

Arlington Redevelopment Board
Monday, October 7, 2019, 7:30 p.m.
Town Hall Annex, 2nd Floor Conference Room
Meeting Minutes

This meeting was recorded by ACMi.

PRESENT: Andrew Bunnell (Chair), David Watson, Kin Lau, Rachel Zsembery

ABSENT: Eugene Benson

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

The Chair called the meeting to order and notified all attending that the meeting is being recorded by ACMi.

The Chair notified everyone attending of the hearing updates for the evening's meeting. Docket 3348 - 833 Massachusetts: The applicant requested continuance to the November 4th meeting. Docket 3504 - 93 Broadway: the applicant withdrew without prejudice. Docket 3504 - 1207-1211 Mass. Ave. the applicant requested continuance to December 16th.

The Chair moved to continue the 833 Mass. Ave hearing until November 4th, Mr. Lau motioned to approve and Mr. Watson seconded, all voted in favor 4-0.

The Chair moved to continue the hearing for 1207-1211 Mass Ave, Docket #3504 until December 16th. Mr. Lau motioned to approve, Mr. Watson seconded, all voted in favor 4-0.

The Chair then introduced the first agenda item, Discussion with property owner of 833 Massachusetts Avenue. Mr. Annese, who represents property owner Mr. Noyes, introduced himself and Mr. Noyes. Mr. Annese acknowledged that there have been complaints filed with the Police Department about this property, known as the Atwood House. Mr. Annese explained that Mr. Noyes has not been in a position to do anything with the property until Mr. Noyes wrapped up his father's estate one month ago. Mr. Annese is meeting with architect, Monty French, and Mr. Noyes to assess the building. Mr. Annese said the structural engineer who inspected the building said that the building is in tough shape but he opines that the building is structurally okay. Mr. Annese will have his own structural engineer and architect assess the building to see if it is eligible for rehab instead of demolition. Mr. Annese said according to the 2009 ARB decision the client would have to come back in front of the ARB if Mr. Noyes considers taking down the building. Mr. Annese said according to the decision Mr. Noyes was told he could not tear down the building with 24 months of the decision being rendered. Mr. Annese said that his client is prepared to do what is needed to do but would like to conduct an additional structural inspection before moving forward. Mr. Annese said that his client is open to suggestions from the ARB.

The Chair and Mr. Lau thanked Mr. Noyes for coming to meet with the Board. Mr. Lau said it has been 10 years since the CVS project was approved. Mr. Lau said that the ARB would like to encourage Mr. Noyes to do something with the property which has been a nuisance and close to a school. Mr. Lau said the Board would like to help Mr. Noyes move this project along and feels that there are many opportunities for this property. Mr. Lau said that he toured the building with Inspectional Services and believes the structure of the building is in good shape. Mr. Lau asked Mr. Noyes to re-board the windows at the property while working with the ARB to resolve this issue. The Chair asked the Board if they had any other comments.

Chris Loreti, 25 Adams St. interjected and said that he thought this was a public hearing. The Chair explained that this is not a public hearing, the public hearing request is for CVS, and this agenda item is a separate issue regarding the same address. Mr. Loreti said that he hopes the Board has the original special permit for this property. Mr. Loreti said he was on the Redevelopment Board at the time of the initial decision and there was

a clear intent to maintain the house. Mr. Loreti said the ARB would not even consider tearing down the house at the time of that decision.

The Chair explained that the meeting was running a little early and the Town Manager will arrive precisely at 8:00PM for his presentation. The Chair then introduced agenda item 3, Meeting Minutes (9/9) while waiting for the Town Manager to arrive. The Chair moved to approve, Mr. Lau motioned to approve meeting minutes for 9/9/19, Mr. Watson seconded, all voted in favor 4-0.

The Chair called a brief recess for approximately 10 minutes before introducing the next agenda item.

When the meeting resumed the Chair introduced the second agenda item, Presentation: Housing in Arlington. The Chair thanked the Town Manager, Adam Chapdelaine, and Ms. Raitt for presenting. The Chair acknowledged that the Town Manager has limited time to present this evening so he said he would allow brief comments of 3 minutes per person after the presentation. Ms. Raitt thanked Mr. Chapdelaine for his time and the Board for their attention to this issue by continuing the conversation and dialogue throughout the community. Mr. Chapdelaine said that he presented this information to the Select Board over the summer and would like this presentation to be a launching pad for a broader community discussion about why these housing issues are important in Arlington.

