

Arlington Redevelopment Board
Monday, February 24, 2020, 7:30 PM
Second Floor Conference Room, Town Hall Annex
Meeting Minutes

This meeting was recorded by ACMi.

PRESENT: Andrew Bunnell (Chair), Eugene Benson, Kin Lau, Rachel Zsembery

ABSENT: David Watson

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 introduced the first agenda item, 833 Massachusetts Avenue Environmental Design Review, Continued Public Hearing, Docket #3348 The Atwood House. Robert Annese introduced himself, Jeff Noyes, the property owner, Emily Driscoll, Designer for the project, and Monte French, Architect. Mr. Annese said that the group has been working on a schedule in regards to developing the site. Mr. Annese said that there are a few options he would like to review with the Board.

Mr. Annese said that building was found to be structurally sound and is on the local significant property inventory. Mr. Annese acknowledged that he must meet with the Arlington Historical Commission in the future. Mr. Annese said that special permit condition # 5 focused on developing the Atwood House while doing the best to retain the attributes of the house. Mr. Annese said that it has been a challenge to find a plan that makes sense for development which includes residential and commercial units as required for mixed-use.

Monte French gave an overview of the proposal. Mr. French said a vendor was brought in to clear the interior of the house of trash. He and Emily Driscoll photographed the interior details of the Atwood House and found that they did not have architectural significance and would not withstand a renovation. Mr. French said that the central staircase leads to an intermediate level the house and is not conducive to redesign. Mr. French said that the basement is considered stable and sound but has withstood flooding; remediation will take a lot of work and will require unearthing the foundation.

Mr. French said that remodeling the property would require taking the building down to the studs, which is not financially feasible. Mr. French reviewed his plans which he said would provide mixed-use development that would better serve the area. Mr. Lau suggested that Mr. Noyes put the house up for sale to anyone who would like to save the building due to the suggested financial constraints of remodeling the property. Mr. Lau suggested working with the Historical Commission. The Chair said that the Board will review the packets that were submitted at the start of the meeting and follow up at a later date. More detailed designs are needed. Mr. French said that there will be a street scape study to help to design a building that complements the area. Mr. Benson said that he would like to make sure that the plans work within a timeline.

The Chair opened the floor to public comment.

John Atwood, grandson of Dr. Atwood, said after Dr. Atwood's family sold the house, the plan was to continue to use the building as medical offices. Mr. Atwood said that he realized that it is a difficult problem finding a way to repurpose the building. Mr. Atwood said he thinks that a mixed-use office plan is encouraging, especially anything to do with medical uses. Mr. Atwood provided the Board with materials from the 25th anniversary of Dr. Atwood's Harvard graduation. Mr. Atwood said that the house is historically significant.

John Worden suggested speaking with the Historical Commission regarding the changes to the exterior of the house. Mr. Worden said that he thinks that moving the building is not a good idea. Mr. Worden said houses at that time had large front lawns. Mr. Worden said that it is an old house and example of nice homes that used to line Massachusetts Ave. Mr. Worden said he feels that CVS is too close to the street and lacks green space.

Mr. Benson clarified for the members of the public that the proposal Mr. Annese presented would not save the Atwood

structure. Mr. Benson said that, with the current proposal, if the house is not purchased by someone else the structure could be torn down following a demolition delay period. Mr. Lau said that the current layout does not allow for more than a few small offices. Ms. Zsemsbery said she agreed that contacting the Historical Commission and getting started with that process is a very important step.

Dorothy Nash-Webber said that 10 years ago when special permitting was being completed for CVS, an important element of the conversation regarding the Atwood House was that it be used for affordable housing. Ms. Nash-Webber said that the Noyes family was going to maintain the property, which she said hasn't really happened. Ms. Nash-Webber said it was stated at the last hearing that affordable housing would not be possible financially. Now Mr. Noyes is suggesting a mixed-use option and to even tear down the Atwood House. Ms. Nash-Webber asked that the numbers be reviewed to see how much cost is due to a lack of maintenance for the past 10 years and subtract those costs from the total project cost. Ms. Nash-Webber asked if affordable housing could be an option, as opposed to market rate units, if the cost due to lack of maintenance is deducted. Ms. Nash-Webber also asked to consider that the cost of finishings for affordable housing units may be less expensive than those typically used in market rate units.

