



Town of Arlington Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting Minutes

Date: 01/13/2026

Time: 7:34 pm

Location: Remote

Board Members in Attendance: Christian Klein, Roger DuPont, and associates Bradley Baranowski and Nick Rosenberg. Patrick Hanlon, Venket Holi, were recused and Adam LeBlanc was absent.

Town Officials: Colleen Ralston

Docket Attendance: Joshua Lee Smith and Jeremy Butler

Chair's Introduction: Chairman Klein opened the meeting at 7:34 PM. After reading the land acknowledgement, rules for remote hearings and a roll call attendance, the meeting was underway. Mr. Klein noted that this meeting was being recorded by ACMI.

Administrative Items

- **Member Vote: Approval of Meeting Minutes from 12-09-2025**
 - Mr. Klein moved for the approval of the Meeting Minutes from 10/28/2025. The Motion was seconded by Mr. Hanlon and approved unanimously. The voting members were Mr. Hanlon, Mr. Holi, Mr. Baranowski, Mr. Rosenberg, and Mr. Klein.

Hearings:

#3880 307 Washington Street

Joshua Lee Smith, outside counsel for Boston Gas Company, presents an overview of a proposed project requiring a special permit to rebuild an existing gas “take station” at 307–309 Washington Street. The take station, which receives gas from a transmission pipeline and conditions it for safe distribution to customers, is not a compressor station. Much of the current infrastructure dates back to the 1950s, with a prior rebuild in the late 1990s, and portions are located on the adjacent Kinder Morgan property at 305 Washington Street. Due to aging equipment, safety, reliability, and compliance concerns—including outdated underground components—Boston Gas proposes to rebuild the facility entirely on its own property.

The project includes construction of one primary regulator building of approximately 1,400 square feet and three smaller accessory structures for odorization, telemetry, and restroom use, all within a fenced and secured compound on a roughly two-acre site. Access would be provided by a new driveway off Washington Street, and the facility would be set back as far as practicable from both Washington Street and Tomahawk Drive. Landscaping, including

arborvitae plantings and vegetative screening, is proposed to minimize visual impacts, and existing trees will be preserved where possible. The site will be unmanned, with limited visits for maintenance and inspections, resulting in no meaningful traffic, noise, light, or odor impacts.

Mr. Smith emphasizes that the project is an asset-condition and reliability upgrade comparable in impact to an electric substation. He notes extensive outreach to town staff and neighbors, including meetings, door-to-door outreach, informational flyers, and a project website, and states the applicant remains open to continued dialogue. He then turns the presentation over to project engineer Jeremy Butler for further technical details.

Mr. Butler's presentation provided a detailed overview of the proposed Boston Gas Company site, including property boundaries, existing structures, and planned upgrades. The Kinder Morgan parcel and the adjacent National Grid-owned parcel were highlighted, with existing facilities such as meter runs, heat exchangers, below-grade regulator vaults, and telemetry buildings noted. The site's topography was discussed, emphasizing grading considerations and access roads, while the lighting plan was designed with motion-sensor lights to minimize disturbance. Fencing was limited to essential areas, and landscaping plans, including Arborvitae trees along the driveway and site frontage, were intended to provide visual screening.

The proposed building designs were reviewed, with heights ranging from 10 to just under 14 feet, alongside detailed descriptions of fences with privacy slats and barbed wire. Supplemental civil sheets addressed erosion control and grading details. Comparisons to similar stations were provided to illustrate expected aesthetics, with an emphasis on minimizing visual impact and maintaining a central location on the parcel to reduce intrusion on neighboring properties. The presenters also highlighted tree clearing plans, noting coordination with the tree warden and an associated \$43,000 tree fund fee.

Mr. Butler emphasized that the project requires a special permit for essential services under Arlington zoning by-laws. They framed the construction as necessary for maintaining reliable gas services to the community, citing aging equipment and ongoing local demand. While acknowledging the residential context, they emphasized mitigation measures to minimize visual, environmental, and operational impacts, aiming for a responsible balance between essential service provision and neighborhood preservation.

Board Discussion

Mr. Klein: This is a hearing regarding a special permit application by National Grid for a new "take station" facility in a residential district of Arlington. As the applicant stated, the use of the property for this purpose requires a Special Permit, under bylaw 3.3.3, for "essential services". The discussion primarily focuses on whether the project complies with local and federal regulations, specifically the Arlington Fossil Fuel Free by-law. Arlington Town Counsel determined that while the station's general operation is exempt from the prohibition on new fossil fuel connections, any ancillary uses like heating or hot water must be electric. Technical details clarified that the project will utilize existing inlet and outlet piping on-site, though it involves moving operations from a neighboring property owned by Kinder Morgan to a new building owned by National Grid.

Mr. Klein raised questions regarding the necessity of the project and its impact on the community and the future of the current 'Take station'.

Mr. Butler, the National Grid representative, explained that the move is driven by federal **PHMSA (Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration)** compliance, which requires verifiable documentation of materials and above-ground infrastructure that the current underground site cannot accommodate.

Since they do not own the property, National Grid cannot say what will happen to the current 'TAKE station' but there will need to be some type of equipment at 305 Washington St.

Mr Rosenberg asked about the potential capacity increases and the financial burden on ratepayers as the town shifts away from fossil fuels, the applicants maintained that the capacity increase is "negligible" and that the project is an "essential service" required to maintain safety and regulatory standards.

The Board concluded with a focus on site aesthetics and environmental impact.

