

Arlington Redevelopment Board
Monday, November 4, 2019, 7:30 PM
Town Hall Annex,
2nd Floor Conference Room
Meeting Minutes

This meeting was recorded by ACMi.

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

STAFF: Jennifer Raitt, Director of Planning and Community Development

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, Environmental Design Review, Public Hearing Mr. McCoy for 833 Mass Ave.

The Chair explained to Gary McCoy, representative from Poyant Signs, that while the hearing is for signage at CVS, the Board and members of the public will want to speak about the neighboring property, known as the Atwood House. The Chair reminded members of the public in attendance that Mr. McCoy does not have control over the neighboring property and is here for the CVS sign change. The Chair said that the Atwood House has been a long standing issue for the town. The Chair said that with this special permit being reopened it is an opportunity for a discussion about the original conditions of the special permit regarding maintenance and future plans for the Atwood House. Mr. McCoy explained that CVS is updating their signs throughout the country and would also like to add one do not enter sign at this location.

The Chair then deferred to the Board for comments. Ms. Zsebery said that the property owner needs to follow-through with the original permit conditions required for the Atwood House property. Mr. Benson said that he watched the ARB meetings that he could not attend, so he is prepared to vote on this issue. Mr. Benson said he drove past CVS and he noticed that there is a sign missing from the existing and proposed signage plan. The Chair and Mr. McCoy said that they can have the sign added to the revised site plan. Mr. Watson said he had no issue regarding the signage but would like a resolution to the issues regarding the Atwood House property. Mr. Lau said he has no problem with the signage change due to CVS's rebranding. Mr. Lau said that the Board needs to devise a reasonable solution that is fair to Mr. McCoy and CVS. Ms. Raitt said that as well as the previously noted sign, the current landscaping is also different than the landscape plan submitted with the original application. The landscaping between the brick front of the CVS building and the sidewalk that was approved at the time of the original decision was never installed or installed and then removed.

The Chair opened the floor to the public for comment. John Worden said he forwarded an email with documents from the time of the original decision. Mr. Worden said that based on the original decision it was intended that the Atwood House serve a useful purpose. Mr. Worden said that there was talk of creating affordable housing with parking in the rear of the Atwood House, but the owner said he would only grant a 10-year lease for that use. He noted that the Atwood House is boarded up and in a commercial area, which is not allowed. Mr. Worden said he sent a letter to the Building Inspector regarding the vandalism and condition of the house. Mr. Worden said that the house was named for Dr. Atwood who served the town well.

John Atwood from 523 North Oakland St, Arlington VA, the grandson of Dr. Atwood, came to offer comments on the historical context of the house. Dr. Atwood was originally from his family farm in Rhode Island. He attended Harvard College and Harvard Medical School and graduated in 1900. Mr. Atwood said he thinks that Dr. Atwood moved to Arlington before 1906. Dr. Atwood was active with Symmes Hospital and was the Town Physician, working with the Board of Health. Dr. Atwood was in the Symmes Hospital gallery of honored physicians who worked with Symmes Hospital through the years. Mr. Atwood said that the Atwood House was elegant in its day

but many of the unique details, including the stained glass window on the second floor, have been destroyed by vandals. Mr. Atwood said he thinks the house is historically significant to the Town of Arlington; therefore the house should be preserved.

Mr. Lau noted that the house was transformed by the dentists who used the building after it transitioned from being doctors' offices. Mr. Lau said that many of the details Mr. Atwood described are no longer there due to the renovations to the dentists' offices.

David Baldwin, a member of the Arlington Historical Districts Commission, said that the sign as you enter Arlington from Cambridge says welcome to historic Arlington. Mr. Baldwin said that many historical structures have been moved or demolished therefore the remaining historic buildings are important. If Arlington is promoting history we should not be raising historic structures. Mr. Baldwin said that we are all stewards of the historic past so we should make a stand for historic buildings and this is the legacy that we leave to the future. Carl Wagner said he wanted to thank the ARB for the Oct. 7 meeting where the Atwood House was discussed to be able to have a conversation about why is that house in such bad shape for such a long time. Mr. Wagner said he hoped that Arlington residents would reach out to Inspectional Services to get the house taken care of before something awful happens. Mr. Wagner said he learned at the October 7, 2019 Redevelopment Board meeting that 10 years ago instructions were given to the owners that they were not permitted to demolish the building. Peter Bloom said as a neighbor he is discouraged seeing what has happened to the house over the years. Mr. Bloom said he does not understand how this could have gone on for so long. Mr. Bloom said he looks forward to see what can be done. He said Arlington will be losing the high school's architecture so that makes the Atwood House even more important to the streetscape.

