

Arlington Redevelopment Board
Monday, July 22, 2019, 7:30 p.m.
Lyons' Hearing Room, Town Hall Second Floor
Meeting Minutes

This meeting was recorded by ACMi.

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

STAFF: Jennifer Raitt, Director, 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 and at least two members of the audience will also be recording.

The Chair introduced the first agenda item, Environmental Design Review, 1207-1211 Massachusetts Avenue, Arlington, MA - Docket #3602 Public Hearing

Ken Ingber, from Krattenmaker, O'Connor, and Ingber, introduced himself and Greg McIntosh from Lincoln Architects of Winchester, who are representing Jim Doherty, the project developer. The proposed development will be a mixed-use property located at 1207-1211 Mass. Ave. 1207 Mass. Ave is the former Disabled American Veterans' facility which is closed and vacant in the B2 zoning district. 1211 Mass. Ave. is currently an auto repair business with a single apartment on the second story in the B4 zoning district. The mixed-use building proposed will include a boutique hotel with 50 rooms and an upscale restaurant. Mr. Ingber has three requests for zoning relief. The first is the requirement for setback, the proposed setback exceeds the current requirement. The second aspect is the number of parking spaces, the bylaw requires 1 parking space for each room. There are no additional parking requirements because there are no planned function rooms or meeting rooms. There will be an emphasis on tour groups and bicycles in order to justify a reduction. The third element is the floor area ratio required as stated in section 5.3.6 of the bylaw, Mr. Ingber is requesting an increase of 1.67.

Greg McIntosh from Lincoln Architects introduced himself and presented the details of the proposed building. The plan includes planting a buffer and maintaining as much green space as possible. External lighting will be low-level to limit the impact for the surrounding area. Mr. McIntosh said there will be outdoor seating off of the 1st level and an outdoor gathering area. Bicycle storage in different varieties will be included and the applicant is working to make sure to meet the requirements. The plan allows for a drop off area to prevent blocking traffic on Mass. Ave. There will be windows on the first floor and restaurant to create a connection with the street. Mr. McIntosh said they plan to use a plank system rain screen and exterior synthetic stucco system on the facade. They plan to replant and screen the back edge of the building for privacy. All rooftop equipment will be screened and placed towards the back of the building so it will not be visible from Mass. Ave. Mr. McIntosh then reviewed the shadow studies for each season.

Mr. Lau said he supports the project in this area but needs the following details:

- 1) Provide a more detailed description of the existing conditions. Show conditions with the existing neighborhood details, including drawings of neighboring buildings, curb cuts, and provide an overview of the existing vs. proposed conditions.
- 2) Show elevations of adjacent neighboring structures along Mass. Ave.
- 3) Show how the building meets the sidewalk, include grading
- 4) Complete traffic study
- 5) Show landscaping plan, including trees and drainage plans, new and existing plants, and planter details including finishes
- 6) Lower level plans should include the property line with the adjacent building, sidewalk, fencing, and planting

borders

- 7) What is the structure for the 1st floor? Will this be a steel or wood building?
- 8) Window openings do not correlate between different plans
- 9) What are the plans for venting from restaurant?
- 10) What is the proposed plan for roof access?
- 11) On the elevations and drawings label materials the materials to be used and bring in samples
- 12) Provide the details on railings
- 13) Building sections should include grading and basements of abutting structures.
- 14) Design suggestions – egress stairs are too big and move the smaller stairways to the corners to take advantage of the window areas to open up the corners to make the building feel lighter
- 15) Recommend switching the reception area and the restaurant so the drop off and loading for the building can be moved to the side street instead of Mass. Ave.
- 16) Move the trash dumpster back away from the neighboring properties.

The Chair said that this is an exciting commercial opportunity for Arlington. He said he has concerns about traffic control and asked Mr. Doherty to provide a traffic study including Mass. Ave., Appleton Street, Lowell Street, Forest Street, and Clark Street (which is a private way). The Chair asked how employees and guests will be encouraged to use public transportation. The Chair said he would like to see plans for stormwater runoff, snow management, and trash pickup. Will these services be handled through a private company or through the town? The Board would like to see the plan for deliveries and a landscape plan including street trees. How will the valet service be managed? Where will tour buses park?

