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Date: Mon, 18 May 2020 18:31:28 -0400
Subject: Special Permit for 882-892 Mass Ave. - Housing

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TO: ARB

The proposed 22 unit (plus commercial) project scheduled to replace 3 commercial buildings at 882-892 of Mass Ave., across from the high school is scheduled for a first hearing by the ARB tonight. Special Permit Docket #3625

Apparently all are single bedrooms. Based on the Design Study done by MIT last Fall, there is a real need for more single bedroom units in Arlington. They address two niches: 1) they are likely to be more affordable because they are smaller and 2) they provide a home for young single, pre-child rearing, professionals in their early careers and for older, post child rearing singles.

My concern, especially given Arlington's own participation in the effort to meet the region's need for housing, is that only THREE of the 22 residential units are dedicated for affordable housing.

As the regulatory agency with approval rights over this project, the ARB has considerable "soft power" and negotiating opportunity to have this development do better for the community.

I propose - give them another story, another 7 units. Encourage them to have TEN units affordable out of a total of ca. 30 units. Limit these to permanently rental units, not potential condos.

Consider your potential use of eminent domain and step back from that to negotiate aggressively on behalf of the Town's larger interests, not just whether they comply with zoning regulations.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to comment on the sidewalk width. As we reconsider our towns, especially our transit corridors, in the post Covid 19 era, we will be looking for ways to create opportunities for maintaining "social distance" and for avoiding the pushing together of pedestrians on sidewalk corridors, especially those near transit stops or other uses that attract pedestrians to stop and linger.

Thank you for this opportunity to share my thoughts.

Barbara Thornton
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