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Mr. Michael Byrne, Director of Inspectional Services
51 Grove Street
Arlington, Massachusetts 02476

Atwood House

Dear Michael,

It has come to my attention that several windows of the Atwood House – the historic building adjacent to the new CVS store – have been boarded up. Since this has persisted for far longer than seven days, it would seem to be in violation of the By-Laws, Title V, Article 7.

I recall, and perhaps you do too, when Town Meeting amended the By-Laws to add this provision. There was a lot of concern about the unfortunate aspect that boarded-up buildings created, particularly along major thoroughfares, and it is mandated that this should only be done temporarily and for the most serious reasons.

If the boarding-up is under one of the exceptions to that provision, then it would seem to be a change in the building, which, under the EDR permit for the CVS store would require application to the Historical Commission and/or a reopening of the hearing by the Arlington Redevelopment Board for an application to amend the permit. Boarded-up windows are certainly not the “present condition” required by the permit.

Here are the relevant paragraphs from the Redevelopment Board’s Decision of April 13, 2009, regarding the development of the CVS store on the former Hodgden-Noyes automobile dealership (Docket No. 3348)

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 site has no historical structure, and the site has no historical significance. Before it became an auto dealership, there were three or four houses on the site, including the Atwood House, which remains today. The Atwood House is listed as a significant building under Arlington Town Bylaws, as is the Baptist Church next door. The applicant has stated that the Atwood House will be retained on the site, and the proposed plan reflects that. Any addition or modification of the Atwood House would have to respect Town bylaws regarding significant structures. Any modification of the Atwood House will require an amendment of this special permit. The Board finds that the proposal meets this standard.

5. The Atwood House shall remain at its present location on the site, and reasonable and diligent efforts shall be used to maintain its present condition to prevent any damage from the elements or otherwise, until it is redeveloped. It is acknowledged that ten parking spaces behind the Atwood House are reserved for its use. It is further acknowledged that the plan of the site leaves space behind the Atwood House to accommodate a possible future expansion of the structure, and that no use of that portion of the site will preclude such an expansion. Redevelopment of the house will require the amendment of this special permit, regardless of whether the proposed use of the structure is allowed by right or by special permit (as such are listed in the Arlington Zoning Bylaw). No requests to move or demolish the house by amending this special permit will be made within 24 months of the date of issuance of this permit.

Your early attention to this matter would be much appreciated.

Sincerely yours,

John L. Worden III

JLW/st

cc: Town Manager
Arlington Redevelopment Board chairman
Dept. of Planning & Community Development
Historical Commission chairman
Town Counsel
Carol Kowalski
John Atwood