

**Warrant Article 15**

**ESTABLISHMENT OF TOWN COMMITTEE ON RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT**

*Select Board Meeting*

*February 24, 2020*

I have spoken before the SB a few times over the past 3 to 4 years about issues arising from the on-going residential development activity.

Thank you again for the opportunity to address these issues tonight. I have some brief remarks and would then be happy to try to answer any questions you may have.

This article's primary concerns include creating the ability of residents to have input to the development changes occurring in their neighborhoods; to preserving their quality of life and character of the neighborhood; and to minimizing impacts, both temporary and permanent, during construction and redevelopment. The purpose is to allow Arlington to develop and change, as it naturally should, while balancing the interests of current residents and the development/real estate communities.

I believe current residents have an expectation that the negative impacts to their homes and neighborhood from significant construction and/or development activities should be minimized to the extent that it is reasonable.

### Some Background:

Briefly, numerous zoning and administrative issues concerning teardowns, McMansion-type construction, and resident/neighborhood quality of life were presented at the 2016 Town Meeting. While specific warrant articles were discussed, none were adopted, however, the Town Meeting established an informal committee to look into these issues, called the **Residential Study Group**. The RSG, under the direction of the Planning Dept. proposed articles for the 2017 Town Meeting covering issues regarding parking, driveway slope, and pre-construction notification (Good Neighbor Agreement).

However, many of the primary issues that prompted the formation of the RSG remained uncompleted when the RSG was unilaterally dissolved by the Planning Dept. last Spring. These unresolved significant issues include:

- Proper notification to abutters prior to project commencement
  - from citizen information gathered from town records and presented to Redevelopment Board last year (ARB), the GNA, at best, has been only about 15 – 20% effective in providing the required notifications to abutters
  - in addition, follow-up with residents where the GNA was fully implemented should be done to assess its effectiveness and outcome.
- A 2<sup>nd</sup> issue is Environmental & Public health impacts during teardown/demolition, excavation, rock removal, and construction. It is my understanding that noise, debris, and safety issues concerning rock removal remain unaddressed.
- Storm water mitigation suitable for some new designs is required (I have been made aware that some neighbors report now having periodic water intrusion in basements after nearby construction, where none existed previously)

Very significant quality of life issues concerning size and scale of new development continue to be produced by new large-scale construction. These include:

- Loss of sunlight (increased shadowing)
- Loss/reduction of sight lines
- Loss of privacy
- Interference with existing or planned solar arrays

More importantly,

*All these associated effects are exaggerated and made more onerous when an abutter is on a non-conforming lot. There has been no discussion/consideration of this issue in the Town, as far as I am aware.*

In many cases, new home construction and renovation has been done in an exemplary fashion with significant benefit added to the neighborhood and its abutters.

However, in a significant number of cases, issues such as those discussed above have occurred, with both short- and long-term negative effects. It's time to try to mitigate these potential issues with active resident participation and feedback.

In summary,

There is no one body that comprehensively represents residents' opinions and concerns on residential development. This should be the one.

I urge the SB to recognize these important residential issues and provide an opportunity to have this warrant article discussed and debated at Town Meeting.

Thank you for your attention.

Paul Parise

106 Hemlock St.