Mr. Watson requested a more detailed traffic study. The intersection of Appleton and Mass. Ave. is very complicated with all of the activities in that area. Lowell Street feeds into the Downing Square intersection which is also a complicated intersection. Where will the loading and unloading of tour buses take place? Mr. Watson stated that loading and unloading should not create a traffic back up or a hazard for bicyclists. The project should not worsen existing conditions in the area. Mr. Watson said he appreciates that there are plans for bicycle parking, and following the new bike parking bylaw should address everyone's needs. The Board will need a detailed transportation demand management plan especially with the request for a substantial parking reduction. Mr. Watson is also concerned about sidewalk width, everything should be done to maximize the width; 4.5 to 5 feet is not sufficient. Because of the location. Mr. Watson asked the proponent to provide an existing shadow study compared to the proposed shadow study for the neighbors to review.

Ms. Zsembery asked about the entry façade design. Ms. Zsembery said she would like to see greater differentiation between the entry points. The current plan has the main entrance, a restaurant entrance, and canopies. Ms. Zsembery asked the developer to think about using stucco as a material. Ms. Zsembery thinks that the expanse of stucco proposed seems out of place for the neighborhood; brick, stone, or clapboard should be considered. Also consider the number of louvers on the entry façade as it makes quite an impact on the façade. Regarding the rear façade balcony, Ms. Zsembery said she appreciates the outdoor seating but questions locating the balcony on the rear of the building, facing the residential side, may cause noise concerns. Also questions sliding doors on the top, consider the neighborhood and a boutique hotel. The planned signage is lit canopy signage. She suggested that a banner instead of lit signage be appropriate on the residential side. Ms. Zsembery would like to see the proposed exterior lighting.

Mr. Benson asked about the street trees. He is concerned about the lack of consistency with renderings and plans. Mr. Benson said he has questions about the floor area ratios and asked the developer to provide the set of calculations for review. Mr. Benson said that he reviewed the LEED checklist and currently the plans will not qualify to be LEED certified. Mr. Benson said the narrative and the checklist completed for review is needed. Mr.

Benson also said he has concerns about parking, including charging people to park and the potential for overflow parking.

Mr. Doherty stated that they will be following the parking requirements in the bylaw. Tour buses carry approximately 35 people and the hotel is expected to be a 50 room hotel so there should only be one tour bus parked at a time. Mr. Doherty is looking into parking options for the buses, Mr. Doherty said they do not intend to have the buses park at the rear of the hotel. Mr. Doherty said that he is working to keep the location of the dumpster and the loading space from infringing on the neighborhood as much as possible. Mr. Doherty explained that loading and deliveries will be geared towards the restaurant, the hotel does not require much loading.

The Chair opened the floor to public comments.

Gilbert Lim lives close to the property. He said his family has lived there for 20 years and he opposes the hotel proposal due to concerns about the following:

1) Traffic issues, traffic volume will increase and the intersection is already a very tricky four way intersection.

The area requires two traffic crossing guards to manage the traffic for crossing students. Mr. Lim feels the hotel would worsen the existing traffic issues.

2) Safety issues

3) Potential for legal issues associated with the nature of the proposed business. Prostitution and human trafficking issues are associated with the hotel business. Mr. Lim stated that a local massage parlor was closed and the owner was arrested for human trafficking. There is a risk bringing this type of business to the neighborhood. Mr. Lim asked the ARB to please reject this proposal. Mr. Lim said he feels the 50 room hotel is not the right answer for the neighborhood. Live entertainment between Mass. Ave. and Clark St. will contribute to traffic and noise pollution. Mr. Lim said the safety of middle-school students is the most important factor that should be considered.