Mr. Chapdelaine gave an overview of the housing crisis in Arlington, and the region, how residents are experiencing issues where housing demand is far out pacing supply. Many households are struggling with affordability, and are cost burdened, especially those on the lower end of the income bracket. Cost burdened is defined as spending more than 30% on housing, those severely cost burdened are spending upwards of 50% of their income on housing, including many renters. Projections show the housing problem continuing, and by 2030 many more units are needed to meet demand. Arlington is an economically diverse community and affordability in housing is needed to maintain that economic diversity. One in three Arlington residents spend more than 30% of their income on housing, many low-income seniors spend an even higher portion of their income on housing costs. Housing pricing is rising faster than income and we have an affordability challenge. Rental units in Arlington that have been converted to condos were formerly mostly apartments and two family houses. From a tax base perspective that is good, but it is likely these apartments are moving from being somewhat affordable, or naturally occurring affordable housing, to luxury condos. Conversion is happening pretty rapidly in Arlington and we are losing affordable housing stock. Arlington has support from the Select Board and the ARB supporting the Housing Corporation of Arlington creating 57 new affordable housing units at Downing Square and Broadway. The Select Board also supports the allocation of CDBG, CPA, and HOME funding for affordable unit production and preservation, mainly thanks to Ms. Raitt and her department. The Town supports the Weatherization program which is helping residents to make their homes more energy efficient to reduce housing costs. The Town is working with the HCA and Arlington Housing Authority to maintain affordable housing in the community, maintain the subsidized housing inventory, and the implementation of the Master Plan and the Housing Production Plan.

Mr. Chapdelaine said efforts of the Metro Mayors Coalition, which represents 1.4 million residents in the region, include a goal of producing 185,000 units by 2030. Boston has set a goal to produce 69,000 units by 2030 and Somerville has also set a goal. In order for the Coalition to meet their goal proportionally Arlington would have to produce 7,000 new units by 2030, but that is not how this regional housing partnership is working. Communities have been asked to have dialogues to set a goal. This is a collaborative effort acknowledging an issue in the region with every community trying to do its share. Solutions are all about zoning, including potential changes to the inclusionary zoning bylaw, housing creation along the commercial corridors, and accessory dwelling units, with potential age and family restrictions. With anything regarding

housing we also take into account stormwater and climate resiliency. We also would consider displacement protection issues while we to think about options. Next steps include scheduling a joint ARB and Select Board meeting to talk about these issues and agree on a path forward together. Through public engagement the goal is to put together strategies that the Town would like to pursue. The plan is to bring forward recommendations by next fall after a broad community dialogue.

The Chair introduced Don Seltzer who has prepared information to present to the board. Mr. Seltzer reviewed his presentation, Housing in Arlington, Arlington's needs vs. Regional Demands. Mr. Seltzer said with the MMC goal of 185,000, excluding Boston, that leaves 14 communities that are expected to increase housing by 116,000 units, based on currently housing of 338,000 units. Mr. Seltzer said that Arlington would increase by 6,800 units and asked where would we put them? Mr. Seltzer said the first question should be what would be the impact of such a population increase on our town's infrastructure, particularly transportation and schools. Mr. Seltzer suggested that the Metro Mayor's Coalition ask the 5 cities that are less dense than Arlington to build out to Arlington's present density. Arlington is lacking affordable housing and Arlington needs to address its shrinking commercial base. The cost to educate the 40 children who reside in Brigham Square is \$580,000 and the current property taxes are \$470,000 from this property. Mr. Seltzer's suggestions include amendments to inclusionary zoning bylaw to eliminate loop-holes in the current bylaw and increase the percentage of affordable units. Revisit the ideas that were proposed in Town Meeting this spring. Protect existing residents and businesses from displacement. Ensure against the loss of commercial base. Bring the Residential Study Group back to review accessory dwelling units again. Stormwater and climate resiliency improvements to preserve landscaped open space from redevelopment. Change "no worse than before" rule to a minimum standard. Mr. Lau asked about Mr. Seltzer's density study slide, Mr. Lau asked if the housing density slide per square mile of land took parks and open spaces into account. Mr. Lau said that if the parks were removed from the amount of land included in the density calculation.