The Chair turned the meeting back to the Board to deliberate. The Chair said that the Board may be limited to what they may be able to decide this evening. Mr. Benson said that he does not think that there is any way to connect the application before the Board to the issue of the condition and future of the Atwood House. Mr. Benson said he does not know if the Board can condition the sign permit to address the Atwood House. The Chair said that in the 7 to 8 years he has been on the Board only one other time a special permit has been reopened and the special conditions and general conditions put forth by the special permit have not been withheld. CVS has been an excellent neighbor to the town and it is not reasonable to keep CVS from moving forward. Special permit condition #5 states that reasonable efforts should be used to prevent additional damage by the elements or otherwise until it is developed. These efforts have not taken place in the last 10 years. The historical and cultural implications of the house notwithstanding, the house is falling down and with its condition there is concern about the church next door and neighboring CVS. The Board is essentially dealing with an absentee property owner. The Chair said that the Board does not want to cause undue hardship to CVS; but as a long-time tenant, they might have influence over the property owner to improve management for the property.

Mr. Watson said he is not comfortable to continue to stall CVS from moving forward with the signage. Regardless of what pressure CVS might be able to exert on Mr. Noyes, any type of redevelopment of the site is going to take a while. Ms. Raitt said the special permit was reopened in order to allow the Board to meet with the property owner and his attorney, which occurred on October 7th. However, the Board and property owner did not devise an action plan or terms for next steps. There should be limit on how long the Board holds off issuing a permit to a tenant of the property owner. There are other legal measures the Town can take to further protect this property including a preservation restriction. Ms. Raitt said that the condition of the Atwood House does not directly relate to this tenant or their ability to install signs and make interior improvements.

The Chair said that the Board would theoretically have the opportunity to enter into further discussions under general condition #4 by reopening the permit and place conditions specifically on this property. Mr. Lau said in his opinion the Board should approve the signs for CVS and use the Board's authority to reopen the permit and

discuss concerns about the property directly with the property owner. Ms. Zsembery said that she understands the timeline a retailer has for a rebranding effort. The Atwood house has alleged illegal dangerous activities adjacent to the CVS property and it is important for them to understand the risks and the Town's concerns. She feels it would be important to have someone from CVS to attend this hearing and work with the owner in order to expedite a resolution for their customers and the Town. The Chair said that he feels that at this time they can close testimony on behalf of the sign company. Mr. Benson suggested adding a third condition that a representative of CVS comes to meet with the Board. Mr. Lau said that the Board should follow up with Mr. Noyes for the update from Mr. Noyes' architect and structural inspector. The Chair suggested a motion to approve the application for special permit, Docket # 3348 with the following conditions: adding the missing directional sign, correcting the landscaping, and a reopening the special permit to discuss condition #5 at a public hearing on December 16th with both a CVS representative with decision making authority and the property owner. Mr. Lau moved to approve, Mr. Watson seconded, all voted in favor 5-0.

The Chair suggested a second motion to reopen special permit Docket #3348 for a public hearing on December 16, 2019. The property owner and a representative from CVS with decision making authority must attend to discuss special permit, condition #5. Mr. Benson moved to approve, Mr. Lau seconded, all voted in favor 5-0.

The Chair closed that portion of special permit #3348 hearing and introduced the next agenda item, update on Central School renovation project schedule and endorsement of borrowing for Central School renovation project.

Ms. Raitt gave the Board a current timeline of the project. Ms. Raitt said she spoke with Bond Counsel who requested that the Board endorse spending; the amount bonded by Town Meeting is \$8,055,000.00. Ms. Raitt reviewed the budget for the project. Ms. Raitt explained that the endorsement shows that the Board supports this project. Mr. Benson moved to support the bonding of the Central School in the amount appropriated by Town Meeting, The Chair seconded, all voted in favor 5-0.

The Chair introduced the next agenda item, Committee Updates. Ms. Raitt said that the Housing Plan Implementation Committees is discussing two proposals for a future Town Meeting: a real estate transfer tax at a municipal affordable housing trust fund to hold and keep funding for affordable housing. Ms. Raitt said Town Counsel will be attending the next Housing Plan Implementation Committee meeting to further discuss the second item with the committee.

Mr. Watson said that the Zoning Bylaw Working Group voted to hire RKG Associates to conduct an Economic Analysis of the Industrial Zones, which includes an analysis of ways to invigorate industrial spaces. The Chair asked if the ZBWG considered hiring a consultant to review the zoning districts along the business corridor in Town. Ms. Raitt said that was planned for last year but the Town did not receive any bids from consultants. Steve Revilak, member of the ZBWG in the audience, noted that the original RFP submitted last year included a review of sign bylaws and zoning in business districts but there were no bids. The RFP was then changed to only amend the sign bylaw.