Eileen Park asked about the maximum building height in the area. The Chair answered that the maximum height limit in the B2 district 40 feet or 4 stories and in a B4 district 50 feet or 5 stories. Ms. Park commented about the parking in the area and use Clark St. and Pierce St. as a cut through. She asked where the hotel employees will park and about the ADA accessible parking spots. Ms. Park said legally there should be 2 ADA parking spots.

Marc Colosimo said that he is happy to see something done with the property. He said is concerned about the intersection and lack of cross walk by the proposed building site. Mr. Colosimo asked if the power lines and telephone poles in the area going to be relocated. He said he is also concerned about the heat from the reflection of the steel curtain wall.

Ivana (last name unclear on recording) lives between Clark and pierce Street. The area has lots of children so she would like continued traffic studies in the neighborhoods behind the hotel. She would like to see the plans for the changes to the view for the residents behind the hotel.

Barbara Thornton said she is delighted that the ARB is considering an important, new, and exciting project for developing commercial tax base in the Town's economic corridors. Ms. Thornton said that Lexington has a hotel at their Town Center that blends in very well with the town. Ms. Thornton said that she is sure that the design issues will be addressed and applauds the town for taking this project on.

Mark Ramras said that the residents from Locke Street rental units on Park Ave. park on Locke and Pierce Streets every evening. He is concerned about additional parking with the 50 unit hotel. Clarke and Pierce streets are already being used as a cut through at the same time children are heading to Ottoson School.

Don Seltzer said that he feels that the hotel is a good use for Arlington. Mr. Seltzer said he feels the hotel meets the needs of residents without adding to the number of children attending local schools. Mr. Seltzer has some

concerns about zoning and the square footage of the hotel. Mr. Seltzer said he is concerned that the applicant does not have a setback at the corner with the current design. Mr. Seltzer said that due to the height buffer zones the max height allowed is 3 stories. Mr. Seltzer is concerned about the lack of usable open space.

Marlon Banta said he is intrigued by the hotel proposal and sees potential but only if the hotel is a good neighbor. Mr. Banta said that Clarke St. is a private way, maintained without help from the town, and he is concerned about traffic and overflow parking. Mr. Banta is also concerned there may be lead and asbestos in the old buildings so would like to confirm that there will be dust control during demolition. Mr. Banta has a solar array on the roof so he would like to see the shadow study to see if the hotel will block his array. Mr. Banta also wanted to know if the hotel and restaurant employees' pay allow them to afford to live in Arlington. Mr. Banta stated that that may help with the parking issues.

Pam Hallett, the Executive Director for the Housing Corporation of Arlington, said her program has 21 housing units in this area with excess parking. Ms. Hallett thinks that the hotel is a great idea would like to see a really exciting boutique hotel and not a motel 6. Ms. Hallett said she thinks this will help with visiting family members staying in town, as they currently have to stay in Boston or Cambridge. Ms. Hallett thinks the Heights would love to have the restaurant in this area of town.

Sheri Baron asked if a marketing study was conducted. Ms. Bauer asked how this hotel would differentiate itself from the other hotel in town. Ms. Bauer said since the hotel will be used by Arlington residents' family members, asked what the nightly rates will be. Ms. Bauer asked about the owners' hotel experience. Ms. Bauer would like to know that the hotel owners will be able to screen potential employees for the hotel and restaurant.

Allan Tosti said he is excited about this commercial/retail project. Mr. Tosti gets off of the 77 bus has to walk by the current buildings, which he says are an eyesore. Mr. Tosti asked if it possible for the developer to purchase the abandoned or empty buildings in the area and use those properties for additional parking and a redesign for the area.

Carol McDonald said that the proposed site is located in a congested area and that a traffic study is needed. Ms. McDonald said that sometimes she can't get out of her driveway due to the traffic. Ms. McDonald said she thinks a hotel in Arlington is a good idea but not in that location.

Hamilton (last name is unclear on recording) from Leheigh St. does not like the aesthetic of the current plan, feels that the plan does not look like a boutique hotel. He requested that the board ask the developers to incorporate improved public spaces in the development plan. He stated that there is opportunity here to get some improvement to help all the neighbors in the area.