Chris Loreti asked if the Board has had an independent assessment of the property. The Chair confirmed that an independent assessment has not been done. Mr. Loreti suggested that the Board get a second opinion.

The Chair moved to continue the hearing on Monday March 16, 2020, Mr. Lau seconded, approved 4-0 (Mr. Watson was absent).

The Chair introduced the second agenda item, Environmental Design Review Public Hearing 434 Massachusetts Ave. Taipei-Tokyo. Charlie Scacca from Vital Signs, and the property owner Ara Gechjian introduced themselves and explained that the restaurant has been closed for two years due to fire and will now be known as Taipei-Tokyo. Mr. Scacca said that they would like to have the new signs, which have already been installed, approved for the restaurant.

Ms. Zsemsbery said that the signs do not comply with the current sign bylaw; the signs are over in both quantity and size. Ms. Zsemsbery said she does not know how the Board can approve the signs if they do not meet the sign code. Mr. Benson said that there is a provision for the Board to sign a waiver if it is in the public interest, but Mr. Benson said that he cannot approve a sign that is so far removed from what the sign bylaw requires. Mr. Lau asked about the sign proportions and what type of material is behind the signs. The Chair said that he agrees with Mr. Benson because he is afraid if a waiver is approved then it will be "anything goes" going forward.

The Chair opened the floor to members of the public. There were no comments. Ms. Raitt said that Vital Signs should work with the Department to prepare plans for their next hearing. The Chair made a motion to continue this hearing to Monday, March 16, 2020, Mr. Lau seconded, approved 4-0 (Mr. Watson was absent).

The Chair suggested tabling the fourth agenda item, Annual election of chair and vice-chair, for this meeting since not all Board members are present.

The Chair introduced the sixth agenda item, Lease Extension for Retirement Board.

Ms. Raitt explained that due to the construction in the Central School building the Retirement Board will be moving to the second floor and changing the lease for the remainder of the term, through June 30, 2020. Mr. Benson asked if there will be two leases and Ms. Raitt said the document is an amendment to the Retirement Board's current lease.

The Chair introduced the third agenda item, Environmental Design Review Public Hearing 93 Broadway Springboard Schools. Architect, Zeke Brown, and Springboard Schools owner, Kevin Flynn, introduced themselves. Mr. Flynn gave an overview of the plans for the addition to the school. Mr. Flynn said that Springboard Schools has had success with their bicycle parking program.

Mr. Flynn said that he has received many requests to expand the school and this proposal includes four more classrooms. Mr. Lau asked if the additional classrooms will be for children of the same age group or of another age group. Mr. Flynn said that the additional space will be for children of the same age group as the current students. Mr. Brown explained that the plan is essentially an extension of the existing building. The siding materials will be the same as the existing building to continue the look of the original building.

Mr. Lau asked about parking. Mr. Lau said he drives by on his way to work in the morning and said that he has not seen a problem with parking or drop-offs. Mr. Lau asked about the cement planters at the corners. Mr. Flynn said the cement planters are also intended to serve as a safety measure. Mr. Lau asked if Mr. Brown could work to soften the

corners with plantings to make the area more attractive. Mr. Lau and Mr. Benson said that they are fine with the parking reduction.

Mr. Benson asked why the new building was tilted as compared with the existing building. Mr. Brown said that the new portion is angled to be line with the neighboring building and to create a more welcoming courtyard. Mr. Benson asked if any existing trees would be taken down. Mr. Brown said that the existing trees on the plans are beyond the fence line on the neighboring property. Mr. Flynn said he plans to plant more trees in the courtyard for shade and additional screening for the building.

Mr. Flynn said that the families who are Springboard Schools' customers asked Mr. Flynn to comment on the lack of bicycle lanes on Broadway. The families feel the lack of bicycle lanes is a safety concern so Mr. Flynn said he wanted to pass the feedback on to those planning the Broadway Corridor renovation. Ms. Zsembery said she commends Mr. Flynn's commitment to alternative transportation for both customer families and employees.

The Chair opened the floor to comments from members of the public.