The Chair thanked Mr. Seltzer for his presentation and introduced Steve Revilak, the next Arlington resident to present.

Mr. Revilak presented the collaborative housing survey conducted by Envision Arlington, during Town Day. The top tier concerns were housing affordability and social justice. The people who participated were most concerned about housing costs. Some suggestions included bringing back rent control and keeping older, naturally occurring affordable, apartment buildings. Other concerns were displacement, traffic congestion, and regional housing demands. Mr. Revilak said that this is the start of a very long conversation. Mr. Watson thanked all of the presenters and the Town Manager for recognizing that the Town needs solutions that work for Arlington. Mr. Watson said he hopes the Town will find unique solutions that work well for Arlington to optimize the space and opportunity that we have and are supported by citizens of the town.

The Chair introduced the next presenter, Barbara Thornton. Ms. Thornton said she hoped the Board members would be bold and look beyond Massachusetts for solutions, and as members of a region, to work to solve these regional issues. Ms. Thornton gave examples from a book written by David Rusk. Ms. Thornton said what works is a broader governance that works together, like the regional coalition. Ms. Thornton said she agrees with Mr. Seltzer about the importance of the Town not having a strong commercial tax base. One of the examples is the Minnesota fiscal disparities plan where commercial tax base from richer communities is redistributed to areas with a lower commercial tax base. Ms. Thornton said Arlington needs to find their role and responsibility, and what Arlington's part should be as part of the region. Mr. Watson asked if the commercial tax redistribution example was within functioning counties. Ms. Thornton said that they probably have counties but it does not need to be limited to counties, but can be a group of municipalities working together. Mr. Watson asked Mr. Chapdelaine if that is something that the Metro Mayor's Coalition has

discussed. Mr. Chapdelaine said that would be a challenge politically. Mr. Chapdelaine said there should be some model, but is not sure if there should be a direct community to community model or a more overall progressive structure. The inequities of prop 2 ½ in terms of communities with large commercial bases versus those that do not should be scrutinized. Ms. Zsembery said she appreciates bringing up the opportunity to perhaps extract some of the wealth we have within the growing commercial base.

Patricia Worden was next to present. Ms. Worden said the only housing needed in Arlington is affordable and some elderly housing, according to available information including the Arlington Master Plan. Leverage funds that can be accessed to purchase existing buildings and residences for renovations including CPA, CDBG, Federal HOME funds, and others. Ms. Worden said that this strategy will work even better if the Town establishes an Affordable Housing Trust Fund, increased linkage fees for developers, and a real estate transfer tax. The exclusionary Zoning Bylaw helps but needs to counteract developers gaining that system. The ARB might be able, hopefully, to be better able to protect housing like the Atwood House for use as affordable housing. Arlington needs more commerce and business. We should not change zoning to enable more market rate and luxury residential units costing more in services, like schools, than they bring in. Arlington's residential real estate tax revenue is 94.4% of tax revenue, which is the highest of all neighboring communities. Arlington's non-residential share is only 5.6%. Boston's non-residential tax base is more than 9 times higher than Arlington's non-residential base. Ms. Worden said we cannot burden Arlington residential tax payers further to provide housing for wealthier municipalities. 39% of Arlington residents are renters who spend an average of 30% of their income on rent. Rent in Arlington, on average, is less than neighboring communities. If there is massive new construction of mixed use buildings in Arlington many renters that cannot afford newly constructed units may be displaced or evicted. In Boston evictions have reached up to 43 per day. Arlington's AHA and HCA would be overwhelmed with an increase of possible hundreds of families displaced and facing homelessness.

The Chair introduced Jennifer Seuss, Ms. Seuss stated that when looking at the cost of schools we have to be intellectually honest. We cannot talk about the average cost of education per student we have to consider the cost for next year. Considering the enrollment growth factor, next year the cost will be up to 50%, about \$7,000.00 per additional student. Jennifer said she is supporting additional housing because of the effects on schools. She is afraid of the current trends where people may start to move to Arlington with toddlers and move out of Arlington when their children go to college. With the loss of housing diversity, younger people, who typically don't have kids in the school system, cannot afford to rent in Arlington. There has been a decrease in younger residents under the age of 34 and the number of residents over the age of 65 is also decreasing. There also have to be opportunities to downsize. There is very little smaller, affordable housing available in Arlington.