Ann Leroyer said that she is concerned about waived permit fees, she would like the board to explain that process. Ms. Raitt explained that as part of the RFP, the Select Board allowed for waived fees to expedite this development. The ARB still needs to accept the waiver request from the proponent in order to have the fees waived. Ms. Leroyer said she thinks the Town is losing money in fees. Zoning B2 small scale retail this project seems too large for the site. The Mill Brook is a block and a half away so she would like to see the stormwater studies. Ms. Leroyer said traffic and overnight parking has become a problem in the neighborhood.

Christopher Lorette said there is B2 zoning for this area, in Town Meeting it was stated that a mixed-use development has to fit within what is already allowed for zoning in the area. Mr. Lorette said that this project would require a zoning change. Mr. Lorette asked for the developer to provide plans for usable open space, a model of the hotel, and asked the ARB to work with the Transportation Advisory Board. Mr. Lorette stated that a loading area according to bylaw must be on the lot and not on a public way. Mr. Lorette said that he does not feel the Select Board has the authority to waive fees.

Barbara McCauley wants to know more about the live music. Mr. Doherty explained that like Town Tavern they plan to have the music indoors not on the patio.

Flora (last name unclear on the recording) would like an explanation of the zoning exemptions. She said she does not feel the area was described correctly as blighted, she said she wants to make sure that the private way is respected. She is concerned traffic issues and about parking, would like to see a parking and traffic study for the project.

Terra Bradley wanted to know if there will be an overnight/early morning front desk agent at the hotel available to contact about parking issues before calling the police. Mr. Doherty confirmed that there will be a hotel attendant available 24/7.

Julie (last name unclear on the recording) said she is not a neighbor but wanted to comment. She has heard that Jim Doherty does great work. She said she feels that this is not the right area for the hotel safety is a huge issue likes the idea but should be located on a bigger space.

The Chair thanked the neighbors for taking the time to share their thoughts and concerns with the ARB. The Chair moved to continue this hearing at a later date. Mr. Doherty asked to continue at the September 9, 2019 ARB meeting. Mr. Lau motioned to approve and Mr. Watson seconded. All voted in favor 5-0.

The Chair introduced the second agenda item, approving ARB Meeting Minutes. The Chair moved to amend the April 24, 2019 meeting minutes to include voting and attendance corrections. Mr. Lau motioned to open minutes and make amendments, Mr. Watson seconded. Approved 3-0, Mr. Benson and Ms. Zsembery abstained.

The Chair moved to accept the April 24, 2019 minutes as amended. Mr. Lau motioned to approve the amended April 24, 2019 minutes and Mr. Watson seconded. Approved 3-0, Mr. Benson and Ms. Zsembery abstained.

The Chair introduced the third agenda item, Open Forum and opened the floor for comments from the public.

Don Seltzer asked about the amended April 24, 2019 minutes. Mr. Seltzer wanted to know who was present for the vote at the April 24, 2019 meeting. The Chair confirmed that just the ARB members were present; Ms. Raitt left the room before the ARB voted.

Steve Revilak spoke about the land vs. structure values in Arlington. Mr. Revilak found that in 2013-2018 the value of the land is higher than single family homes. The Chair said that they will discuss the letter they received from Mr. Revilak at a future date.

Mr. Lorette said he has some requests for zoning changes to the requirements for open space, density regulations; change the definition of mixed-use, and some table corrections. Mr. Lorette said he would leave a copy of his notes with the details with the Board to review.

Pam Hallet said that the Housing Corporation is ready for review of final plans for 19R Park Ave and 117 Broadway. They are now focusing on lighting, landscape, and interiors. Ms. Raitt said that the September 9, 2019 meeting would be the next date to meet with the Board.

Mr. Seltzer stated he will have additional details regarding the hotel project for the continued hearing. The Chair asked Mr. Seltzer to submit any information to the Board before the next meeting.

The Chair moved to close the meeting. Mr. Lau motioned to adjourn, Mr. Benson seconded. All voted in favor 5-0.

Meeting adjourned.