Chris Loreti said that he supports this proposal instead of the proposed mixed-use development that would have dominated the triple decker next to it. Mr. Loreti asked about the parking relief calculations. Ms. Raitt said that the calculation was 21. Mr. Loreti said that 11 employees were expected to be driving with 6 available spaces. Mr. Flynn explained that his employees work in shifts so will not all be on site at the same time. Mr. Flynn said that there would be up to 9 employees who drive on site at the same time on a consistent basis. Mr. Loreti said that essentially Mr. Flynn will allow employees to park on the street.

Mr. Loreti said he is concerned about the location of the parking spaces and asked how the proposal is consistent with section 6.1.10b, parking in commercial districts no parking should be located in the front yard and no driveway in the front of the building will be permitted. Mr. Brown said that it comes down to the space on this site and the goal is to use the available space to create larger classrooms. Ms. Zsembery said that she appreciates the fact that they did not create additional curb cuts to preserve on street parking.

Ms. Raitt said that the one last condition is to finalize the landscape plans, including the concrete planters. The Chair said that the design is unique and innovative and vastly improved the lot. Mr. Lau moved to approve this application with conditions, Ms. Zsembery seconded, approved 4-0. (Mr. Watson was absent)

The Chair introduced the fifth agenda item, Debrief and follow-up from joint meeting with Select Board on January 13, 2020.

Ms. Raitt introduced the memo with an outline of the process that was agreed to for the review of warrant articles. Ms. Raitt also introduced the proposed schedule of engagement, which has already been enacted. Ms. Raitt said that they are looking to schedule the next joint Board meeting in July. The meeting will allow each Board to have both an individual meeting and the joint Board meeting.

The Chair said that the first engagement meeting was very collaborative and is encouraged by finding ways for the two Boards to support each other. Ms. Raitt reviewed the amendments made to the allow for participation throughout the process, broad open engagement as a starting conversation about housing with public meetings in May, talk about policy development, then prepare for the upcoming Town Meeting. The Chair said that the focus will not be solely on housing but on development on the whole.

Ms. Zwirko said that the Department is scheduling meetings, setting up a dedicated phone line for comments and a survey through survey monkey for feedback from residents. Ms. Zwirko said the Department is working to find multiple avenues for feedback so that a variety of people will be comfortable voicing their opinions. Ms. Zwirko reminded the ACMI viewers to take the Town Survey.

The Chair introduced the seventh agenda item, Final Broadway Corridor Report.

Ms. Raitt said that the final report is now available. The students' proposal has received favorable reviews from many people. Ms. Raitt said that many of proposed items are actionable such as the additional of bike lanes, mobility issues, street scape, street corners, and quality of life in general. Ms. Raitt said that one of the warrant articles for Town Meeting is related to this report; it proposes a design competition for the Broadway Corridor. The Chair said that it is a unique look at a part of town that does not get very much attention, for better or for worse.

The Chair introduced the eighth agenda item, Meeting Minutes (12/2/2019, 1/6/2020, 1/13/2020, 1/27/2020)
Mr. Lau moved to approve the 12/2/2019 meeting minutes, Mr. Benson seconded, approved 4-0.
Mr. Lau moved to approve the 1/6/2020 meeting minutes as amended, Mr. Benson seconded, approved 4-0.
Mr. Lau moved to approve the 1/13/2020 joint Board meeting minutes, Ms. Zsembery seconded, approved 4-0.
Mr. Benson moved to approve 1/27/2020 meeting minutes as amended, Ms. Zsembery seconded, approved 4-0.

The Chair reviewed the Board's meeting dates for March 2020 so they are entered on record as well as being available on the Town website and posted at Town Hall. The Chair said the following Board meetings will be held in March:
Monday 3/2/2020 in the Senior Center Main Room, Monday 3/16/2020 in the Lyons' Hearing Room, Thursday 3/19/2020 at the Arlington Police Department Community Room, and Monday 3/23/2020 in the Lyons' Hearing Room.

The Chair opened the floor to public comment for the Open Forum portion of the meeting.

Patricia Worden read a prepared statement regarding the MIT Students' Broadway Corridor Report. Ms. Worden's full statement is included with the submitted correspondence for this meeting.

Wendy Richter introduced herself to the Board as the Open Space Committee Liaison with the ARB. Ms. Raitt said that Ms. Richter is also a member of the Design Review Group and the Master Plan Implementation Committee.

Mr. Lau moved to adjourn, Ms. Zsembery seconded, all voted in favor 4-0.

Meeting adjourned.