking and driveway standards cannot be strictly complied with as follows:

1. The landscaping required per Section 6.1.11.D is not provided due to the below grade historic contamination. Landscaping would interfere with the engineered barriers and direct contact barrier. The landscaping standards may be modified per Section 6.1.11.E by the ARB.
2. The driveway width is proposed to be 30 feet wide, an increase from the 24 feet maximum required by Section 6.1.11.C(9). The larger width is to accommodate the DPW equipment and the Fire Department equipment. The application materials

indicate that this standardized driveway width will be an improvement over the existing conditions.

3. Three parallel parking spaces are proposed along Grove Street in front of Building E. These parking spaces are located in the front yard, which is not allowed per Section 6.1.11.D(4). The application materials indicate that allowing this parking will provide convenient access to the DPW administrative offices and the Inspectional Services Department.
4. A screening buffer of 25 feet is required between the parking lot and the adjacent residential properties to the west per Section 5.3.7 and 5.3.21(A). This may be reduced to 12.5 feet if a solid fence and plantings are installed. In this southwestern corner of the site, there also exists below grade historic contamination, overhead wires, and an underground high pressure natural gas distribution main and associated RIC station. Currently, there is pavement up to the property line. The proposed conditions will pull pavement back 5 feet to 10 feet from the property line, a grass strip will be installed, as will a 6-foot vinyl fence.

The ARB should consider whether the unique conditions of the site, the use, and the overall redevelopment of the complex meet the intent of the regulations in Section 6.1.11, 5.3.7, and 5.3.21(A).

**5. EDR-5 Surface Water Drainage**

**Special attention shall be given to proper site surface drainage so that removal of surface waters will not adversely affect neighboring properties or the public storm drainage system. Available Best Management Practices for the site should be employed, and include site planning to minimize impervious surface and reduce clearing and re-grading. Best Management Practices may include erosion control and stormwater treatment by means of swales, filters, plantings, roof gardens, native vegetation, and leaching catch basins. Stormwater should be treated at least minimally on the development site; that which cannot be handled on site shall be removed from all roofs, canopies, paved and pooling areas and carried away in an underground drainage system. Surface water in all paved areas shall be collected in intervals so that it will not obstruct the flow of vehicular or pedestrian traffic and will not create puddles in the paved areas. In accordance with Section 3.3.4., the Board may require from any Applicant, after consultation with the Director of Public Works, security satisfactory to the Board to ensure the maintenance of all stormwater facilities such as catch basins, leaching catch basins, detention basins, swales, etc. within the site. The Board may use funds provided by such security to conduct maintenance that the Applicant fails to do. The Board may adjust in its sole discretion the amount and type of financial security such that it is satisfied that the amount is sufficient to provide for any future maintenance needs.**

The application materials indicate that the approach to stormwater management on the site consists of maintaining existing drainage patterns and outfalls, installing structure BMPs to provide water quality treatment, and improving environmentally sensitive areas of the site. In some areas on the site the Mill Brook is daylighted (and

has associated floodplain areas) and in other areas the Brook is culverted, but special attention is paid to this resource. The stormwater management system has been approved by the Conservation Commission.

The system consists of the following:

1. Runoff from certain impervious surfaces will be conveyed to deep sump catch basins and hydrodynamic separators prior to being discharged;
2. The runoff of the new parking area within the existing soccer field will be stored in an underground detention area and discharged at a controlled rate, and a portion of the proposed parking lot will be treated by a biofiltration system prior to connecting to the outfall system;
3. Previous biofiltration landscaped areas will be installed in the unpaved areas immediately adjacent to the Mill Book openings; and
4. The installation of sediment and oil removal and the installation of rain gardens.

The Board can find this condition is met.

**6. EDR-6 Utilities Service**

**Electric, telephone, cable TV, and other such lines of equipment shall be underground. The proposed method of sanitary sewage disposal and solid waste disposal from all buildings shall be indicated.**

New services will enter the site from overhead wires via a new utility pole to be installed at the southern entrance to the site. Electricity, telephone, cable, and similar services will be connect to the buildings through an underground system. The Board can find this condition is met.

**7. EDR-7 Advertising Features**

**The size, location, design, color, texture, lighting and materials of all permanent signs and outdoor advertising structures or features shall not detract from the use and enjoyment of proposed buildings and structures and the surrounding properties.**

The historic signage on Building A will be restored. This signage is considered a landmark sign per Section 6.2 of the Zoning Bylaw and is exempt from compliance with that section.

New signage will be installed on Building E, including the street address "51 Grove Street", "Arlington Public Services", and "Town of Arlington Administrative Building." The application materials do not include any information about the dimensions. Based on one of the renderings provided, it appears that the "Town of Arlington Administration Building" is a wall sign and the "Arlington Public Services" sign is a canopy sign, both of which are allowed per Section 6.2. The additional details would provide the information necessary to determine compliance with the sign area requirements.