Ms. Raitt said that she does not have any updates from the Master Plan Implementation Committee at this time. The MPIC typically meets quarterly and prior to Town Meeting.

Mr. Benson said that the Community Preservation Committee received 12 applications and the Committee invited all applicants to submit preliminary proposals to see if they qualify for CPA funding. Mr. Benson said that the CPC did not receive any applications for affordable housing. Mr. Lau asked if there was a carryover from last year. Mr. Benson says he thinks that there was some carryover and the committee should have adequate money to fund the approved proposals. Ms. Raitt said that the DPCD has updated the Town's historic property inventory cards as part of the Town's historic property inventory and will continue with mostly municipally-owned properties going forward. The Department is also pursuing an archeological survey of the Town which was recommended by the

Survey Master Plan. The final Department request was for visioning/ planning process for the Minuteman Bikeway. The Chair asked about the status of the design guidelines project. Ms. Raitt said that the RFP for a consultant was re-issued following a lack of responses the first time it was advertised.

Ms. Raitt and the Chair said that there has not been an Envision Arlington meeting in a year. Ms. Raitt asked to invite Juli Brazile to update the Board. Ms. Raitt said that the Envision Arlington survey for 2020 will include questions about housing.

Ms. Raitt said that the Open Space Committee is working on securing funds to create a new Open Space Recreation Plan – the current one expires in 2021.

The Chair introduced the next agenda item, Announcement: Release of Bike Parking Guide. Ms. Raitt said that this is a companion document to assist applicants with the new bike parking bylaw. Ms. Raitt said that that Mr. Watson's feedback was greatly appreciated and Ms. Raitt wanted to thank her DPCD staff. Ms. Raitt said that she is open to taking any other feedback. Mr. Benson said that this is a wonderful resource and he has some suggested wording changes. Steve Revilak said that he has been using a bike as his primary mode of transportation for about six years. Overall, he thinks the guide is wonderful and liked the examples of how to improve a bike parking facility. Mr. Revilak said he also likes the examples of corral parking systems. Mr. Revilak said he thinks they are a practical way to retrofit bike parking in an area that was originally designed to accommodate automobiles and it also shows how space efficient bicycle parking can be. Mr. Benson said it might be interesting to set up some of the bike parking corrals for Town Day next year. Ms. Zsembery said she noticed that the graphics on the front of the guide shows one of the bike parking options that was an example of a poor bike parking option. Mr. Watson said he wanted to express his appreciation to the staff and he thinks it is a great job that the guide will be very helpful to developers, employers, the schools, and people running events in town. Mr. Watson said he would like to see the guide distributed in some way to the existing larger residential and commercial properties to give them ideas about creating bike parking or improving existing bike parking. Ms. Raitt said that the Town will create a press release to make the announcement.

The Chair introduced the next agenda item, ARB 2020 Meeting Schedule. The Chair suggested a motion to accept the ARB 2020 meeting schedule, Mr. Lau moved to approve, Ms. Zsembery seconded, and all voted in favor 5-0.

The Chair introduced the next agenda item, Meeting Minutes (9/23, 10/7, 10/21). Mr. Benson moved to accept the 9/23/19 minutes with amendments, Mr. Lau seconded, and all voted in favor 5-0.

Ms. Zsembery moved to accept the 10/7/19 minutes with amendments, Mr. Lau seconded, and all voted in favor 4-0 (Mr. Benson abstained).

Mr. Lau moved to accept the 10/21/19 minutes with amendments, Mr. Watson seconded, and all voted in favor 5-0.

The Chair opened the floor to members of the public for the open forum portion of the meeting. Don Seltzer said he has a question regarding the building at 887 Mass. Ave. Mr. Seltzer said that initially that location was to have commercial retail on the first floor and Mr. Seltzer said he understands that now there are plans for different use. Mr. Seltzer asked about the next steps since the space is will now be used for a different purpose than what was originally approved. Ms. Raitt said the space will be a preschool and the DPCD has followed the Board's guidelines with a Dover Amendment review process along with Inspectional Services and input from the Town Counsel. Ms. Raitt said she would be glad to share any other details or answer any other questions about the space or property. Mr. Seltzer said he thinks a preschool is a good use for the area, but since it is a different use that what was approved, Mr. Seltzer said that he feels that there should have been additional reviews. Mr. Seltzer said there should have been another parking and traffic review in addition to a review regarding the ongoing construction in

the space.

Mr. Lau motioned to adjourn the meeting, Ms. Lau seconded, all voted in favor 5-0.

Meeting adjourned.