Patrick Hanlon was next to present. Mr. Hanlon said he is pleased with the open and thoughtful conversation during this meeting. This is an opportunity to look objectively at the housing crisis, lack of diversity in housing, and lack of affordable housing. Mr. Hanlon said he realized that eventually he will be looking to down-size to a residence with only one floor and there is not much supply in Arlington. Diversity of housing options is needed going forward. Mr. Hanlon suggested going back and thinking about Arlington's goal and how to go about reaching that goal. Mr. Hanlon said he looks forward to the ARB working with the Select Board to take on the housing issue in a comprehensive way. Questions to be addressed are: how would potential solutions affect housing production? We have to think about the financial implications on the Town. Environmental considerations, with increased housing prices people move further out and then commute into Boston and many of the most congested routes travel near Arlington. We need to find solutions to the housing and environmental conflict.

Mr. Loreti asked Mr. Chapdelaine about a slide from the Metro Mayor's Coalition that shows that housing demand follows job growth. Mr. Loreti asked Mr. Chapdelaine if the Metro Mayors Coalition has looked into reducing job growth in the area. Mr. Chapdelaine said that he is not aware of any such discussions. Mr. Loreti said elected politicians will never say that we do not need new jobs when there are other areas that could benefit from the job and housing growth. Mr. Loreti also asked about increased tax revenue that the new development brings. Mr. Loreti said that the Town can build its way out of spending problems and will help elevate budget overrides. Mr. Chapdelaine said after looking at many models, there is no amount of commercial, housing growth, or budget cuts that takes Arlington out of its fiscal challenges.

The Chair closed the housing portion of the meeting and thanked the Town Manager and the presenters for coming to the meeting. The Chair said that he is looking forward to constructive solutions as this dialogue continues.

The Chair then introduced the next Agenda item, appointment of Arlington Heights Neighborhood Action Plan Implementation Committee. The Chair asked the nominees to introduce themselves. Jason Forney said he loves his neighborhood in the Heights but there are opportunities for improvements through planning. Mr. Forney said he is an architect interested in using his professional skills to contribute to the implementation part of the plan. Rob Davison said he also lives in the Heights, and has lived in Arlington for most of his life. Mr. Davison is a corporate creative director and a visiting faculty member at the Mass. College of Art and Design. Mr. Davidson said that there are many opportunities for improvements in the Heights business district. Ms. Raitt said there was a lot of interest in this committee. Ms. Raitt hopes the other committee candidates stay engaged. There will be an upcoming community engagement event that this committee will plan. The Heights plan was being developed while also preparing for this past spring Town Meeting. The proposed zoning issues are not being pursued. The hope is that the committee will explore opportunities for place-making, business development, and business creation as well as thinking about the other zoning recommendations for the Heights. This committee is a result of the Arlington Heights neighbors that came together and encouraged the Town to address a range of issues, primarily in the business district in the Heights. Support Arlington Heights formed and led to a 100 person meeting two years ago.

The Chair moved to appoint this slate of people including, Jason Forney and Robert Davison, to the Arlington Heights Neighborhood Action Plan Implementation Committee, Ms. Zsembery moved to approve, Mr. Watson seconded, all voted to approve 4-0.

The Chair asked the Board if they would like to designate a member of the Board to the Arlington Heights Neighborhood Action Plan Implementation Committee. Mr. Lau nominated Ms. Zsembery and Ms. Zsembery said she would be happy to serve on the committee. The Chair moved to nominate Ms. Zsembery to serve on the Arlington Heights Neighborhood Action Plan Implementation Committee, Mr. Lau motioned to accept, Mr. Watson seconded, the Board voted 3-0 to approve (Ms. Zsembery abstained).

The Chair then introduced the last agenda item, Open Forum. Mr. Loreti asked the Board what their policy was regarding posting correspondence received. Mr. Loreti said he expects any correspondence received would be posted even if it does not have a corresponding agenda item. Mr. Loreti asked to make the policy clear on the Board's website.

Mr. Lau motioned to adjourn, The Chair seconded, all voted in favor 4-0.
Meeting adjourned.