Mr. Smith detailed plans for an eight-foot fence with privacy slats and the planting of Arborvitae trees, which are expected to reach heights of 15 to 18 feet to provide a visual buffer. The applicants confirmed they are working with the town's tree warden on an approved planting plan and emphasized that the site would not be used for vehicle storage and would feature security measures and motion-sensor lighting to minimize neighborhood disruption.

Public Comment:

Participants:

Steve Moore - Piedmont St	Marina Wagner – Central St
Danielle Dean – 55 Greeley Circle	Brian Gannon – 231 Mountain Ave
Jennifer Cutrara – 15 Stowcroft	Susan Stamps – 39 Grafton St
August Drufke – 15 Carl Rd	Stephanie Levinson – 38 Tower Rd
Clare Moodie – 24 Richardson Ave	Jim Mahar - 26 Tomahawk
Laura Kiesel – 84 Lake St.	Vishwesh Patil – 304 Washington St
Jeffrey Alexander – 59 Tomahawk Rd	Laura Sousa - 6 Greeley Circle.
Marina Popova – 255 Ridge St	

The following topics were discussed by the residents and responded to by the National Grid representatives, Mr. Smith and Mr. Butler:

The public comment raised significant concerns regarding National Grid's proposal to construct a new gas take station in a residentially zoned, forested area. Neighbors criticized the company's historical neglect of the site—citing trash and unsafe trees—while emphasizing that the community has long maintained the area's walking paths. A primary point of contention is the decision to place the facility in the center of the parcel, which residents argue maximizes the destruction of mature trees and wildlife habitat.

National Grid representatives, Mr. Smith and Mr. Butler, defended the placement of the facility in the middle of the property as a "balancing act" designed to provide visual buffers for all abutting homes and to utilize flatter terrain for engineering and stormwater management.

The discussion also highlighted the project's technical and regulatory necessity. National Grid explained that the current equipment, located on adjacent Kinder Morgan property, must be replaced to comply with federal and state safety codes.

Residents questioned if the existing site could be upgraded to avoid clearing new forest. Mr. Butler stated that moving to their own property is essential for operational independence and to meet modern standards. He noted that failure to comply could result in heavy fines or a loss of their operator's license.

Mr. Butler responded to questions about the environmental impact of the move. They proposed a stormwater rain garden designed to handle 100-year storms and promised to use "vegetative buffering" like Arborvitae to screen the industrial appearance of the site. The residents questioned the choice of tree and asked if there was a more appropriate tree that was native to Arlington. Mr. Lee agreed to check with the Town tree warden.

Public comment concluded with residents asking for more detailed renderings to ensure the facility does not look too "aggressive" or "commercial" with its planned chain-link and barbed-wire fencing. There was also a focused inquiry into the long access road required for the new build.

Mr. Butler stated that using existing Kinder Morgan access points was not feasible due to property ownership issues and the size of their maintenance trucks. Despite the company's intent to be a "good neighbor". Mr. Lee clarified that the land is private property and the public has no legal right to the trails that will be partially eliminated by the construction.

Mr. Klein closed public comment.

Findings and Conclusions:

Mr. Klein: National Grid is proposing an upgrade to their existing facility to meet federal safety standards set by the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA). The project is driven by aging equipment and the need to achieve compliance by 2035. Mr. Lee and Mr. Butler explained that the current adjacent parcel, owned by Kinder Morgan, lacks the necessary space for the required piping replacements and upgrades. Consequently, National Grid intends to develop its own property, transitioning operations from the Kinder Morgan site and potentially removing existing underground structures once the new facility is operational.

Mr. Klein raised several concerns regarding the site's environmental and community impact, including the use of security fencing and landscaping. He asked that National Grid consult with the local tree warden to prioritize native, wildlife-friendly species over the proposed Arborvitae. National Grid expressed a willingness to implement a multi-year maintenance plan to ensure new plantings successfully establish themselves.

Mr. Baranowski questioned the security measures at the site. Mr. Butler explained the necessity of barbed wire, a "breach-proof" chain link for asset protection, door alarms and motion detector lighting, and valve locks would be used for security. He stated that the rest of the security measures could not be discussed.

Mr. Klein addressed community concerns, such as site security, noise mitigation, and public access. Mr. Smith clarified that no formal public easements exist on the property and they do not intend to grant official public access to the undeveloped areas.

To address community concerns, Mr. Klein requested further information on how noise complaints would be handled and suggested establishing a clear communication protocol and exploring ways to minimize the visual and auditory impact of the new infrastructure.

Mr. Smith indicates that the public should use the existing process of contacting the Building or the Health departments for noise complaints.

Mr. Smith will investigate the reforestation of areas previously damaged by wildfires.

The Chair moved that the Zoning Board of Appeals for the Town of Arlington vote to continue the hearing for #3880 307 Washington St, on January 27, 2026, at 7:30 pm. The Motion was seconded by Mr. DuPont and approved unanimously. The members voting were Mr. DuPont, Mr. Baranowski, Mr. Rosenberg, and Mr. Klein.

Adjourn:

At the conclusion of the evening's hearings, Mr. Klein invited a Motion to adjourn. Mr. DuPont moved to adjourn the meeting. The Motion was seconded by Mr. Baranowski and approved unanimously. The voting members were Mr. DuPont, Mr. Baranowski, Mr. Rosenberg, and Mr. Klein.

The next ZBA meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, 1/27/2026 at 7:30 PM

Meeting Adjourn: 10:37 pm

Administrator's Note: The Meeting Minutes are a recap of the hearings and do not contain a great deal of information. Please see the Decision after it has been approved for greater detail of each hearing.