**8. EDR-8 Special Features**

**Exposed storage areas, exposed machinery installations, service areas, truck loading areas, utility buildings and structures, and similar accessory areas and structures shall be subject to such setbacks, screen plantings or other screening methods as shall reasonably be required to prevent their being incongruous with the existing or contemplated environment and the surrounding properties.**

All storage areas, including the relocated fuel island and salt shed, are located toward the rear of the site to ensure that there is an inviting streetscape for customers and visitors to this municipal complex. Interior capacity has been increased to provide storage of vehicles and equipment within the new building bringing a substantial amount of the outdoor storage inside. The Board can find this condition is met.

**9. EDR-9 Safety**

**With respect to personal safety, all open and enclosed spaces shall be designed to facilitate building evacuation and maximize accessibility by fire, police and other emergency personnel and equipment. Insofar as practicable, all exterior spaces and interior public and semi-public spaces shall be so designed to minimize the fear and probability of personal harm or injury by increasing the potential surveillance by neighboring residents and passersby of any accident or attempted criminal act.**

All buildings are designed with access and egress routes. The vehicular circulation can accommodate the largest municipal vehicles. Security fencing and gates are included to prevent unauthorized access to the non-public area of the complex. The Board can find this condition is met.

**10. EDR-10 Heritage**

**With respect to Arlington's heritage, removal or disruption of historic, traditional or significant uses, structures or architectural elements shall be minimized insofar as practical whether these exist on the site or on adjacent properties.**

The Arlington Gas Works Building and other buildings are included in the *Inventory of Historically or Architecturally Significant Properties in the Town of Arlington* and are listed in the National Register of Historic Places individually and as part of the multiple resource area. The new building takes cues from the terracotta tile used on the roof of the historic gas works building. The Massachusetts Historical Commission found that there is "no adverse effect" and the redevelopment of the site has been reviewed by the Arlington Historical Commission. The Board can find this condition is met.

**11. EDR-11 Microclimate**

**With respect to the localized climatic characteristics of a given area, any development which proposes new structures, new hard surface, ground coverage or the installation of machinery which emits heat, vapor or fumes shall endeavor to minimize insofar as practicable, any adverse impacts on light, air and water resources or on noise and temperature levels of the immediate environment.**



The redevelopment of the DPW Yard will not impact the microclimate and will improve the conditions of the site through a reduction of impervious surfaces, mitigation of the heat island effect, reduction in light pollution, and the storage of vehicles inside the new building. The Board can find this condition is met.

**12. EDR-12 Sustainable Building and Site Design**

**Projects are encouraged to incorporate best practices related to sustainable sites, water efficiency, energy and atmosphere, materials and resources, and indoor environmental quality. Applicants must submit a current Green Building Council Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) checklist, appropriate to the type of development, annotated with narrative description that indicates how the LEED performance objectives will be incorporated into the project.**

The proposed building has been designed to meet the LEED silver certification. The Board can find this condition is met.

**IV. Findings**

1. The ARB finds that the project is consistent with Environmental Design Review per Section 3.4 of the Zoning Bylaw.
2. The ARB finds that the project is consistent with screening and buffer requirements of Section 5.3.7 and 5.3.21(A).
3. The ARB finds that the project is consistent with the parking and loading space standards of Section 6.1.11.

**V. Conditions**

**General**

1. The final design, sign, exterior material, landscaping, and lighting plans shall be subject to the approval of the Arlington Redevelopment Board at the time when future operators are identified. Any substantial or material deviation during construction from the approved plans and specifications is subject to the written approval of the Arlington Redevelopment Board
2. Any substantial or material deviation during construction from the approved plans and specifications is subject to the written approval of the Arlington Redevelopment Board.
3. The Board maintains continuing jurisdiction over this permit and may, after a duly advertised public hearing, attach other conditions or modify these conditions as it deems appropriate in order to protect the public interest and welfare.

4. Snow removal from all parts of the site, as well as from any abutting public sidewalks, shall be the responsibility of the owner and shall be accomplished in accordance with Town Bylaws.
5. Trash shall be picked up only on Monday through Friday between the hours of 7:00 am and 6:00 pm. All exterior trash and storage areas on the property, if any, shall be properly screened and maintained in accordance with the Town Bylaws.
6. Upon installation of landscaping materials and other site improvements, the owner shall remain responsible for such materials and improvement and shall replace and repair as necessary to remain in compliance with the approved site plan.
7. Upon the issuance of the building permit the Applicant shall file with the Inspectional Services Department and the Police Department the names and telephone numbers of contact personnel who may be reached 24 hours each day during the construction period.